GEORGE GRENFELL

PIONEER IN CONGO

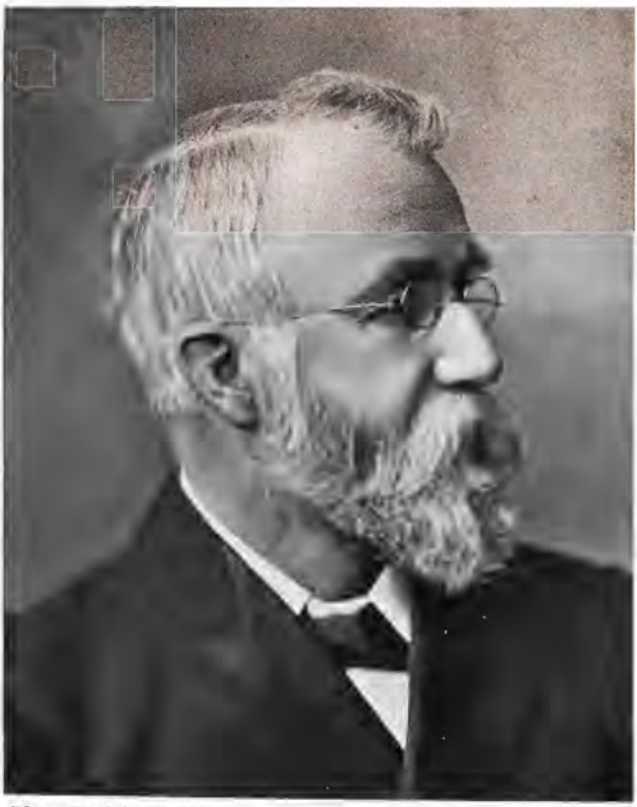


Photo: W. Coles, Watford

GEORGE GRENFELL
AT FIFTY-TWO

GEORGE GRENFELL

PIONEER IN CONGO

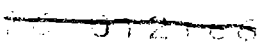
By

H. L. HEMMENS

ASSISTANT HOME SECRETARY
BAPTIST MISSIONARY SOCIETY

LONDON
STUDENT CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT
32 RUSSELL SQUARE, W.C.1
1927

First published March 1927



Made and Printed in Great Britain
by Turnbull & Spears, Edinburgh

TO THE

INSPIRING MEMORY OF

WALTER

WHO FROM HIS EIGHTH BIRTHDAY

UNTIL HE PASSED FROM OUR SIGHT SIX YEARS LATER

STEADFASTLY SET HIS FACE TO FOLLOW

GRENFELL

TO THE HEART OF AFRICA

EDITORIAL NOTE

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

While these volumes contain a large amount of valuable new material, this is not their main objective. The aim rather is to give to the world of to-day a fresh interpretation and a richer understanding of the life and work of great missionaries.

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

K. M.

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

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

By character and achievement a man may become a hero to his contemporaries. As his life recedes into the dim distance an increasing glamour and glory gather about it. It is those who follow immediately after him who are often in ignorance concerning him. They form the generation that knows not Joseph.

Like all Baptists of my day, I grew up under the spell of the Congo Mission and of its leaders, among them Grenfell in particular. When the unexpected invitation to undertake the task of writing his story reached me from the United Council for Missionary Education, I responded with eagerness. It is a story worth repeating at any time, not less so now that more than fifty years have passed since Grenfell first set foot in Africa, and that though he has ceased from his labours his works still follow him.

My work has been eased in many ways. I have had access to the records of the Baptist Missionary Society, and have enjoyed the help of some of Grenfell's colleagues. Sir Harry Johnston, author of *George Grenfell and the Congo*, gave generous permission to draw upon the material his volumes contain. The Rev. George Hawker, author of *The Life of George Grenfell*, crowned his many previous en-

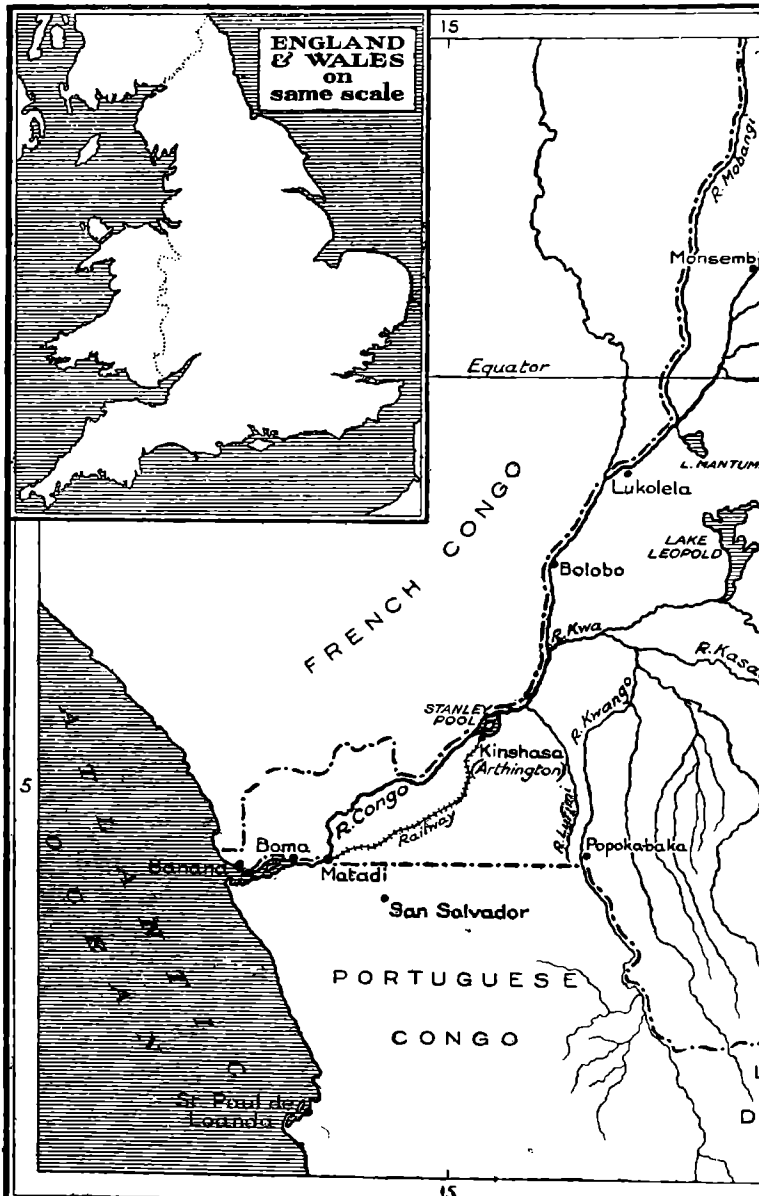
couragements by a similar permission and by his criticisms of my manuscript. The present volume is largely built upon the toil of these two authors, and also upon Dr Holman Bentley's *Pioneering on the Congo*, and the Rev. Robert Glennie's *Congo and its Peoples*, though it contains some additional matter hitherto unpublished.

Grenfell was one of a band who, in the words of a successor, "without roads or railroads, without shops or currency, without river boats or motors, without charts or maps, without government help or native funds, without literature or dictionary, without hospital or doctors, went out in faith, crossed unknown hills, and explored unheard-of streams, established friendly relations with the peoples of new lands, built steamboats and schools, reduced strange languages to writing, and established printing presses, taught handicrafts and founded hospitals, raising everywhere the Gospel standard, as they went purposing to claim the continent for Christ—by a line of stations from West to East."

May the reading of his story inspire all its readers to press forward with the unfinished work which he began and so to remove "the ancient sin of white against black" by establishing the Kingdom of God in Central Africa.

H. L. HEMMENS

BEXLEY HEATH, KENT
December 1926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R. Kwa
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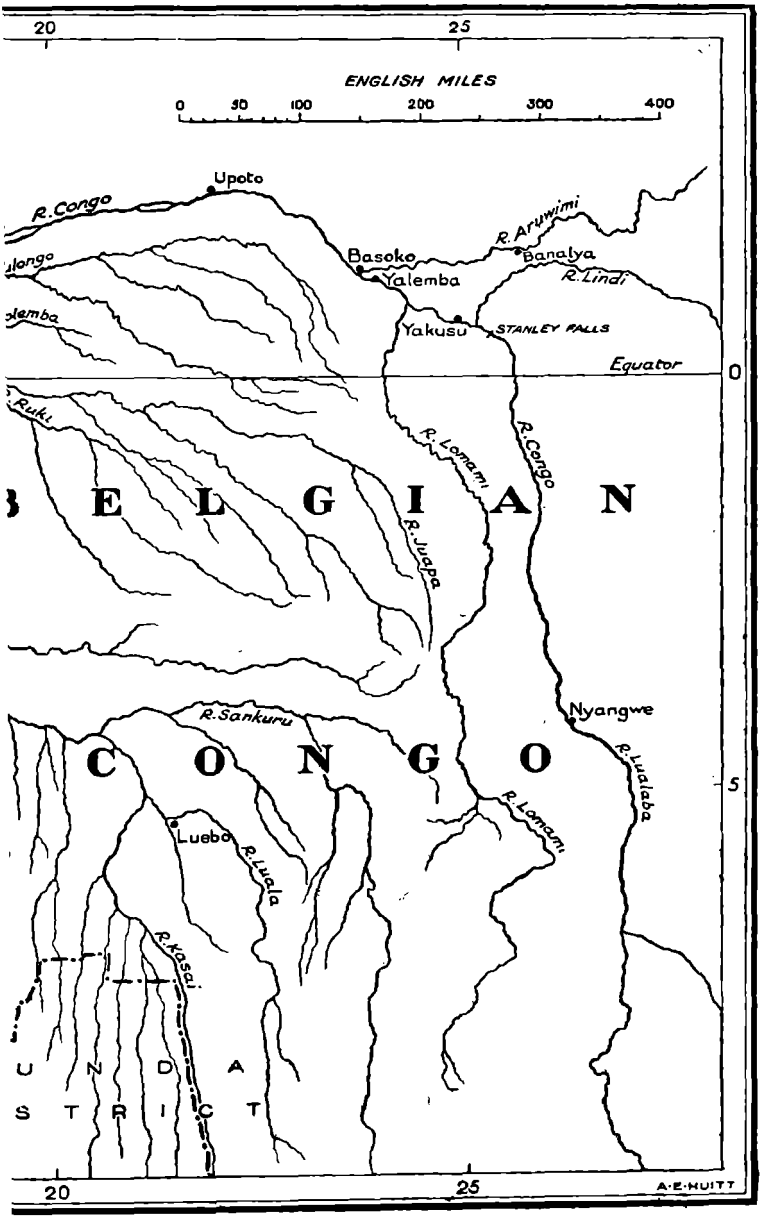
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PRONUNCIATION OF CONGO WORDS

A FEW simple hints will be sufficient to secure the correct pronunciation of Congo names. Generally speaking, the accent is to be put on the last syllable but one.

The vowel sounds are constant :

A long as in ' psalm '
E short as in ' hem '
I like our long ' e ' as in ' seen '
O long as in ' lo '
U to be sounded like ' oo ' as in ' flute,' except when it begins a word, when it is like ' you.'

CHAPTER I

LIFTING THE VEIL

In August 1877 a white man reached Boma, at the mouth of the River Congo, after a long and epoch-making journey from Zanzibar, on the other side of the continent. Gaunt and worn, this traveller, Henry M. Stanley, carried with him a story which electrified the civilized world. Three years before he had struck inland from the east coast and had followed a familiar path to the place where, on his previous journey a few years earlier, he had discovered Livingstone and vainly tried to persuade him to return to Britain. His present purpose was to complete the task, left unfinished through Livingstone's death in 1873, of mapping the river systems of Central Africa, and of following the course of the Lualaba, wherever it might lead him, until he reached its mouth.

With a motley caravan of Zanzibar porters he pressed northwards from Nyangwe on the Lualaba to adventures and achievements that proved classic in the annals of exploration. His advance was resisted first by slave-raiding Arabs, who saw in the coming of the white man a threat to their evil trade, and later by cannibal savages, to whom all other men were only a potential food supply. To these human obstacles were added the natural difficulties of the uncharted river.

Three hundred and fifty miles north of Nyangwe Stanley encountered seven successive cataracts, which he could pass only by painfully dragging his equipment overland through formidable country. Then began a down-river journey which gradually veered farther and farther westwards, and confirmed his theory that he was assuredly tracking the last of Africa's mighty secrets—the course of the Congo. For a thousand miles his convoy of canoes paddled onwards. He passed safely through hostile tribes—sometimes by coercion, sometimes by persuasion; until once again he was compelled to forsake the water by reason of another baffling cataract region through which the river swept and swirled before its final swift approach to the sea.

By this remarkable journey, which covered precisely nine hundred and ninety-nine days, Stanley riveted the attention of a curious world on Central Africa, and ushered in a new era for its primitive peoples. In its early part he passed through Uganda, whence he dispatched that clarion appeal to British Christians which issued in the establishment of the Uganda Mission of the Church Missionary Society. His subsequent achievement in the west brought to a climax a series of events in England and set the seal upon the Congo Mission which the Baptist Missionary Society had already decided to commence.

Stanley was not the first to attempt the exploration of this vast region, almost as spacious as Europe. The earliest Portuguese navigators, who ventured daringly along the west coast of Africa in their crazy caravels, were aware of a mighty river that poured its waters into the Atlantic half-way towards

its southern extremity. Its muddy brown current swept on with a strength that carried it a hundred miles out to sea and resisted all attempts to ascend its estuary. Other explorers came in the wake of the Portuguese and made successful landings, established trade with the inhabitants, and were the unconscious pioneers of a procession of merchants, priests, slave raiders, soldiers and adventurers. That procession has continued irregularly ever since. The activities of these early arrivals were, however, confined to the lower Congo area. No man even claimed to have advanced more than two hundred miles from the coast. Progress up the river was barred by insuperable cataracts and impetuous currents. Overland, the hostility of chiefs and the deadly diseases of the country proved equally difficult to overcome.

In the early years of the nineteenth century an expedition fitted out by the British Government, under Commander Tuckey, was directed to explore the Congo. After a boat journey of one hundred miles and a further inland journey of fifty miles, the venture ended in disaster and death. Another attempt was made from the west fifty years later, when Lieutenant Grandy led an expedition for the relief of Livingstone, only to be turned back by news of Stanley's successful quest.

Until recent times the heart of Central Africa remained untouched and unknown. The continent's long coast line had been mapped by the close of the fifteenth century. The veil had been lifted from the fringe of the west and south-west before another hundred years had passed. British, Dutch, French and Portuguese obtained precarious footholds south, east, and west in the next two centuries. The epic

deeds of mighty travellers illumine the story of the first half of last century. The explorers had closed in upon all sides around the Congo basin by the middle of its second half. Nevertheless, the Bantu peoples, still undisturbed by western influences, were pursuing the same rude, savage, tribal life which their ancestors had lived from the dawn of time. They made their huts of grass or wood, hunted and fished, contended with nature, with wild beasts, and with each other. They engaged in primitive spirit worship, knowing nothing better. They were ignorant of the frontal attacks from the west being made with so little success upon their land, and of the tremendous new forces that were to play upon them with increasing power as the result of Stanley's advent from the rear.

To-day, the Congo area of over two million square miles is under the control of European Powers. Its river system, which includes the main stream, three thousand miles in length, with tributary streams aggregating another eleven thousand miles, is virtually explored and charted. Its northern watershed is a French possession. British power runs up to its eastern and south-eastern limits. Its south-western extremity is within the domain of Portugal. Its vast, sparsely populated central area—about one-half of the whole—is administered by Belgium.

The river also pulsates with a new life. Steamers, owned by the State and by numerous trading companies, ply on its main streams and carry coastwards, for the comfort and enjoyment of the white peoples of the world, the well-nigh inexhaustible material products of its mountains, valleys and forests.[1] The

[1] Congo exports include coffee, cocoa, copper, copal, ivory, palm-oil, palm-nuts, rubber, gold, diamonds, and radium.

cataract regions have been skilfully rounded by railway tracks. The drone of Handley-Page aeroplane engines is heard above the silence of the forests, as the giants speed to and from the copper areas in the south-east. Motor lorries lumber along macadamized roads for hundreds of miles through and around European settlements and concessions. The journey across the continent, which Stanley found long and tortuous, can now be made with ease in less than a month. The telegraph and cable bring the country within a few hours of Paris, London, New York and other great centres. Wireless installations place Boma, the capital of Belgian Congo, in direct communication with Brussels. The buzz of sewing machines sounds from thousands of huts, as trained natives make clothes at a speed and on a scale undreamed of by their fathers. The white man's gramophone brings a new delight to native ears. Flickering pictures in the ubiquitous cinemas flash before curious eyes a world wonderful beyond the wildest imagination. Modern towns, whose names—Albertville, Brazzaville, Elizabethville, Leopoldville, and Stanleyville—suggest their European origin and association, are the centres of wide administrative areas and the focus of vast trading interests.

Strong administration imposes new demands upon the people in return for economic development, settled government and ordered life. The needs of trading companies for labour make devastating inroads upon the sanctions and restraints of hoary tribal customs. The increased wealth that now finds its way into native hands enlarges purchasing power. The new contacts made through the inflow of white civilization are, as usual, producing good and

bad results: on the one hand mental stimulus and an expansion of outlook, and, on the other, a tendency to physical deterioration.

These transformations have not been limited to the material and social spheres. Moral and spiritual forces have resulted literally in a new way of life for multitudes of people. Over wide areas the incessant tribal warfare of the past has ceased to harass and disturb. The depredations of slave-raiders no longer strike terror into defenceless victims. The sway of witchcraft has vanished before the light of knowledge. High standards of chastity and cleanliness have been set up in place of conditions unspeakably cruel and corrupt. New and better sources of livelihood and more stable habits of industry have produced a dignity that is leading the natives towards a higher place in the family of nations. Languages have been reduced to writing, and the beginnings of a literature have appeared. The healing hand of the doctor has been laid upon the sick and suffering. The introduction of preventive medicine and the observance of the laws of health have stayed the spread of disease and plague.

Whereas, at the beginning of the new era, Christianity had made little contact with Congo, the main rivers and some inland areas are now dotted with vigorous and progressive Christian communities. Churches and schools by the hundred proclaim that a power has entered the lives of the people which has changed their desire and purpose.

Many men and movements have contributed to this opening up of Congo. Foremost among them is the band of missionary pioneers who penetrated its unknown waterways and forests, established the

first friendly relations with its barbarous peoples, and laid broad and true those foundations upon which their successors have built. None is worthy of higher honour, or has made a more noteworthy contribution, than George Grenfell. He was one of the first two missionaries to enter the country, and for thirty years was leader of a group of Christian adventurers. From the beginning he kept his eye on the far horizon, and maintained the pioneer spirit to the end.

If he be regarded merely as an explorer, his achievements give him a high place among the makers of Africa. Sometimes blazing a trail where no white man had gone before, and sometimes, with greater care and thoroughness, going over ground hurriedly and imperfectly explored by others, he made large additions to knowledge in geography, anthropology, ethnology and other sciences. His innate modesty estranged him from fame, for he always preferred the background to the limelight, and worked without thought of reward.

Of Grenfell and his accomplishments *The Times* said in an obituary :

> Few explorers in any part of the world have made such extensive and valuable contributions to geographical knowledge as this modest missionary, who, had he possessed the ambition and the "push" of men who have not done a tithe of his work, would have been loaded with honours. . . .

The purpose of this book is to tell the story of this man and of his work.

CHAPTER II

THE MAKING OF THE MAN

1849–1874. Age 1–25 years.

At Flores in the Azores Sir Richard Grenville lay,
And a pinnace, like a flutter'd bird came flying from far away:
"Spanish ships of war at sea! we have sighted fifty-three."
—*The Revenge.*

THE pulses of men and boys everywhere quicken as they read or hear for the first time this stirring poem of Tennyson, but to few men could it ever make greater appeal than to George Grenfell. For, although he belonged to an obscure branch of the illustrious family whose name he bore, he could claim kinship with the doughty old Elizabethan adventurer whose immortal and impertinent fight is enshrined in the poem, and with all the Grenvilles, Greinfields and Grenfells whose names and deeds illumine the pages of Britain's story in war and peace. From that same rare strain there came more recently that unique, living, venturous Christian, Wilfred Thomason Grenfell of Labrador, whose self-sacrificing humanitarian service is one of the epics of this generation, and Julian Grenfell, soldier-poet and gentleman, whose death in battle was among the lamented casualties of the Great War.

Tennyson's vivid verse must, on occasion, have carried George Grenfell's thoughts to the distant Cornish home of his ancestors, where he himself was born on August 21st, 1849, at Sancreed, a village

near to Land's End, and whither he returned again and again for prolonged holidays. It must have kept fresh many choice memories of the gentle music of running water as it babbled towards the sea hard by his cottage home at Trannack Mill, and of the winter storms that beat about the hills and valleys around the homestead.

From Grenfell's own story another laureate might, with justice, pen a second poem equally stirring. Throughout his African career he displayed an eagerness to reach the edge of beyond which nothing could damp. He was happiest when he felt the roll of a ship beneath his feet. His record is indissolubly linked with one ship in particular, the *Peace*, which he helped to design, to build in Britain, and to rebuild in Africa. From the day that she was launched until his own death twenty-two years later, he was her captain and she was to him as a child beloved. Like the combative *Revenge*, this trim little vessel often "ran on sheer into the heart of the foe" on her mission of salvation. Times almost without number she "won great glory." Her dauntless captain might have exclaimed, with truth, "In perilous plight were we," and have asserted that "his vessel was all but a wreck," when more than once she returned to dock shaken and shattered by storm and disaster. And at the end stricken members of her black crew watched their beloved chief "fall into the hands of God." There clung about Grenfell through life an old-world courtliness and grace which more than once reminded his friends of his ancestry, and led one of them to remark: "Such courtly manners and spirit are never acquired in one generation. They are the product of the ages, like the Oxford manner."

Grenfell's father, a farmer's son, was single-hearted, patient and gentle, and keenly interested in political concerns. His mother, who was a farmer's daughter, combined a tenacious will with a winsome temperament. These parental traits, added to the fundamental characteristics of the ancestral stock, furnished Grenfell with that doggedness by which he held to his appointed tasks without swerving, and that sensitiveness that kept him aloof from all save a favoured circle of intimate friends.

In consequence of depression in the local tin-mining industry, by which the Grenfells were affected, the family migrated to Birmingham when George, the elder son, was about three years old. Henceforward, until the day he embarked upon the specialized training for his appointed vocation, the Midland metropolis was the hub around which his interests and pursuits revolved, and the school in which his gifts emerged and attained maturity.

Heneage Street, about which these folk from the secluded countryside found their new abiding place, is a long thoroughfare, within easy walking distance of the heart of the city. It is to-day a weary wilderness of dingy, dirty, red brick cottages and tenements, whose front doors border the pavements, varied only here and there by stark factories and warehouses. The appearance of the neighbourhood suggests that, whatever dignity it may have once possessed, the glory has long since departed before the relentless advance of economic necessity, which has driven out the better class artisans, and introduced a seething population of more or less casual labour. In the days of the Grenfells' settlement the district was comparatively new and thriving, but nevertheless

it was so utterly different from their Cornish home that one can imagine that only an inexorable compulsion could have induced the parents to settle there. Grenfell was too young for the change to affect him. He grew to manhood as a son of the Midland city.

As the family belonged by tradition to the Church of England, the children were sent to the Sunday school connected with St Matthew's Church hard by their home. They remained here until Grenfell's eleventh year, when he removed himself to a Baptist Sunday school a stone's throw away. The event which caused this change bears a humorous aspect. St Matthew's Sunday school contained a bully whose oppressive operations were directed more especially at Grenfell's younger brother. At length they became intolerable and both brothers sought and found a quieter haven. This step, next to his removal to Birmingham, has been described as "the most momentous act and fact of his life." But for a bully his course might have followed a road far different from that which it took; and the story of the Baptist Missionary Society and of West Africa might have proved of another order.

In the church to which Grenfell became attached in 1859 he formed friendships which endured through life; he came under the spell of powerful personalities, who left indelible impressions upon his character; he breathed an atmosphere in which his convictions were fashioned; and he was introduced to those activities which determined his line of action.

The Baptist Church which received him had been founded some twenty years earlier, and at the time of his adherence its life was in full flower. Set in

the midst of a populous district, it was chiefly composed of an artisan membership. The church building is severe in outward appearance and plain in interior appointments. Our fathers who worshipped in "the beauty of holiness" paid little regard to the holiness of beauty. But to them the place was a veritable "House of God" and "Gate of heaven." To-day both St Matthew's Church and the Baptist Church share in the general deterioration of the vicinity, but are making a vigorous fight as centres of redemptive work.

Grenfell was gifted with a genius for friendship. From boyhood onwards he ever gave himself without reserve to those who were privileged to acquire his confidence, and he received abundant comradeship in return. Joseph Hawkes was his chum at day school and Sunday school, and the hearts of these two became as closely knit as those of David and Jonathan. Hawkes's home appears to have been open house to Grenfell. With William Hastings, the third of the trio, they "joined the church" within the same few months. They were colleagues in the organized work of the church, in the life of the city, and in their hopes of future service. Their lives passed into still more intimate relationship when Grenfell married Hawkes's sister. For a space their paths lay apart, as Hawkes entered upon missionary work in the West Indies, while Grenfell's face was turned towards the south. When after a short-service period Hawkes returned to live in Birmingham, the other reposed a trust in him which deepened with life's growing responsibilities and perplexities. During Grenfell's rare furloughs Hawkes's home was his; his strength was a solace amid the multiplying sorrows

of lengthening years; and his fatherly care was lavished upon the missionary's children. The voluminous correspondence of these twin souls is a treasure store to the biographer.

In boyhood they had their differences, of course. One of these was so acute that it was mutually agreed to resolve it by appeal to arms. With typical thoroughness, rules were drawn up for the contest. The time and place were appointed, weapons were chosen, and intervals for respite were arranged. At the close of afternoon school, the contestants proceeded unobtrusively to a disused clay-pit. Here they took off their waterproof capes, rolled them into batons, and forthwith furiously belaboured each other. An hour passed with the issue still in question. Both boys were completely exhausted, and in no heart to continue the fray. They left the scene of battle greater friends than ever. But for one of them there was another reckoning when, dishevelled and distressed, he reached home!

Early in his Sunday school life, Grenfell was gripped by the personality of a gifted teacher. James Weston, devoid of scholastic distinction, was master of One Book. By occupation a shop porter, he so captivated Grenfell and his associates by the simple sincerity of his faith that, in the Sunday school class and the boys' own meeting, and in his walks to and from business, they were his constant attendants. He was pre-eminent among those who awakened in Grenfell aspirations after personal religion. The memory of this honest son of toil must be reckoned among the factors which in later years kept him straight and true, amid inducements and attractions to other spheres.

Just before Grenfell reached his teens a fresh minister was called to the pastorate at Heneage Street. Samuel Chapman entered its pulpit direct from college. Even in those early days he revealed an austerity that was forbidding, blended with a geniality that won the affection of old and young. His six years' sojourn in Birmingham was marked by evidences of those talents which afterwards ripened with such plenitude in Glasgow that the famous Adelaide Place Church was required to accommodate the congregations that gathered to hear him preach; and still later, reached maturity in Australia during an eventful ministry in Melbourne. He expended himself for the young people of his flock, and Grenfell and his confrères were instantly drawn into the circle of his most ardent admirers.

The causes which operate to produce that spiritual experience called conversion are often obscure and complex. In Grenfell's case it is patent that each of the factors which have been mentioned made its distinct contribution. There was the urge of a virile church, led by a man of strong character whose message and life were felt and discussed by a group of boy friends, and pondered in private. There were the example and persuasion of a godly teacher, and the exhilaration of a fervid spiritual atmosphere. There was the expanding desire to link his life to the highest and noblest ends. Thus it was in the case of Grenfell and his two intimates. Somehow they heard the call to follow and they obeyed. Each was about fifteen years old when he applied for admission to church membership, was examined prior to baptism, and was received into the church at the monthly communion service. Thenceforward all

were drawn increasingly into the corporate life of the church.

Samuel Chapman believed in applying youth to a task, and Grenfell was quickly engrossed in the many-sided activities of the church. An outline of his Sunday programme is eloquent testimony, not only to the zeal of this ardent disciple, but to the vigour of Nonconformity about the middle of the last century. The day's engagements opened with a meeting for prayer at seven o'clock. Morning school at half-past nine was followed by church service, which lasted at least a full ninety minutes. Between morning service and an interval for dinner visits were paid to the houses of the district for the distribution of tracts. Another school session was held in the afternoon. After tea, Grenfell and other youths tramped to one or other of what were then hamlets on the outskirts of the city to distribute tracts and to bear their Christian witness in personal conversation and in open-air services. The day's duties were rounded off with an evening church service and prayer meeting. Truly a strenuous training!

About this time the wider movements of the city began to play upon Grenfell's mind and character. In his fifteenth year his education at the Gem Street School, which was associated with the renowned King Edward School, ended. Probably at his own desire, and certainly in line with his natural bent, he served an apprenticeship with a firm of machine and hardware merchants. His business aptitude speedily gained for him the confidence of his employers, and it is certain that, had he remained in business, he would by his diligence and assiduity have obtained a high position in the commercial world. In any case,

his business experience provided him with a knowledge of mechanical construction which stood him in good stead in the sphere of missionary enterprise with which he became identified.

Joseph Hawkes was again his colleague in the workroom, and as they took their daily journeys and mixed with older men, the throb and tumult of the Midland metropolis were incessant in their ears. Birmingham was the headquarters of the local iron, steel and coal trades, and its varied manufactures were familiar the world over. The friends noted with pride the constant expansion of the town, as new suburbs arose to satisfy the needs of its growing population. A variety of forces served to stimulate their civic spirit. Every Birmingham lad could boast of the influence of a galaxy of men remarkable in the scientific, commercial, and political realms who gave lustre to the town with which they were associated. Among them were Dr Priestley, discoverer of oxygen; James Watt, perfecter of the steam-engine, and his friend and partner, Matthew Boulton, who first used gas as an illuminant; John Ash and Sands Cox, founders of the General Hospital and Birmingham School of Medicine; Joseph Sturge, pioneer of the Adult School Movement; Charles Lloyd, friend of Lamb and Coleridge; Thomas Atwood, William Scholefield and George Edwards, leaders of the Reform Movement in the thirties, the last of whom suffered a year's imprisonment in Warwick jail for the offence of presiding at a public meeting.

John Bright, high-souled and silver-tongued, represented the city at Westminster in the sixties and exercised a profound influence on corporate and

individual affairs throughout the country. Men, black with grime, poured into public halls, straight from the factories, for the reward of hearing him speak, every seat being removed from the floors while they stood, in dense masses for hours, under the spell of his oratory. Joseph Chamberlain, then a captain of industry, in the dawn of manhood, was beginning that career as a trenchant reformer of local public affairs which was later to find complete expression in national and imperial statesmanship.

Democracy was stirring. Domestic problems produced clear issues which compelled men to definite positions. The demand for popular education was approaching the climax which resulted in the Act of 1870. Gladstone had pledged his party to the movement for the Disestablishment of the Irish Church, which precipitated a cleavage between the English Church and Nonconformity, and to the extension of the franchise, which provoked an inevitable conflict between property and the people.

Birmingham Nonconformity, guided by such giants as R. W. Dale among the Independents and Charles Vince among the Baptists, exercised a great political influence and was solidly behind these protagonists and movements. In August 1866 a quarter of a million men and youths, with the Mayor of Birmingham at their head, marched to Brookfields, where speeches from six platforms voiced their insistent demand for the right to vote. A year later the city was stirred by revelations regarding child labour in factories and workshops. Thousands under ten years of age were at work. But thousands more were neither at work nor at school. Of eighteen thousand children between ten and fifteen only forty

per cent could read and write. A local Education League was formed, which quickly developed into a national organization, the object of which was the establishment of a system which should secure the education of every child in England and Wales.

Grenfell, alert and open-minded as he was to current thought, could neither remain unaffected by the trends of the day, nor be insensible of the fact that he was "a citizen of no mean city."

Signs of an increasing purpose are to be gathered from the fact that, in his eighteenth year, Grenfell and a few others banded themselves together in a discussion group for the study of theological and ethical problems. The rules they framed indicate that the select circle regarded membership as a high privilege; while the range of subjects which were debated proves that the group took themselves with a full measure of seriousness. Grenfell was selected to introduce the first topic. We may easily picture him from a contemporary photograph as he stood, a short and sturdy figure, with thick, rebellious hair straggling over his broad forehead, and with thoughtful face clean-shaven, save for the then fashionable fringe of side-whiskers, while he expounded his appointed theme, "A few remarks on the Inspiration of the Bible," and his intent audience watched for loopholes through which his position might be penetrated and his arguments destroyed. On one occasion he declaimed at length against certain forms of amusement and delivered himself of this unequivocal pronouncement: "He objected to Theatres, Concert Halls, Circuses, Fairs, Games of Speculation, and all kinds of Gambling. He saw no harm in games of Draughts and Chess, nor in Soirées, Conver-

saziones, Penny Readings, etc., which he thought might be made conducive to good when properly managed." Even this puritanical statement was too lax for some of the members !

True to the general history of such essays of youth, this class exhausted itself and reached an inglorious end within two years. But, under the stress of the laboured preparation which it involved, and in the thrust and parry of debate which ensued, Grenfell's convictions were still further clarified and stabilized, and his power of expression grew more facile and at any rate forceful. He was being carried nearer to his appointed vocation.

The call of the wider world had been heard by Grenfell from his earliest years. The attention of the country had long been attracted towards Africa through the journeys and writings of David Livingstone. Before he passed his tenth birthday, Grenfell had read Livingstone's first book, and had formed an attachment to the Dark Continent which crystallized a few years later into a determination to follow in Livingstone's footsteps.

Birmingham Baptists had definite links with the beginnings of the modern Christian world movement. The publication of William Carey's astonishing *Enquiry* was due to the spirited generosity of Thomas Potts, a Birmingham merchant. The formation of the Baptist Missionary Society was shared in by the " seraphic " Samuel Pearce, a Birmingham minister. A few days after the historic Kettering meeting at which this step was taken, Pearce so moved his own congregation by his description of that event, that the members subscribed seventy pounds towards the new enterprise. This sum—a large gift in those

days—he conveyed in person to Northampton through country infested by highwaymen, and thereby revived the drooping spirits of his friends on the Committee, who were in the deeps of depression that invariably follow the heights of daring advance. Pearce's church was the first to form a Missionary Auxiliary, the forerunner of a Birmingham Baptist Missionary Auxiliary, which, established in 1823, maintains a virile existence in its second century.

The Baptist churches of those days centred their missionary aims in Africa in the Cameroons mission, where Alfred Saker was the head of an undertaking which drew from Livingstone the tribute that it was "the most remarkable on the African coast." Grenfell's knowledge of Saker and admiration of his work were reinforced through a meeting with the veteran when he came to Birmingham in 1869 during a round of deputation visits.

The impending approach of a crisis was accelerated by Grenfell's acceptance, in his twenty-third year, of the editorship of *Mission Work*, the organ of the Birmingham Young Men's Baptist Missionary Society, then lately inaugurated through the visit of the Rev. Goolzar Shah, an Indian missionary. This organization had as its chief object the raising of funds to provide education for the sons of Indian Christians. Grenfell's tenure of office was marked by a fine catholicity of outlook and by the exercise of a satirical and trenchant style. He sought to fill the pages of his magazine with information about any and every kind of Christian effort abroad, on the ground that it would reinforce the localized effort in which the Society was engaged. In pursuit of this object, he perused books and periodicals in great

numbers, culled facts and stories from every available source, and presented the results to his readers. It was inevitable that the close study which the office entailed should confront him with his own relationship to missionary service.

He has recorded that he first desired to be a missionary in his tenth year. This probably arose from a boyish impulse, but nevertheless it was a spark which, fanned by the winds of heaven, so withstood the damping and deadening effect of mundane affairs that it flamed at length in an overmastering compulsion. His definite avowal occurred in his twenty-third year, during a walk with a friend, George Cauldwell, master at the King Edward Grammar School, a mentor of young men at Heneage Street, and particularly of Grenfell. With his world outlook in secular and religious matters, Cauldwell contributed greatly to the making of Grenfell, by correcting any inclinations he might have had towards a narrow pietism and a restricted vision.

Grenfell's missionary decision was communicated to his minister, Benwell Bird, who had succeeded Samuel Chapman. Gentle and benevolent, with a strain of poetry in his preaching, Mr Bird had continued the concern of his predecessor for the young men of his congregation. In order to equip those who desired it, he had established a class for the study of Elementary Greek, which met at half-past six on Monday mornings. Such was the eagerness of its members, of whom Grenfell was one, that they formed the habit of rising at five o'clock in order to complete their preparations.

A feature of the Baptist denomination is that each congregation is, generally speaking, an independent

unit. Most, however, are linked voluntarily into district or county associations, which in turn form a national union. The theological colleges are likewise independent, although each has definite connection, according to its history and locality, with particular groups or areas of churches. Grenfell's church resolved to recommend him for admission to one of them, and after a lapse of several months he was entered, at the age of twenty-four, as a probationer at Bristol Baptist College.

At Bristol, Grenfell found himself under the sober sway of Dr F. W. Gotch, who successively as student, tutor, and principal, had spent most of his life within and about its gloomy walls. His profound scholarship was wedded to an intense affinity with men. His quiet gravity was relieved by a rich humour. Amid his relish for research, which kept him in the van of the advanced thought of the day, he exercised a sane patience with the ignorant and backward. Outside Baptist circles his name is chiefly associated with the revision of the Old Testament, in which he took a prominent part.

Grenfell found difficulty in adjusting himself to college conditions. On arrival he was junior in standing to all the men save one, though he was senior in age to most. His sensitive nature was bruised by the hard knocks which are the lot of freshmen everywhere. The discipline of the routine bore heavily upon his independent spirit. The pleasantries of his fellows irked him, and were regarded as childish interruptions to his serious aim. When the mood was upon him, however, he took his share in ragging and practical joking, and proved that he would permit no liberties. A contemporary

relates that, to his horror, Grenfell walked into his study one night without his spectacles and with one eye missing. His horror was mitigated, though his sympathy was deepened, when Grenfell explained that in his eighteenth year the sight of one of his eyes was destroyed and that since then he had used an artificial one.

Preparation for classes, which came easily to other men, involved laborious toil for Grenfell. He was conscientious in his work, and spared no effort to forge to the front. He carried himself well during his first term, and at its close was admitted as a full student of the college.

Bristol was exactly suited to his bent. On most Saturday afternoons he made his way to the river-side. In a short while he was well acquainted with its quays and docks. He studied the ships in order to discover their ports of origin and destination. He noted their sails and rigging. He examined the cargoes they carried, and fraternized with their crews. Other occasions were devoted to rowing and sailing on the river. He was pre-eminent in athletics, and sometimes indulged in furtive revolver practice within the college precincts.

Long before his brief course at Bristol concluded, every man in the college was vividly aware of the sincerity of his life and of the singleness of his intention. In a reminiscent sketch his biographer, George Hawker, writes :

> The geographical interest was strong in him, and I often saw him poring over maps and dreaming of the mysteries of the dark land whither he was going, with its unknown multitudes of men and women for whom Christ died. When the day came for Grenfell's departure,

the house was strangely moved. Some of us were standing in a little crowd in the dining room when he came in to say "Good-bye." His manner was quick and intense as always. But as man after man shook hands with him, and said the word that came to his lips, each turned away to look at a picture or look out of the window. He didn't want the other fellows to see that his eyes were full of tears.

Thoughts of Africa were never far from his mind. Within a few months of his arrival in Bristol he entered into correspondence with Dr Underhill, Secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society, about the likelihood of his being accepted for the Cameroons mission. The negotiations continued for the greater part of a year. It had become apparent that a junior colleague and eventual successor must be found for Alfred Saker, who was then approaching the conclusion of his African service. By November 1874 Grenfell was appointed.

Saker was in this country on furlough prior to his final period abroad, so the recruit enjoyed the advantage of many meetings with the hero of his boyhood and youth. The prolonged round of personal and public farewells which is rarely relished by any missionary, however hardened, was relieved from tedium for the ardent volunteer by this fellowship with the revered veteran. Among other joys, Grenfell had the pleasure of introducing him to his fellow students, upon whom Saker's almost wraith-like appearance made an unforgettable impression, which was heightened by the passion with which he told his story and by the intimacy of his fireside conversations.

Zest was added to Grenfell's anticipation of missionary life by the gift of a boat, the *Helen Saker*,

for the use of the mission. He describes it to a Birmingham friend with an amount of detail which reveals his delight:

> It is being built on the Clyde, is 40 feet long, 11 feet beam, draws 2 feet of water, accommodation for six men. I've seen the plans. She's quite a nice looking paddle boat. We expect to start for a three months' trip up the river in about a month after we get out. The passage is known to be clear for a hundred miles.

The making of the man in England was finished. The road was clear before him. The Hand beckoned him onward. The immediate steps were plain. Henceforward for thirty years he gave demonstration of the adequacy of his equipment by the amazing achievements of his African adventure.

CHAPTER III

AN AFRICAN APPRENTICESHIP

1875–1877. Age 26–28 years.

THE first missionary footing in Cameroons was gained in 1845 by Saker and by Merrick, a coloured missionary. The scenery here is among the most beautiful on the African shore. Its mountain range is crowned by a giant peak thirteen thousand feet in height, which rises close by the sea. This extinct volcano is covered on its ample lower slopes with luxuriant verdure, while at times its crest is flecked with snow. Of the district Grenfell wrote ecstatically on his arrival:

Cameroons is a glorious place, a charming site for a new Olympus, Arcadia, Valhalla and happy hunting ground all in one. Mountains, plains, forests, lakes and islands are all beyond my powers of description. Birds abound of plumage grave and gay, of good as well as vicious habits, up to the pelican, a flock of which in wondrous order flew over our house a few days ago.

Sir Harry Johnston confirms this early appreciation by describing the landscape around Grenfell's new home as being of

ravishing beauty. The unhealthy mangrove swamps about the Cameroons estuary are in vivid contrast to the mountain scenery which includes some of the grandest tropical forest in the world, with trees rising to two and three hundred feet in height, their trunks garlanded with

parasitic arums and orchids. The present writer has rarely seen a parallel in magnificence to these forests of Ambas Bay. Half-way up the mountain gaudy flowering plants abound. Higher still one enters on open country of grass, everlasting flowers, heather, violets and other Alpine vegetation.

At the time of Saker's arrival the village communities, organized under petty kings, lived in a mutual hostility which was liable to break out into open violence on the slightest provocation. Blood feuds persisted from generation to generation. Every man's hand was against his fellow, and universal fear and suspicion were the consequence. Property was unsafe and life was cheap. The people had added to their native degradation the vices acquired through their rôle of intermediaries between the white men and the tribes of the interior. Their worst passions were directed against Saker, whose ways and methods differed so radically from those of all other men of his colour with whom they were familiar. They watched him with distrustful eyes day and night. They refused him permission to enclose the land which he bought. They stripped his house of furniture, destroyed his food, stole his goats, and rifled his tool-chest. They questioned his motives, and concluded that a man who did not trade in women or ivory or rum, or other of the usual commodities, must have in reserve some magic by which he would ultimately destroy them. Therefore he must be destroyed first. So they sought opportunity to kill him.

An occasion came on the death of one of the kings. His fifty sons quarrelled over the succession, and a furious riot ensued, during which their savage lusts

were directed against the missionary. They surrounded his bungalow, fired his fences, and surged about the building, a yelling mob armed with knives, spears, guns, firebrands and other weapons, while inside the little man awaited their assault, prepared to defend his wife and child with his life. One brave hurled his axe with such force that it split the door into three pieces. But the immediate danger passed, for there was something awesome about this man who faced them so unflinchingly that they were subdued and discomfited. Another time they planned to kill and eat him. They completed their scheme up to the point of surrounding him, only to decide after feeling his body that there was so little flesh on his bones that it was not worth the trouble.

The first Sunday after his settlement Saker conducted a service in one of the towns, which was attended by the king and his chief men, a listless and uncomprehending congregation. Later in the day another service was held in a neighbouring town, where the king and his chieftains gathered about him, too sodden with the white man's rum to give any attention. Yet, in spite of so unpromising a beginning, next morning he arranged the first session of his school with a dozen little savages as scholars, and wrote afterwards in his diary: "I hope soon to build a schoolroom sufficiently large for four hundred children."

The Dualla people of Cameroons were, however, shrewd enough to recognize in the advent of the missionaries the prospect of tangible benefits for themselves, as well as the advantages of education for their children, though for years they maintained

an unabated antagonism towards religious instruction, lest it should interfere with their lucrative traffic in slaves or uproot their cherished tribal customs.

When Grenfell arrived in Cameroons in 1875, a generation later, he found a community changed profoundly from the state of early days. Saker had become a veritable father in God to these children of darkness. Under his supervision the people had learnt to make bricks and to build substantial houses in place of ugly huts. They had mastered the cultivation of the ground and the rotation of crops, so that an end might be put to the famines which occurred with appalling frequency. They had responded to the introduction of the cultivation of cotton and of the sugar cane, which had resulted in a better standard of life, and had conferred a nobler dignity on manhood by opening out honourable avenues of trade. A persecuted flock from Fernando Po, a Spanish island twenty miles off the coast, had settled on the mainland at Victoria, where an experiment in town planning was made before it became a science in Europe, in the hope that this garden city might become a "garden of the Lord," and the starting-point for a highway of God into the interior.

The material progress of the people had been paralleled by a mental and moral awakening. A great church had arisen in their midst. Its ranks included some of the very men who, at the onset, had tried to thwart Saker's efforts and had plotted to destroy his life. He had won them to a rich gentleness and grace by his patient love. These Christians read from their own Bibles, placed within their reach as the fruit of nearly twenty years of untiring translation. They sang from their own native hymn-books.

Their children possessed their own reading books, while the schools were well supplied with lesson primers. In the creation of this literature, Saker had taken a predominant part. At one period he had fashioned his own printing press, formed the moulds from old lead, and cast types, and with the help of his colleagues and converts had printed his sheets and published his books! He was preacher and peacemaker, doctor and teacher, in fact all things to all men, that perchance some of these savages might become saints.

No wonder he was a hero to Grenfell, or that the record of the Cameroons mission excited a general admiration which is typified in this judgment of Winwood Reade, the explorer of much of West Africa:

> It is really marvellous to mark the changes that have taken place in the natives in a few years only. Old sanguinary customs have to a large extent been abolished; witchcraft hides itself in the forest. The fetish superstition of the people is derided by old and young, and well-built houses are springing up on every hand. From actual cannibals many have become honest, intelligent, well-skilled artisans. An elementary literature has been established, and the whole Bible translated into their tongue, hitherto an unwritten one. There must surely be something abnormal about this.

Grenfell was caught up from the outset into the even flow of the varied duties of a well-organized mission. As English was in general use, he was able, without delay, to share in the routine of the school. He was entrusted with the young men who were being trained as teachers or artisans, and took his turn in teaching the younger boys, whose uniform

dullness and idleness made heavy inroads upon his store of patience. He conducted the daily preaching services in common with his colleagues. As soon as the natives learnt that he possessed a stock of drugs, his elementary knowledge of medicines was in widespread demand. Most of the cases required but simple attention, and the lack of symptoms in many roused his suspicions and resulted in the prescription of harmless pills. One man, however, came to him with a three-inch splinter broken in his foot. The removal of the more deeply rooted portion involved a surgical operation. The patient's yell as he felt the knife was deafening, but the climax was reached when the floor gave way, and the patient and the school-bench to which his leg was fixed were hurled to the earth beneath.

The work was so stabilized that Grenfell writes:

> The mission runs itself in the missionary's absence, the native pastors and the teachers officiating in everything except the young men's school for an hour and a half every day. When the missionary goes away, the chief of the young men go with him to see to the boat, and to perform other tasks.

He was junior colleague to a senior who had the mission as his monument, and who was well content with the remarkable evolution that had produced its present position. Saker's natural satisfaction was in the progress of the past rather than in the prospects of the future. His concern was with the conservation of his gains rather than with the acquisition of additional spoils. His anticipation was directed towards his retirement. As he looked around, he was satisfied to sing his *Nunc Dimittis.*

The mission was confined to three central stations in a severely restricted coastal region, and apparently few efforts had been made, and few were contemplated, to enlarge its salient or to break through with a view to extending its sphere of operations. On Grenfell's first short journey inland he met, at the very first halting-place, a crowd of village women, most of whom had never seen a white man before, and a mob of children who fled panic-stricken on his approach.

At the same time the progress of the mission was hampered, and to some extent neutralized, by the rooted antipathies of the various chiefs, who worked off their personal grudges at the expense of the missionaries, and by the deleterious influence of the white traders, whose vices ran riot among the natives and sapped their vitality.

These conditions combined to strengthen Grenfell's resolve to advance inland at the earliest moment, where equal exertions might, without the handicap of adverse forces, attain a greater measure of success. He regarded the present sphere as adequately occupied, and determined to prospect in the rich untapped areas beyond. The coast stations could still be used as a necessary base from which to direct and conduct operations up-country. He laid his conclusions before members of the Home Committee, and reinforced his case by rehearsing interviews he had had with the senior missionary of the Basle Mission and by pointing to the similar experiences of the Livingstonia Mission. And ever present in his mind was the example of his hero, David Livingstone.

With the object of finding the best route inland, he devoted a considerable part of his three years in

Cameroons to the exploration of the river system. His first journey in 1875 was in the nature of an experiment. It extended over four days, and was made in a dug-out canoe, whose scanty accommodation provided a severe introduction to the discomforts and difficulties of pioneering. He suffered acutely from the attentions of mosquitoes, sand-flies and lizards by day, and from the inconveniences of African huts by night. His journal contains this rueful comment: "I have not yet discovered 'Afric's sunny fountains!' Afric's decomposed-organic-matter-in-suspension-laden streams abound."

This itinerary included the careful negotiation of four tributaries which merge into the main stream at the same point. It gave him his initial experience of handling a native crew, and his first opportunities of preaching to untouched heathenism. He also passed through the fearsome sensation of his first tropical thunderstorm, in which the lightning was continuous from all points of the compass, and the deluge terrific. Throughout the trip he was never more than thirty miles away from the mission station.

A month later he took a second journey up another tributary, where he met a finer type of native than at the coast, and found an eagerness to hear his message. He notes in his diary that "the appearance of the people is much superior to the popular notion at home. Darwin must not come to Cameroons or its tributaries for his 'missing link'!" These Abo people were skilled craftsmen in iron, steel and wood. They fashioned swords, spears, axes, hoes, chisels, wooden stools and other articles of trade and furniture. Their country was the centre of the palm-wine production, and as Grenfell

passed along in his dug-out he watched, with the interest of a newcomer, the skill with which the collectors pulled themselves up the long, slender trees by means of bands tied around themselves and the trunks, made their deft incisions at the junction of the flowers and stems, and extracted the juice for brewing. Grenfell's canoe was often in the van of an escort of other boats paddled by natives who marvelled at this strange-looking white man. The white man on his part admired and enjoyed the rhythmic movements of the oarsmen as, to the accompaniment of an official bard, a hundred bodies swayed and pulled in perfect unison, and a hundred paddles gleamed and glistened in the sun as they swung in simultaneous circles at each stroke.

Owing to the ravages of the slave trade, the towns were difficult of access. One was isolated by a broad barrier of water. Others were perched on the summits of hills, and were approached only by single-file paths which consisted of steps, and, as Grenfell said, " a path must be very steep to compel Africans to resort to steps." In more than one town, however, he was urged by the chief to take boys back with him that they might be educated at the mission. Much as he desired to respond, he was compelled to refuse, though he anticipated being able to accede in the future, for he saw in these lads potential bearers of the knowledge of Christ to their own people.

These two exploratory ventures whetted Grenfell's appetite for more ambitious advances. Before this could be satisfied, he was forced, at the end of 1875, to take short furlough in England, partly to recuperate from the effects of fever, and also that he might

take over charge of the work in Cameroons before Saker's final departure in the following autumn. During this furlough his marriage to Mary Hawkes was celebrated on February 11th, 1876, in Heneage Street Church, Birmingham.

He reached Cameroons once more in May. Additional burdens were thrust upon him during the summer, as, owing to the sudden death of a fellow-missionary, he was obliged to assume the oversight of two other stations besides his own. When Saker left just afterwards, the only other missionary remaining with Grenfell was Joseph Jackson Fuller, the sole surviving member of the original emigrant contingent which came from Jamaica and eventually settled in Cameroons.

These administrative responsibilities were outweighed by a tragic domestic sorrow which shattered his cherished dreams of united service. His wife, who had suffered from repeated attacks of fever during her residence in Cameroons, developed dysentery in December, which induced premature birth of a child, attended by complications from which she never recovered. The year which had commenced in joy closed in sorrow, and the bereaved husband was left alone, the only white individual in the mission.

To his relief, in more senses than one, a fresh colleague, Thomas J. Comber, arrived shortly afterwards. The pair were happily matched. Comber shared Grenfell's devotion and enthusiasm. He was even more ambitious for advance than the other, and eventually became his companion in the opening-up of the Congo region. His pre-eminent qualities earned for him the native sobriquet of which a free

translation is "the man who could not be still." He will appear again and again in these pages.

Much of the time that Grenfell was now able to snatch from normal station duties was given to the reconstruction of the mission sawmill. The view of Grenfell engaged in this task is poles removed from the conventional missionary picture. He wears a pink shirt, sail-cloth trousers, and an old helmet in dry weather, or a sou'wester in wet. Boots are needed, not to keep the feet dry, but to protect the soles from the pebbly beach, and one of the pair which he wears is insecurely buttoned and the other is laced with bush grass. He takes his turn at the forge and with the engine, and writes aptly to a fellow-student:

> There is small relation betwixt the present George Grenfell and the old one you knew: not much like an "eminent divine," I can assure you. It's rough sort of work but it suits me very well. I don't write my sermons now. One has to talk very plainly and very simply, and give it in small doses and hit hard to reach these folk. A plainness that would not be tolerated at home is the best and only style suitable to these thick-skinned sons of Ham.

Throughout 1877 also Grenfell and Comber both seized every opportunity to reach the interior by exploring the mountain ranges and the river system. Grenfell in particular made thorough and exhaustive survey of the waterways, using sometimes steam launches belonging to British and German trading firms, and on other occasions the *Helen Saker*, the mission steamer. He traversed every stream, with one exception, prospecting as far as his boat could go, and found that some made admirable highways along which lines of advance could be projected.

His greatest distinction was the discovery and charting of the lower reaches of the Edea River, by far the longest and most important of the Cameroons system. He also surveyed extensive portions of the southern slopes of the Cameroons mountain, and scaled its highest summit. He comments on these journeys that "I have been so far beyond where the coast people would think of going that we cannot expect guides from them. In my last two journeys the paths were so indistinct in many places that I had to blaze the trees to mark our route and to guide us coming back."

In most districts visited he was the first white man the people had ever seen. Often they were so timid that the population fled before him. In others, the riverine peoples were reluctant to facilitate his communication with the tribes beyond. All the time, the coast natives hampered his exertions, as they saw in his progress the possibility of an end to their profitable position as commercial middlemen between the trading firms and the tribes behind them.

The whole of these trips were viewed by Grenfell as necessary preliminaries to much more extensive and complete attempts to be made subsequently, and, with Comber, he planned for a far deeper penetration in the following year.

By this time, impending political changes began to cast their shadows over the country. The petty kings were tiring of the constant bickerings and bloodshed, which made existence precarious and kept their subjects in turmoil. They sought for the protection of a Power that would hold local passions in leash, and made frequent overtures to British representatives to annex the country. These

approaches were ignored. British statesmen held, in accordance with a Parliamentary minute adopted in 1865,[1] that the Empire was already sufficiently cumbersome, without the addition of further territory in Africa. When the scramble for the prizes of the continent commenced in the next decade, Cameroons fell into the lap of another Power, with staggering results for the Baptist missionaries.

Long before this, however, other forces were brought into operation which effected a radical alteration in the current of Grenfell's life, and turned him from Cameroons to Congo.

[1] This minute reads: "All further extension of territory, or assumption of government, or new treaty offering any protection to native tribes was inexpedient."

CHAPTER IV

GRENFELL'S DREAM

1877–1878. Age 28–29 years.

VISCOUNT GREY has used lately an expressive phrase —"the mind of the event." This he employs to urge the need of a knowledge of the circumstances surrounding any new undertaking or occurrence, the causes which operate to bring it about, and the men who are behind the scenes, as well as those who are in the forefront, if a just appreciation of its unfolding and outworking, and the part played by its principals, is to be gained. This is emphatically true in regard to the Congo mission, and the place occupied by Grenfell in its establishment.

The Missionary Herald contained for the first time, in September 1877, the spacious headline—"Africa for Christ"—that, for the next few years, was to govern the growth of the Baptist Missionary Society. In this phrase were crystallized the prayers of thousands of its readers; its intention provided a channel for the expression of their hopes and desires; its fulfilment required and received their consecrated service and sacrifice.

With the opening of the second half of the nineteenth century a new era dawned for Central Africa, as an outcome of the discoveries of such explorers as Grant, Schweinforth, Cameron, and more especially of Livingstone. Their revelation of the

immense natural resources of the continent aroused a determination to secure these for the enrichment of the white man. All Europe turned its hungry gaze upon this astonishing prize. Germany, France, Belgium, Italy, Portugal, and Great Britain began that preliminary play for position which was to win for each a greater or lesser share of the spoils.

Many people, however, were burdened with a sense of honour towards this new Africa. The hideous iniquities of the slave trade, as practised for four hundred years by Christian nations, the ravages of the white man's liquor, the wanton destruction of life, and the callous disregard of the black man's rights, had agitated their minds until they were stung into action that was in the nature of reparation and reconciliation.

The passionate appeals of Livingstone fell upon their responsive ears. His call for "bold courage" to reach the "real heathen" in the heart of the continent was eagerly taken up and several new Christian missions, or expansions of existing missions, were founded. The Scottish Free Church pushed ahead to the southern end of Lake Nyassa, and the Universities' Mission established itself at the northern end. The Church Missionary Society in dramatic conditions entered upon its Uganda Mission, and the London Missionary Society accepted Lake Tanganyika as its sphere of operations. The Baptist Society naturally desired to share in the advance, and, while Grenfell and Comber were making their tentative moves from Cameroons, the Committee at home were studying maps, instituting enquiries, sifting evidence, and seeking guidance as to the next steps.

Two courses lay before them. The first and

natural one was to build upon the sure foundations of the Cameroons mission, and to throw a line of stations far inland towards the centre of the continent. The second was to accept the hazard of a new entry into Africa by way of the mouth of the Congo, which the Committee were convinced had some mysterious connection with the distant waters of the Lualaba, on the bank of which Livingstone had yielded up his life. While they deliberated, light came in the form of a letter from one of the strangest figures in missionary history—Robert Arthington.

Born to wealth, Arthington dedicated himself to poverty. In early manhood he built a large house on the outskirts of Leeds and lived there almost alone until old age. His days and nights were spent in one room, while the rest of the house was permitted to fall into gradual ruin, through neglect and decay. That single room was devoid of furniture, save for a few pieces of the plainest description, upon which the dust of years was allowed to accumulate. No sun relieved its gloom by day. A candle served to lighten the darkness of night. The cold of the winter months was endured with the aid of a small cinder fire. Sleep was sought in an easy chair, and was broken by periods of acute rheumatism, induced by the damp influences of the empty house. The food was of the plainest description. Arthington's personal appearance matched his environment. His rare passages through the streets aroused pity or derision, according to the temperament of those who observed him.

He repelled overtures of friendship from all save a favoured few. "Visitors to his house had to

knock with their knuckles at the front door, the bell being broken; after waiting some time, they would hear a voice from within enquiring who was there. Many of those who came were simply told to go away; with some he conversed through the partially opened door, the chain meanwhile being kept fastened; and a few were admitted into the outer porch where the master of the house kept his coals, Robert Arthington standing, but bringing a chair for his friend. It was only on rare occasions and to intimate friends that the privilege was accorded to enter the room. . . . He was, by his own confession, outwardly a miserable man."

Though a recluse, Arthington was well read. He kept himself informed about the movements of men. His dilapidated house was in reality an observatory, from which its owner surveyed the world. It was a receiving station in which the needs of humanity became vocal to his listening ears. He longed for the advent of Christ, which he believed was delayed only until His gospel was preached to all men. Therefore he felt compelled to fetter himself in order to free his wealth for the proclamation of the message. His conduct was modelled on a sentence in a missionary's letter which was discovered among his private papers: "Were I in England again, I would gladly live in one room, make the floor my bed, a box my chair, and another my table, rather than that the heathen should perish for lack of knowledge of Christ."

In undergraduate days at Cambridge Arthington had laid the foundations of a culture to which he added an extensive and varied knowledge. In this he was in the true succession of William Carey. He

matched Carey's famous brown paper map with his accumulated sheets of information about places and peoples far and near. Above all, he watched the course of events in Africa with the mind of a man who sees in every advance an opening for the Kingdom of God. He followed the journeys of the explorers and corresponded with them, so that he might check his conclusions and elicit further information from them.

The momentous letter from Arthington to the Baptist Missionary Society was dated May 14th, 1877. It begins by urging that the time is favourable to a more energetic missionary crusade. This is followed by a statement of his special interest in Congo, which includes some details of its history and of the travels of Livingstone and Grandy in the continent. He quotes the latter as saying:

"The King of Congo, hearing I held service on Sundays, attended twice, remained the whole time, and showed much attention. He afterwards told me he came from motives of curiosity the first time, as he had been told we knew nothing about religion, but now that he saw us reading from books and praying and singing, he was convinced ours was a good religion. The old king strongly expressed his hopes to me that some English would come to them." Arthington then goes on:

It is, therefore, a great satisfaction and a high and sacred pleasure to me to offer one thousand pounds, if the Baptist Missionary Society will undertake at once to visit these benighted, interesting people with the blessed light of the Gospel, teach them to read and write, and give them in imperishable letters the words of eternal truth. By and by, possibly, we may be able to extend

the mission eastwards on the Congo, at a point above the rapids.

But, however that may be, I hope that soon we shall have a steamer on the Congo, if it should be found requisite, and carry the Gospel eastwards, and south and north of the river, as the way may open, as far as Nyangwe.

Mr Arthington's offer impelled the Committee to return with renewed zest to the subject of expansion in Africa, and at their next meeting they resolved to lay the project before the churches.

While these events were taking place at home, news was received of Stanley's appearance on the West African coast. Conjectures about the course of the Congo became certainties. Speculations concerning the population of its basin gave place to reliable information upon almost countless tribes, many of whom were well disposed and easily accessible. What further argument or evidence in favour of the Congo mission could be needed?

The announcement of the proposals excited an extraordinary interest and elicited a spirited response among the churches. Donations came from rich and poor alike. A merchant prince in Bristol sent five hundred pounds. A London seamstress gave ten shillings from her slender purse. A Staffordshire collier enclosed five pounds with a letter, in which he revealed that in the depths of the earth he had often pored over the map of Africa with the aid of his Davy lamp and had prayed that the Gospel might be taken to Congo. Money flowed in with a volume and in a variety of ways that assured the leaders that the rank and file were behind them.

No rare offers of service, such as came from Alexander Mackay, Shergold Smith, C. T. Wilson

and others for the Church Missionary Society's Uganda Mission, were received in immediate response to this appeal, though many were made later. Apparently the Committee had made up their minds that the fit men were available already in Africa, and therefore without delay they invited Grenfell and Comber to form the prospecting expedition.

The two men were evidently expecting a call of this kind, and eagerly awaited the arrival of the infrequent mails to Cameroons. When the all-important letter reached them, both were on the beach to welcome it. As soon as its purport was grasped, Comber expressed his feelings by tossing his hat into the air and jumping and shouting like an overwrought boy. The dream of months was about to be realized. The exploit which had burdened their conversations and prayers was imminent. They were to exchange their experiments on the comparatively small streams of Cameroons for an enterprise that must have seemed almost illimitable in its magnitude. They were to form the vanguard of an army yet to be created that was to enter equatorial Africa from the west and claim it for the cause to which they had consecrated their powers. They were to outstrip Stanley's ambition to "prepare for a day when the land should be redeemed from wildness, the industry and energy of the natives stimulated, and the countries round about permeated with the nobler ethics of a higher humanity."

The letter from home was the signal for which they had been waiting, and therefore there was no need for delay. The same evening both men indited their acceptance, and expressed their impatience to receive detailed instructions concerning the course

they were to pursue. It chanced, a few days later, that a Congo-bound ship called in at Cameroons. What could be more in keeping with the fitness of things than for these two men, whose present work was virtually finished, to avail themselves of this timely appearance to travel with her, and to shape their preliminary arrangements on the spot? The captain was willing to take them, and they went. The ship set southwards at the rate of ninety miles a day, an unreasonably tedious pace to these ardent spirits. On the eighth day out they saw, for the first time, a long narrow spit of land, laved by the salt Atlantic water on the one side and on the other by the swift, fresh river current. Here stands Banana, then a trading settlement with three houses—Dutch, French, and Portuguese.

The eagerness with which Grenfell and Comber disembarked was tempered by the trepidation with which they approached the settlement. Protestant missionaries were something unknown in that quarter and they bore no letters of introduction. Their ignorance of Dutch and Portuguese was complete, while their knowledge of French was restricted to a few conventional sentences. Grenfell's delight on being hailed by a familiar voice, as he made his presence known in that unfamiliar spot, may be imagined. An English doctor, whom he had befriended in Cameroons, was actually medical officer to the Dutch house, and he joyfully introduced Grenfell to his chief. The hand of Providence was again evident. This Dutch agent immediately offered a small steamer, the *Zaire*, for Grenfell's use. In this vessel the missionaries voyaged for three memorable days up the Congo estuary, against a

current at times so strong that the boat could scarcely make headway.

Their goal was Musuka, a settlement eighty miles from the mouth, from which ran the overland route to San Salvador. The Dutch commercial house had established a second factory here, and its manager courteously granted facilities to the missionaries for storing their goods. Valuable information was obtained about carriers, food supplies and barter goods. Grenfell gazed with longing eyes more than once during this reconnaissance along the path that led away into the jungle towards San Salvador, and had the weather conditions proved propitious, Comber and he would undoubtedly have hazarded the journey thither. The rainy season was setting in, however, and they were dissuaded. They were compelled to content themselves with sending a letter of introduction to the king, Dom Pedro the Fifth. They returned to Cameroons highly elated, assured that on their next appearance their task would be eased by the goodwill of the friends they had won.

The four months which elapsed ere they again set their faces Congo-wards were occupied with the essential arrangements for the continuance of the mission they were about to relinquish, and with the extensive preparations for the work they were about to assume. They bade farewell to Cameroons on June 28th, 1878.

The Baptist Missionary Society continued quietly in Cameroons until the Germans took possession in 1884, after which event their hold became increasingly precarious, until, three years later, they were somewhat ruthlessly removed by the authorities.

CHAPTER V

STAKING THE CLAIM

1878–1882. Age 29–33 years.

AT half-past eight on the morning of July 30th, 1878, Grenfell and Comber, accompanied by a caravan of thirty-five carriers, swung out in single file from Musuka. They were soon lost to view as their path entered the thick bush grass, fifteen feet tall, for the opening stage of their eight days' journey south-eastwards to San Salvador.

Three weeks of exacting preparation lay behind that orderly procession. It was essential to accumulate at Musuka everything needed for an extensive tour through inhospitable country. Besides ample camp equipment and food supplies, ten thousand yards of cloth and an assortment of beads, pocket-knives and other attractive knick-knacks were obtained to pay the wages of the carriers, to secure a right of way through the intervening towns and villages, and to serve as presents to the King of Congo.

On their arrival at Musuka, the missionaries had dispatched a messenger to the king to inform him of their return to his country, and to ask him to send fifty carriers to convey them and their supplies to his capital. The days passed without response, until, weary of the delay, it was resolved to wait no longer. With a representative of the Dutch trading

firm as intermediary, local Congolese carriers were engaged. These were reinforced by eight men and boys who had accompanied Grenfell and Comber from Cameroons, one among them being a Portuguese interpreter. The carriers proved themselves masters of the art of evasion. From before dawn on the morning of departure until the moment when everything was ready, the missionaries were alternately amused and annoyed by the skill with which the strongest men strove to shoulder the smallest loads. As it was, through the absence of the expected assistance from San Salvador, a substantial part of the stores had to be left behind.

By the end of the first day, thirteen miles had been covered. The thin, extended procession of men, with their loads fixed in cradle-shaped baskets, had straggled up hills, and had struggled through valleys, where the paths were nearly blocked by grass from eight to ten feet in height. Their march was interrupted by a brief rest period in the heat of the day, and now, with the approach of night, a halt was called and the camp was made. After the evening meal, the men huddled around the fire in the chill darkness, while the missionaries retired to their tent, but not, however, to immediate rest. The silence of the night was broken as their dark brown escort, in accordance with a custom of antiquity, interspersed their traditional songs with stories, folk-lore and riddles, and with frank comments on the behaviour and appearance of their masters, of which, however, the latter were happily ignorant.

The second day's stage commenced soon after dawn. Its progress, and that of the following days, was marked by no thrilling adventure or serious mishap.

The worst experiences were associated with trudging through thick swamps, fording or swimming streams, hacking a way through grass and forest, climbing steep hills on the one side and slithering down on the other. At intervals they met caravans of traders bearing ivory and rubber to the coast. Always these gazed with unabashed curiosity at the phenomenon of two white men, and the more daring visited them in their tent and plied them with questions about themselves and the country from which they had come. About midway on their course the anticipated party of carriers from the King of Congo came up, and was speeded to the river to fetch the remainder of the stores.

On the eighth day the road once more began to ascend for the final approach to the capital. The caravan made a last stoppage prior to its entry. The carriers performed the careful ablutions customary to such occasions and arrayed themselves in their finery, while the coast men donned clean shirts as a sign that a visit of moment was in front of them. As the missionaries, an unostentatious embassy, climbed towards their goal, their thoughts must have turned to other Christian expeditions which, through the long centuries, had centred upon the same objective, inspired by the same pure ambition to plant the Cross in Congo and to claim its peoples for their Christ. They would picture the first intrepid company of robed friars who, three hundred years before, had forsaken for ever their homes in Europe and won their toilsome way from the west coast, chanting their Latin hymns and orisons, and accompanied by the pomp and circumstance of military escort, to establish their faith in this land. They would recall

the successive waves of consecrated Italian Capuchins, French Jesuits, and Flemish Franciscans who, for over two hundred years afterwards, until the last of their number finally withdrew, had converged on this same country, after having renounced the glittering prizes of this world in order that they might share with its neglected peoples such riches of heaven as they possessed. And as Grenfell and Comber came near the confines of the capital, the fire of their devotion flamed afresh with the determination that a new and finer church should arise from the ruins of its cathedral, and that, amid its forests, Christian hymns of praise should echo once again, this time in a tongue that the people could understand.

San Salvador, whose name indicates its intimate Portuguese associations, lay before them on a plateau two and a quarter miles in length and about a mile in breadth, its sides descending abruptly into valleys two hundred feet below. The town consisted of about two hundred huts, built of grass and sticks, and contained a population of a thousand. The ruins of a wall, fifteen feet high and two feet thick, which surrounded it, gave colour to its antiquity and importance.

The king's houses and courtyard stood upon the outskirts. Two of his three dwelling-places, constructed of stone and roofed with thatch, had been begun by the Portuguese and left unfinished. The whole was approached by means of a curious and complicated labyrinth of fences, which, while too flimsy to resist combined attack, was arranged to make individual progress difficult and to add to the dignity and importance of his majesty. The king awaited the

arrival of Grenfell and Comber in the courtyard outside his largest house. He was about five feet six inches in height, and was enormously stout and bloated. His throne was a chair placed upon an old carpet. His robes consisted of a jersey of many hues, a mantle of scarlet cloth, and a fine cocked hat. His breast was adorned by a crucifix.

The universal fear with which the king was regarded was shown by the cringing bearing of his subjects when in his presence. Most of those who interviewed him prostrated themselves at his feet, rubbed dust on their foreheads, and clapped their hands long and vigorously. Grenfell and Comber doffed their hats as they drew near, presented their gifts of cloth and knives, shook hands with him and enquired after his welfare. The king's response was cordial. He bade them be seated, and engaged in a protracted conversation concerning their country and the purpose of their visit. He provided a hut for their use, presented them with food, and, greatest boon of all from his standpoint, offered to supply them with wives! More welcome to the missionaries was his expressed desire that they should settle in the district, with a promise of facilities for their work in the town and surrounding villages, and arrangements for the children to attend the school.

Evidences of the great hold that Roman Catholicism once enjoyed surrounded them on every hand. Numerous large crucifixes and images of saints were kept in the royal compound. These were, however, debased from their original high office to the level of heathen fetishes. In periods of drought they were sometimes brought out and paraded round the town. Others were included among the insignia of

the petty chiefs, and yet more were added to the scanty furniture of the native huts.

One of the features of San Salvador was the ruins of the once extensive cathedral, built of hæmatite (iron-ore) and slabs of limestone. Its glory had long since departed. The west front had fallen and the roof had disappeared. The other walls were in a fair state of preservation, more particularly the chancel arch, which possessed a fine span of large dressed stones. The high altar was overgrown with small ferns, but otherwise was well-conditioned, as also were the lady chapel, on the north side of the nave, and the vestry, on the south of the chancel. Three or four hundred yards distant on the western side the extensive convent lay in ruins, and here and there in the dense jungle heaps of stones marked what were once the sites of ancient buildings. The whole was a melancholy memorial, not alone of the great power of this magnificent old church, but of a tragic failure to preach the gospel in the language of the people, to establish an indigenous church, and to supply a permanent written message.

Grenfell and Comber discovered, to their dismay, that they had been forestalled at San Salvador by a Roman Catholic father, who was actually with the king on their arrival. They imagined in this unexpected circumstance a check to their plans. Happily their fear was groundless, but it was one factor which led them temporarily to leave the place.

The other reason was of greater moment. The attainment of San Salvador was only the initial stage in the accomplishment of their purpose to reach the Upper Congo. They were now assured,

by the friendliness of Dom Pedro, that in any advance they might make their line of communication with the coast would remain open. Their immediate business was to press onwards. The hesitation of the king to permit them to proceed was removed by their promise of an early return. In order to expedite their progress he provided them with carriers and sped them on their way to the north-east.

This second journey proved to be more arduous and adventurous than the first. At the end of the first day, the San Salvador carriers, through fear of entering the territory of another chief, struck and returned home. Fortunately, fresh carriers were engaged without difficulty. The path was crossed by numerous streams. Over one of these a bridge, which was a triumph of native skill and ingenuity, had been thrown. It was made of the tough creepers which festooned the trees. These were tied together and interlaced, and fastened to trees on either side, and there was a hand-rail of the same fibre. The bridge itself was reached by a short flight of steps. With a span of eighty feet and a width of two and a half feet, the structure swayed ominously beneath the travellers.

Grenfell and Comber were carried across other streams on the shoulders of the carriers. Occasionally a tree was felled and thrown across to form a temporary bridge. A donkey which accompanied the caravan as a valuable though a somewhat truculent beast of burden, presented a peculiar problem when the banks were precipitous. In such situations the only course was to make a cutting along which he could be taken to or from the water.

The Makuta country, whither Grenfell and Comber now travelled, was reached at the end of four days. Its largest town was Tungwa, which, from the brow of the hill above it, impressed the travellers as being the neatest and prettiest African town they had met with. Its position within the bend of an even flowing river, whose banks were twenty feet apart, showed its founders to be men with an appreciation of natural means of protection. Its land boundaries, formed by stout fences made of a tree which had white and purple flowers, ensured immunity from sudden attack. Its ordered streets and squares spoke of a strong government and a disciplined people.

The caravan paused while couriers went ahead to apprise the chief of its presence, and to seek permission to pass through his territory. Presently, without undue delay, a train of about a hundred people was seen to be ascending the hill to act as an escort, and as the visitors made their way downwards, a continuous roll of drums heralded their welcome.

Their reception at Tungwa was of a far more imposing order than at San Salvador. Almost the entire population assembled to greet them. As they proceeded to the rest house, hundreds of men, women and children thronged their path, and clustered about the building, staring with unreserved intensity and amazement at these extraordinary new arrivals. In particular, one old woman of striking appearance dogged their movements and shadowed their actions throughout their sojourn in the place. Groups of frank, open-faced boys, with finely shaped heads and lustrous eyes, added colour to the conclusion already formed by the missionaries

that the Makuta people were of a higher intelligence than those of San Salvador, and that their town would make a more effective base for the contemplated missionary operations.

In a short time the distant sound of bugles and drums indicated that some ceremony was in progress. As the noise drew nearer, the people arranged themselves in an avenue, at the far end of which a procession presently appeared. The principal figure was a man of commanding presence attired in a red and black plaid wound about his body and thrown over his shoulder, and a military coat and cocked hat. Over his head an attendant held an umbrella, to shield him from the sun. He was the son of the chief. When within speaking distance of Grenfell and Comber, he doffed his hat, bowed and shook hands, and intimated that he was there to conduct them to his father. They found the latter seated on a bamboo chair, garbed in similar array to that of his son. The court orchestra, composed of several big drums, six cornets and bugles and seven ivory horns, crashed out a tumultuous and inharmonious welcome which overwhelmed all attempts at conversation. The missionaries soon retired to their tent, to be followed at a dignified distance by the chief and his son.

Extraordinary difficulties were encountered in getting the chief to comprehend the mission that had brought them before his august presence. Traders who bartered for ivory and rubber he appreciated. White men who trafficked in slaves he knew, to his cost. But men who apparently desired none of these things, but only to teach black men what was good, and who, moreover, were not fugitive visitants, but prospective permanent additions to his kingdom,

were something entirely beyond his ken. It was in vain that, for four days, Grenfell and Comber alternately entreated and expostulated, cajoled, and contested, for the right to establish in Makuta a base for the intended mission. Obviously brave when confronted with visible danger, this chief and his subjects dwelt under the black shade of fear of the unknown. Permission for these strangers to settle among them would certainly bring drought, famine and pestilence, and far more dreadful disasters upon them. Calamity among neighbouring tribes would inevitably be laid at the door of the Makutas for harbouring the white men, to whose machinations it would be attributed, and due vengeance would be wreaked upon them. The missionaries were regarded by these and other Congolese as brethren to those hated white men who had inflicted the countless hideous horrors of the slave-trade upon them, and therefore their naïve request to live in the country must of necessity cover some sinister motive! Little wonder that the petition was refused.

Ill-fortune likewise attended their overtures for freedom to advance above Makuta to Stanley Pool. The king was adamant. He had willingly welcomed them this once, but he wanted neither to see them again nor to facilitate in any way the quest on which they were engaged.

They had no alternative but reluctantly to retrace their steps to San Salvador. Disappointed and baffled though they were, they refused to recognize defeat. This unexpected eclipse of their hopes must only be temporary. The only way they knew to the upper river must somehow be opened. Makuta should see them again and again until its chief

capitulated before their importunity. Contrary to their original intention, San Salvador must now be selected as the immediate base of operations, and the first link in the prospective line of attack on Stanley Pool. It must be the scene of local missionary operations, notwithstanding the fact that Roman Catholic priests were now in possession and would compete with them for the ear of the people.

Dom Pedro received them on their return with even more marked approval than on the former occasion, and readily seconded the realization of their proposals for the selection of his capital as a permanent station. Secure in the assurance of this further support, and with the immediate obligations of their expedition completed, Comber determined to return to England to place his report before the Committee and to appeal for strong reinforcements, while Grenfell returned to Cameroons. Here he finally linked himself to the continent of his choice by marrying an African bride, Rose Patience Edgerley. He resumed his explorations and for a while engaged in business, but at the end of two years was happily able to rejoin the Congo mission.

Events had moved rapidly in his absence. By the close of 1880 Comber, with one or other of his three colleagues, had made no less than twelve unsuccessful attempts to disarm the hostility of the Makuta people and to gain their co-operation in blazing a trail to the upper river. On the last occasion their anger found expression in armed violence. Comber was dangerously wounded and barely escaped with his life. But even this rude rebuff could not stop him. He was engrossed in preparations for yet another effort when the news reached him that two

other missionaries—Bentley and Crudgington—had broken through on the north bank of the river and had sighted Stanley Pool in February 1881.

Fired now by the certainty that their objective was attainable, the pioneers threw out new experimental lines of communication. The doggedness they displayed through months of close grips with the problems of their task proved them to be cast in the same mould as the famous Panama canal-diggers of a generation later whose temper is enshrined in the rugged verse :

> *Got any rivers they say are uncrossable ?*
> *Got any mountains you can't tunnel through ?*
> *We specialise on the wholly impossible,*
> *Doing the thing that no man can do.*

The stations they opened on the routes they traversed served as depositories for barter goods and stores, as resting-places for wayfaring missionaries, and as centres of Christian work by which the confidence of the people might be gained. Their original line from Musuka followed the river for about twenty miles to Vivi on the opposite bank, and then went overland to Isangila about fifty miles beyond. After this it stretched a further seventy-five miles to Manyanga. Land was easily obtained in those early days. Grenfell mentions that the Manyanga station site was secured for about two pounds' worth of goods, and an exchange of presents.

Prodigious obstacles were encountered at almost every stage. Grenfell records that the walk from Vivi to Isangila involved three days of scaling high and steep hills, intersected by numerous ravines, along miserable ruts. The Basundis, who peopled

this area, were among the worst negroes in West Africa. They robbed with insolence and lied without reserve. Passing caravans were only safe from their depredations when they were in armed force. The few unpleasant encounters the missionaries had with these wild savages convinced them that a way of avoiding their country must be found.

A vivid light is cast upon the exacting conditions of those early days by these sentences from one of Grenfell's letters:

> The next English mail leaves Banana on September 2, and I am very anxious that it should take news of our proceedings, so I intend starting off again this afternoon to "post" the news. I have over a hundred and forty miles of walking to do, after that more than a hundred to go down river in our boat, which is waiting for me at Vivi.

The gift of this steel boat, *The Plymouth*, was well-timed: it enabled Vivi and Manyanga to be connected by water, and although by this route the mission party had to make several troublesome landings to haul the cargo over the rocks, it was far preferable to putting themselves at the mercy of intractable robbers. The mission base was shifted shortly afterwards a few miles above Musuka. This eliminated the dangerous river passage and opened a road by the south bank to Stanley Pool through tribes more friendly and hospitable. The station at Stanley Pool, the real base for the upper river work, was commenced in the summer of 1882.

Grenfell's preparation for the supreme task of his life advanced to completion amid the discipline of these early days. In the minds of his nine colleagues he was clearly ordained to the position of leadership

in the vaster expansion that was shortly to begin. For him, dominating everything, was the inward voice which challenged and compelled :

Something hidden—Go and find it.
Go and look behind the Ranges.
Something lost behind the Ranges,
Lost and waiting for you, Go !

CHAPTER VI

THE BUILDING OF A SHIP

1881–1884. Age 32–35 years.

A LITTLE steamer slipped out from a Thames-side shipbuilder's yard in September 1882, and shot lightly between the arches of the twelve bridges which span the river between Chiswick and Westminster. With her newly-polished steel fittings and fresh paint gleaming in the autumn sun, she threaded her graceful way between the river traffic and was made fast to her moorings against the pier hard by the Victoria Embankment. For many days she was among the sights of London. Curious spectators eyed her from Westminster Bridge; crowds of enthusiastic admirers walked her deck and, as they inspected her interior, showered praises upon their guides.

She was christened *Peace*, in anticipation of her future. But even the most imaginative of her visitors failed to foresee how notable that future was to be. None who marked her fine points as she floated jauntily on that river, once so aptly described as "liquid history," conjectured the matchless story she was destined to unfold on the greater river in mid-Africa. Nor could they know that her flag, which floated in proud unison with Britain's banner above the adjacent Houses of Parliament, was to stand in years ahead for a new reign of freedom and goodwill among the strange peoples of that distant land.

The *Peace* satisfied others besides those whose concern lay with her high purpose. A body of experts, which included the Chief Constructor of the Royal Navy and a Lord of the Admiralty, put her through her paces, and voiced their admiration. Then she returned triumphantly to Chiswick, where she was speedily dismantled and separated into eight hundred parts, each sewn up in canvas, numbered and packed in a case, in readiness for the next stage of her eventful career.

. . . . . .

The gaining of Stanley Pool in 1882 by Bentley and Crudgington made the provision of a steamer an essential preliminary to the further expansion of the mission above the Pool along the thousand miles of navigable waterway which stretched into the heart of the continent, and along the noble tributaries of which little or nothing was known at the time. No advance was possible apart from a vessel by which men might travel, discover sites for mission stations, convey supplies and maintain communications.

Once again, Robert Arthington gave the lead. His original gift of a thousand pounds had brought the Baptist Missionary Society's Congo mission to birth. By a similar donation, in 1880, equally opportune, he ensured and shaped its growth. For this gift was made with the specific intention of providing the needed steamer. About the same time he added a further three thousand pounds for investment, to secure an income for its upkeep until such time as the mission should be firmly established.

Long consultations took place between the missionaries as to the type of boat required. To such knowledge as they had gained during their own

endeavours they added every scrap of information gleaned from other travellers. They were aware that, generally speaking, the Congo was broad and shallow, and therefore sluggish; and that its flow was broken by thousands of islands, sandbanks, submerged reefs and rocks. Under such conditions, any serviceable boat must be light in weight and shallow in draught. Its pace must outrun the swiftest canoes manned by hostile peoples. Its machinery must be designed to respond easily to the captain's direction among treacherous currents and shifting sandbanks.

Lightness and speed were not the only considerations to be borne in mind by the designers and builders. As the vessel would have to be transported overland on men's heads from the coast to the Pool, no single part must exceed sixty-five pounds in weight. This standard was successfully observed, except in the case of three special pieces of machinery which weighed from a hundred and twelve pounds to two hundred and fifty pounds each.

Grenfell's sagacity in these deliberations, fed by the experience of his Birmingham apprenticeship and by his Cameroons explorations, led his colleagues to make urgent representations to the Home Committee that he should be recalled to England to advise upon and supervise the building of the proposed vessel. This was readily agreed to, and the subsequent story will show how fortunate was this arrangement. Grenfell left Congo at the end of 1881, taking with him drawings and specifications which were the product of the combined mission staff.

The final plans provided for a steamer built of Bessemer steel coated with zinc, seventy feet in

length and ten feet six inches in width, a keel only three inches deeper than the sides, twin screws to assist control, and seven water-tight compartments. When loaded to her capacity of six tons she was to draw no more than eighteen inches of water.

Her construction was entrusted to Messrs Thornycroft of Chiswick, whose contract price of £1760 included the making of duplicate parts of the most essential machinery and gear. On the commencement of the work in March 1882, Grenfell took lodgings at Chelsea, midway between the Thamesside shipbuilding yard and the city Mission House, in order to be in easy contact with both. He was thus able to watch the boat taking shape from the first stage to the last, an experience which proved of priceless worth when later, in Africa, he was obliged to assume the responsibility of putting her together again and to make her his home for the next twenty years. Half-way through the building he was joined by Mr W. H. Doke, a qualified engineer and theological student, recently accepted by the Baptist Missionary Society for steamer work.

In December the dismantled *Peace* was on her way from Liverpool, with Grenfell and Doke in charge. By the time Banana was reached, on January 21st, the missionary party had increased greatly, for, as the ship had called at African ports, Grenfell had engaged men for the approaching transport work. At Sierra Leone he collected twenty, at Cape Palmas thirty; at Cameroons a further twenty, including some married couples and children. Time was gained at Banana through Grenfell's success in chartering the *Prins Hendrick*, a two hundred ton steamer, on which the *Peace* was conveyed to Under-

hill, a new base station, where everything was landed within three days. Here Grenfell faced his first Congo sorrow, his second child, a few weeks old, dying shortly after his arrival.

It was calculated that the task of shifting the steamer parts up to Stanley Pool would occupy two years. The total distance of about two hundred and sixty miles was divided into three stages, for each of which separate teams of carriers had to be recruited. The first extended sixty miles to Bayneston. For this, from fifteen to twenty caravans were engaged, and each was allotted ten days for the journey. The second stage, from Bayneston to Manyanga, covered another forty miles and involved an equally elaborate organization. The third, which was the longest and most difficult, ran the remaining one hundred and sixty miles to Stanley Pool, and was expected to consume at least a year. By skilful organization it was found that the three stages could be covered concurrently, with the result that the task was completed in half the allotted time.

It was an enterprise worthy of the men who achieved it, and especially of Grenfell, on whose shoulders the burden mainly fell. The country to be traversed was, in Sir Harry Johnston's graphic words, "a terrible region, a continual up-and-down from high hills into deep valleys, across innumerable streams." Many of the ravines and rivers could only be negotiated by the aid of ropes and pulleys. In other places, a path had to be hacked through tangled jungle grass which stood from ten to eighteen feet high.

Grenfell was here, there, and everywhere. In February 1883 he settled at Underhill to undertake the irksome routine of petty tasks which attach

to a base station, and to initiate the dispatch of the steamer. Day after day was given to the opening of the cases and to the rearrangement of their contents for transport. Within two months the incessant strain so told upon his constitution that he was down with severe fever and greatly weakened by dysentery. Happily, he made a speedy recovery. Relief arriving at Underhill, he went up-river to Manyanga, and by midsummer he had settled his family farther on still at Stanley Pool.

Grenfell's rare power in handling Africans is shown in the fact that the steamer transport was accelerated by the willing co-operation of the native chiefs and their men—a factor hitherto undreamed of in the history of Congo development. Some idea of the organization involved is gained from his record of a single day at Bayneston in which he supervised the work of four hundred carriers. A hundred and fifty arrived at the station and dumped their loads. Each man received his pay, in the form of measured lengths of calico, and went home. At the same time another gang of two hundred men, who had been recruited from the district, were allotted their separate loads, given their instructions and sent on their way up-country. His care for these men is evidenced by his conduct towards them. A few days after his settlement at Stanley Pool, he piloted down-country a party of carriers whose contract had expired and to whom he had pledged his word that they should arrive safely at the coast. At the conclusion of this journey he planned to visit Loango, a hundred miles to the north of the Congo mouth, in order to recruit additional carriers. Finding that he had just missed a boat, he was with difficulty dissuaded from

trekking overland. The return journey from Loango with forty boys was taken in this manner, and was attended with continuous excitement and peril.

By the end of the summer most of the steamer parts had reached Stanley Pool. Notwithstanding the number of hands through which they had passed, the formidable character of the country negotiated, and the lawlessness of some of the tribes along the route, everything, except two cases of tools, came through intact. At one point Grenfell discovered that a case containing the crank shafts was missing, and its absence caused him prolonged anxiety. To his relief, it was discovered later at Manyanga in tow of two men. It appeared that, being greatly overweight, it had been dumped in a hut until these two, more enterprising than their fellows, had resolved to shift it.

Grenfell would have begun the rebuilding of the steamer without further ado, but for the fact that the strength of the mission was inadequate to staff the stations, and that the promised engineers were not in sight. The zeal of the men on the spot had outrun the expectations of the Committee at home, and months were to elapse before reinforcements landed.

Up to this year—1883—the mission, unlike political expeditions and sister missions in the country, had been singularly free from serious casualties among its members. Since the death of Mrs Comber, within three months of her arrival in 1879, the band had remained unbroken. But 1883 witnessed the beginning of a series of disasters which shook the mission to its foundations and staggered the faith of its supporters at home. The primitive conditions

under which the missionaries lived in those early days increased the risks to which they exposed themselves. Their huts were improvised from such materials as happened to be at hand. Four wooden posts supported a reed roof. The walls were of bamboo. Their tables were four sticks with tops made from wooden boxes, and their other furniture was equally rough and ready. They were thus at the mercy of the climate, and underwent hardships which fuller knowledge proved to be dangerous and unnecessary.

"They perhaps might never meet again!" This message of Doke on the eve of his departure from Britain received swift fulfilment in Congo. Within a fortnight of landing he was down with a sudden attack of fever, and not even the unremitting attention of Grenfell availed to save him. The loss from the ranks of this youngest recruit, from whose high technical skill and spiritual endowment so much was expected, was a sore blow to the senior man. But worse was to follow. In May, Hartland, a member of the second party to Congo, whose four years of probation were completed and who was on the eve of his marriage, took fever and was dead in three weeks.

This blow for a while overwhelmed the Congo missionary force, so happily united in age and outlook, in purpose and experience. Though, at the time, they felt that the gap caused by Hartland's death could never be filled, they found compensation in the consolation afforded by his faith in God and in the ultimate success of the mission. The third shock, the death, in October, of Butcher, a new arrival, was the more painful because of Grenfell's knowledge

that it might have been averted had the nursing of an experienced colleague been available. Disaster was inevitable in so deadly a country when, in several instances, owing to the staff being greatly below the need, a man was left to carry on a station single-handed. Who would not despair in such an hour as this, when men were dying and those who were left were tempted to think that the churches had forgotten them ?

The autumn of the year faded into winter. Still no reinforcements arrived, and there was no news of any being on the way. Grenfell was far from idle, however. He completed the reconstruction of the steamer engines and commenced work on the boiler. He was only deterred from tackling the construction of the boiler itself by the thought that the skilled engineers might, when they appeared, disapprove of his amateur efforts. Having heard that founts and type were on their way from the coast, he put a press together and collected material for printing. A school was established, with twenty boys in attendance, and the promise of others as soon as a new house and school buildings were ready.

These activities failed to satisfy this man, who was aching to be at the bigger task. For once he was betrayed into natural expressions of impatience and bitterness. He wrote :

> If they don't send us help soon, they had better do as Bentley suggests—sell the *Peace* and send us elsewhere —we *cannot* carry on with our present staff. If they let us drag on like this, they'll be spared the expense of sending us far ; some of us will find resting places near at hand.

Like another disciple at the entrance to a mis-

sionary crusade, Grenfell was chafed by deferred hopes and galled by prolonged inaction. "I go a-fishing!" exclaimed that earlier disciple. "I go a-sailing!" declared Grenfell, and, unlike that older quest, his proved far from fruitless. Its object was an exploration of the Congo in preparation for the coming voyages of the *Peace*. With a team of five Kru men, and with two Congo boys as servants, Grenfell set out from Arthington station in January 1884 on board the *Peace's* tender, a steel whale-boat twenty-six feet long. In these confined quarters they carried a load of five hundred brass rods, to serve as barter; a case of cloth, knives, looking-glasses, and beads, with which to buy food or to make presents; a supply of cassava flour, tea, cocoa and sugar; a bag of rice for the men; a small supply of medicine; and camping equipment which included a tent, bed, cooking utensils and tools.

The impetuous flow of the Congo through the bottle neck between Stanley Pool and Arthington taxed the strength of the rowers to the utmost as they turned up-stream and pulled against it. Easier waters were reached when, after making three miles, they rounded Kallina Point and entered the Pool. As they hugged the southern shore, Grenfell drew upon the experience of a previous trip and upon charts made by Bentley and Comber during a survey the year before. The Pool spread before him, a rough circle, eighteen miles by fourteen miles. On the opposite shore, just above its western outlet, lay the recent French settlement of Brazzaville, then an irregular collection of tumble-down huts, almost hidden by banana plantations and grass. The expanse of water was broken by the large central

island of Bamu and by many smaller islands. Ahead, the horizon was bounded by distant hills. Mountain ranges flanked the shores. Some were richly clad with forests, and others were covered with spreading groves of trees. To a semicircle of white sandy cliffs to the north-east the name of Dover Cliffs had been given by Stanley. Multitudes of water birds thronged the shores, flocks of white egrets being particularly numerous. The entrance to the upper river made a profound impression on Grenfell, who felt it to be a worthy setting for his first approach to the unknown. He writes:

> Steep, tree-clad hills of a thousand feet or so on each side of the fast-running and far-coming Congo, reflected their dark green hues in its waters, making in the evening light so sombre a picture that one could well excuse, if the mystery had not been already solved, a superstitious dread of penetrating the unknown through such an unpropitious looking gate. . . . None of us could resist the melancholy glamour of the view. The morning effect was the same when we left the Pool to enter upon the Upper Congo proper; so it was not due to the evening light, as I had thought.

As, for a hundred miles, the slim boat negotiated this gorge, every reef and sandbank was carefully noted against the day when the *Peace* should make the passage. Observation was rendered easier and more complete from the fact that it was the low-water season when travelling was at its worst. So hazardous was the course that, had Grenfell used a wooden boat, it could scarcely have held together amid the jars and jolts received from hidden snags and rocks. Higher up stream, an expanse of bays lined with reefs suggested a series of giant mouths

armed with the most uncompromising dragon's teeth ever fashioned by nature.

Denizens of the river proved troublesome. The presence of hippopotami necessitated wide detours in order to avoid their attentions. Even these were not always successful. One beast left the mark of his teeth on the steel plate. Another lifted the stern clean into the air as he emerged from the water. Grenfell's mind was sufficiently clear during this disturbing adventure to recall the picture in Livingstone's first book of a similar experience. Luckily the boat kept its balance, and the occupants, though scared and wet, were none the worse for their adventure, but only thankful again that their conveyance was made of steel and not of wood.

The density of the population varied considerably at different points. During a run of several days, the country appeared to be uninhabited. Then the banks were lined with large, well-built towns, at the majority of which Grenfell's reception was hearty and cordial. In one place, the tribes were characteristically Congolese in their anxiety to trade. They offered brass rods for everything that was carried, and were especially attracted by such rare treasures as the boat anchor, the flag, and Grenfell's spectacles. They were disappointed and resentful that nothing but food was needed by the boat party, and that even the ivory and slaves that they pressed upon Grenfell were refused. Above Bolobo, the inhabitants displayed a disconcerting timidity. On the appearance of the boat they scattered to the grass, but as the result of tactful negotiations, they soon became well disposed towards the travellers. One island encampment was shared with a party of tribesmen

on its way down river. The experience was enlivened by the activities of a medicine man during an approaching thunderstorm. As the dense clouds drew nearer, he commenced a raucous chant and an emphatic rattle-shaking. These increased in intensity, in spite of the bursting of the storm, and continued for two hours until the rain ceased at last, and the medicine man was left, tired but triumphant. A recurrence of the storm threatening towards morning, the medicine man played for safety by chanting: "O! for a little rain, let a little rain come; but not a big rain, not a flood, just a little rain, let a little rain come!" But apparently his gods were not yet awake, for the rain fell in a downpour so overwhelming that, in common with everyone else, he was compelled to seek shelter while it continued.

Grenfell's single chilly reception was due to the fact that in one place he arrived as darkness was falling—an inopportune time for visitors. That night had to be spent on an adjacent sandbank amid the unwelcome attentions of mosquitoes and hippopotami. The latter were on both sides of the camp, not more than thirty yards away. They made the darkness hideous with their sustained, concerted bellowing. Even more alarming was the shattering thud of their feet as they tramped about the tents and disturbed the sleep of their occupants. Watches were set for the night, and any near approach of the beasts was prevented by volleys of sticks. These failed to hinder two of the hippos from making a violent stampede across the camping ground, an escapade for which they paid with their lives.

Over against this experience, another chief gave

practical expression to his welcome by presenting Grenfell with a specially prepared cassava pudding, which served for two meals daily during the next fortnight. The same friendliness was displayed to the limits of the journey. The people of Nebu, the largest African town that Grenfell had seen up to that time, loaded the party with goats, fowls, fish and plantains.

So for twenty-four days they paddled eastwards. At intervals they were hospitably entertained at the stations planted by Stanley for the African Association, then engaged in the occupation of the country under the stimulus provided by King Leopold of Belgium. Their turning point was Equator station where, as the first white visitors, they brought welcome news of the outside world to two lonely resident Belgian officers. They had covered four hundred miles, more than a third of the distance to Stanley Falls.

The downward journey, which began along the north bank, was partly devoted to the cultivation of friendly relations with the riverine peoples, a task which naturally delayed progress. Notwithstanding this, the distance between the Equator and Arthington was covered in ten days. As a tangible result of this trip, plans took shape for the founding of the first mission station at Lukolela, three hundred miles above Stanley Pool, which was set amid a thriving, populous district.

Grenfell's reflections as he approached his goal are recorded in the following sentences:

> After having been so far, and being so kindly received, even in places where hitherto the natives have been hostile to the white man, I cannot but be devoutly

grateful for the protection of the Almighty and for His goodness in preparing my way.

How much this part of Africa stands in need of help I cannot tell you; words seem utterly inadequate. I cannot write you a tithe of the woes that have come under my notice, and have made my heart bleed as I have journeyed along. Never have I felt more sympathy for these brethren of ours, and never have I prayed more earnestly than I now pray that God will speedily make manifest to them that Light which is the Light of Life, even Christ our Living Lord.

CHAPTER VII

THE *PEACE* AFLOAT

1884. Age 35 years.

THE whale-boat glided with the current down Stanley Pool, upon the last stage of her plucky journey before reaching Arthington station. Her captain sat in the stern, absorbed in the writing of his journal, but pausing occasionally to give orders to his men or to revel in the still grandeur of his surroundings. For him that day, April 8th, 1884, promised to be the brightest in the history of the mission. In a few hours his hand would grasp those of a new colleague and the two long-awaited engineers. He would be able to cheer them and his companions of the chequered years with the tidings of the welcome that awaited them from the peoples of the upper river. In a few days they would tackle the huge dump which had lain so long against the station and begin the oft-deferred task of building the steamer. In a few months at the most they would send to Britain the news that the *Peace* was again in being. The sky was indeed set fair.

All unknown to Grenfell, the dark cloud of disaster already hung heavily over Arthington station. As the boat rounded Kallina Point and his eyes sought his destination, he detected Comber approaching the flagstaff. With foreboding attention he watched the upward movement of the flag. It stopped at half-mast,

and then, as Comber spotted the oncoming boat in the distance, it was hurriedly pulled to the top. With fear gripping his heart, Grenfell urged the paddlers to full speed, and almost before they drew to the landing stage he sprang from the boat to listen to tidings that bewildered and overwhelmed him.

One after another the items came in stabbing ejaculations from Comber's lips. . . . "Crudgington and his wife seriously ill and needing to go to England." . . . "Ross dangerously ill and already sent home as a last resource." . . . "Hughes barely recovering from a serious illness at Manyanga." . . . "Quentin Thomson in Cameroons—dead!" . . . "Hartley, the new missionary, on his way up from the coast—dead!" . . . "The two engineers for the *Peace*—dead by his side!"

When the first numbing effect of these woeful tidings had spent itself, the two friends set themselves to discuss the causes and the consequences of this series of disasters. They were not surprised, in view of the overburdened condition of the mission, that one or other of their number should in so fever-ridden a country collapse under the strain. But they were distressed that the gaps created must impose heavier tasks on the scanty remnant of missionaries. The grief that they suffered on account of the loss of the three new men was made the more poignant because it was due to their own eagerness and neglect. On the walk up-country from Underhill to Manyanga, these three recruits had been overtaken by a violent thunderstorm, during which their insecurely wrapped bundles of bedding had become soaked, and the simple precaution of drying these in the sun had been neglected. After sleeping in them

the next night, all three men had developed malarial fever and succumbed within three days.

The unfolding of this grim story occupied the ineffaceable hours, during which Grenfell's large English mail, which had accumulated in his absence, was left untouched. When, at length, he turned to open it, he was told that news of the death of his father had just been received. Grenfell's cup of woe was full to the brim. It was the darkest hour of his career.

For the time being he was crushed. He writes home about " the list of evil tidings as never fell upon my head in so short a time." But the stuff of which he was made was not long in revealing itself. He continues, " *We have not lost heart!* We cannot but believe that more help will speedily be forthcoming. Such trials do not kill the faith or quench the ardour of Christians, and we feel sure the friends at home will redouble their efforts on our behalf. It is disappointing to have all our plans knocked on the head. But we dare not grumble ! "

It had been arranged that immediately after Grenfell's return from this whale-boat trip Comber should go up-river to found the new station at Lukolela. Instead, he now departed in the opposite direction to relieve the sorely pressed men who were holding on nearer the base. Once more Grenfell was left single-handed with the *Peace* unbuilt.

His last hesitations were removed. He had no will to ask for more engineers from England, and even supposing he had, the months of waiting ere they arrived would prove intolerable. The *Peace* must be built at once with such local help as might be available. The company he had collected from the

west coast on the voyage twelve months before included a few men who, in the meantime, had proved trusty and efficient workers. To these he turned in this hour of decision. They responded so nobly that their names are worthy of record. Foremost among them were Shaw, a Sierra Leone carpenter, and Allen, an Accra blacksmith. John Greenhough, who took the lion's share of the riveting, Hanbury Hill, and Jonathan Scott, were Cameroons youths who rendered conspicuous service. The assistants also included four other negroes from Fernando Po. It is an eloquent tribute to Grenfell that he was the only European who, up to that time, had so won the confidence of the natives of the last mentioned place as to persuade them to travel as far as the Upper Congo.

The keel of the *Peace* was laid in March 1884, and as the building proceeded the silences of river and forest were broken by ring of hammer and anvil and grind of plane and saw. What the work meant for Grenfell is disclosed in these self-revealing sentences :

> Many times after a hard day's labour, as I walked up the hill to our house, which was two hundred feet above the river, I have been in great doubt and perplexity as to what was the next thing to be done, and how to set about it. There was only one source of light for me in steamer building, as well as in other things : I had to look up, and light came in the morning !

Great care was needed in handling the steel plates, which, though they were tough, were so thin that misdirected hammer blows caused some of them to buckle and bulge beyond repair. Such rapid pro-

gress was made that, within seven weeks, the hull had been tested and found watertight; the boiler and machinery were on board and pronounced satisfactory. Seven days later the deck was completed, and most of the woodwork, which had suffered badly during transport from the coast, was overhauled and fixed. It was possible to expect the completion of the task by midsummer, and the launching in the autumn, when the river would have risen again. So eager was Grenfell, and so enthusiastic were his helpers, that by the middle of June the last copper rivet was driven home, and the last plank was in position. With enthusiasm and expectation at their height, a delay of three months before the next stage was commenced was unthinkable. A way must be found to get the *Peace* into the water.

The turbulent people of Arthington, their faces and bodies made hideous with white, yellow, red, and blue chalk, and carrying menacing knives and spears, who had gazed in undisguised wonder at this white man and his workmen and the monster they were erecting, were now to witness something more marvellous still. People from the interior places as far distant as four hundred miles, who came to the Pool to sell ivory, and who took back mystery tales of the strange new boat that was building, were now to have something beyond their most fervid imaginations to relate. A boat without oars, bigger than their wildest dreams, was to move on the water!

At the beginning of July an earthwork dam was made thirty-six feet into the river, and the water was baled out. Intervening rocks were blasted away and the ground levelled. Launchways a hundred and forty feet long were laid, with a slope of one in

fifteen. Four of the spars used in the launchways, each from forty to fifty feet in length and more than four feet in girth, were cut from trees felled in the forest and dragged three miles to the beach. The cradle, fifty-four feet in length, was likewise fashioned of hard wood from the distant forest. The steamer had been built on an even keel, and the effort involved in lowering her on to the launchways was long and difficult, and more remarkable to the natives than the actual launching. Then the blocks were removed, and the start given. With a complete absence of jarring or jolting, the boat slipped down the appointed way to the water, where she floated evenly and surely. When presently steam was up and white clouds of vapour enveloped her, and her revolving paddles churned the water as she manœuvred in response to her captain's hand on the wheel, the gathering enthusiasm of the natives broke bounds and found vent in the shout, "She lives, master! She lives!"

"Without a hitch" was Grenfell's summing up of the building of his steamer. "Dear old Grenfell has alone accomplished the gigantic task of reconstructing her" was Comber's tribute. "We are proud of Grenfell, and thankful to God for him." A professional judgment on the accomplishment was penned by Mr Sidney Barnaby, the naval expert who had finally designed the *Peace*: "The launching of the *Peace* is the record of a really fine piece of work that would have done credit to any engineer. . . . You could not have set a man a more difficult task than Grenfell was set in re-erecting and managing the boat. . . . The success he achieved was magnificent."

The day following her entry to the water the

Peace ran a trial trip of five miles in a way that delighted her builder. Before a week had passed she had covered fifty miles without mishap. Every part worked so efficiently that Grenfell decided on a long journey of six hundred miles up-river to Bangala, half-way to Stanley Falls, his ultimate objective. This maiden voyage was begun on July 7th, 1884. Besides a crew of eleven she carried as passengers, amongst others, Colonel Sir Francis de Winton, Administrator-in-Chief of the International Association, his secretary, and eight Congo schoolboys. To Grenfell's joy, Comber was able to join the party, which was completed by three men who were being taken to Lukolela to prepare the ground for the first up-river station.

The boys were not an unmixed blessing. On the one hand, in the absence of coal supplies, they were invaluable during the daily stoppage of four hours for woodcutting for the furnace, which consumed a ton and a half of fuel every twenty-four hours. Against that there had to be set their fondness for the stoke-hole during the chilly morning hours, which resulted in bad burns and blisters. Later in the day, the heat of the sun lured them to the water, in spite of their inability to swim and their attractiveness to crocodiles. Grenfell's comment upon these imps of mischief is :

> We thought that to take them a long journey would tend to enlarge their ideas of things. The world is a very little place to some of their minds. But, however desirable it may be to enlarge their ideas, we very much question if either of us will ever again face the responsibility of personally conducting a party of eight unruly cubs for a twelve-hundred-mile tour!

By the first evening the steamer had got through Stanley Pool into the narrow gorge beyond. Navigation among its maze of sandbanks was facilitated by the fact that Ebokea, the steersman, had acted as stroke on the earlier boat journey. Within two days the mouth of the Kwa, the lowest and one of the largest tributaries on the right bank, was reached, and the hazard was taken of ascending its unknown lower reaches and of facing its uncertain peoples.

Fifty miles along its northern bank, a series of hamlets which straggled for two or three miles was encountered. To his surprise, Grenfell found these ruled over by a woman who, though she received them with an absence of ceremony, proved to be strong-minded, energetic and resourceful. Her people impressed Grenfell as being without doubt the finest he had seen anywhere in Africa. The district was the focus of an extensive trade between the hinterland and the coast and was marked as "a most promising post for a mission station." Passing onwards for a further twenty-five miles they reached the confluence of the Kwa and the Kwango. Here the change of hut design, from the hitherto universal four walls to conical shape, told the missionaries that they were on the confines of a distinct tribal area. They were prevented through lack of time from going farther, but resolved that more exhaustive explorations should be made subsequently.

On their return to the main stream they proceeded, in the next phase of their cruise, to the Bolobo area, which embraced a series of small towns extending two miles along the river and some distance inland. The Bobangi people here formed, in Grenfell's mind, a gross and repellent picture. The characteristics

and habits that he noted make a severe catalogue. As his visit coincided with the death of the chief's wife, it is probable that he saw things at their worst. It may have been well that he did so: before many years he was to see them at their best. Drunkenness, immorality, and cruelty were unbridled, and resulted in unnameable vices. As Grenfell and Comber walked through Bolobo, the funeral ceremonies were in full swing. Women, each wearing a brass collar weighing from twenty-five to thirty pounds, danced to the tapping of drums. The streets were crowded with pleasure seekers. At the end of five days of drinking and sensuality, the proceedings reached their height in the sacrifice of four slaves purchased for the purpose. While the missionaries' visit was in progress an agreement over food prices made between the Bolobo people and a neighbouring tribe was sealed in the following manner. A deep hole was dug in the ground on the boundary between the two tribes. Into this a slave, with arms and legs broken, was flung and left to starve to death. There were remarkably few children in this area. These Bobangis, like other tribes, maintained the population by the purchase of slaves.

By contrast, an adjacent tribe—the Bananu—were more timid. The women and children often fled precipitately before the white men's advance. One young woman, in particular, bared her teeth like an animal when they chanced to glance in her direction. A distinctive feature of the architecture observed here was the building of the houses in rows of four to six, all under one roof. Many were ornamented with human heads, while hippopotami skulls

were circled around the bases of trees. The relative density of the population in this district, and the willingness of the people, convinced Grenfell that a mission station ought to be founded in it at the earliest date.

The Congo widened considerably above Bolobo, and until the steamer approached Lukolela, a hundred miles away, the opposite bank was never in view. Even at Lukolela, the swiftly running stream was a mile and a half across. Two days were devoted to a renewal of the acquaintanceships formed on the previous visit, settling the site of the station, and arranging the accommodation of the three men and the material for the building. Grenfell was greatly cheered by the offer of the chief, Mangaba, to proceed with him on his journey so that he might introduce him to the chiefs of the Bangala tribe.

A short distance beyond Lukolela, Grenfell noticed in the narrowed stream two waters, sharply contrasted in colour, which for miles refused to mix. One was the dark brown of the main river; the other was of a light coffee hue. They flowed alongside with considerable commotion and jostling, as if fighting for position. The lighter-coloured water came from the Mobangi, the course of which Grenfell was to reveal to the world on his next voyage. Another similar phenomenon was observed several hundred miles beyond, only this time the inflowing water was inky black.

As the *Peace* penetrated farther inland, the peoples Grenfell met appeared to be increasingly primitive and pugnacious. About the confluence of the Ruki and the Congo, for instance, the men showed fight because at first he refrained from landing on their rocky beaches. They wore a peculiar headgear of

monkey skins, with the tails hanging down their backs. They were the only people Grenfell had seen hitherto using the bow and arrow and carrying shields. Some bore spears and murderous looking knives. Among the various ways in which their cruel passions were shown was their custom of letting loose a prisoner, giving him a start, and then hunting him with spears and bows and arrows until, shot or spent, he fell to the ground. The death of a chief was the occasion for the sacrifice of a series of slaves. Still noisier, wilder, and more troublesome were the Bangala people who occupied the next stretch of river bank. Mangaba, the old chief who was on board the *Peace*, proved an apt sponsor on all these occasions. He caused the missionaries great amusement by claiming kinship so generally that it appeared as if he possessed one wife in every town, while he met at least three mothers and introduced every important chief as his father.

For the first time on this trip, danger was apprehended by the missionaries from these Bangala people. They dogged the footsteps of the steamer company during their stay on shore, and on their return to the boat a crowd of canoes swarmed about it, while their occupants thronged the deck and almost wrested control from the crew. At one moment when a gong was beaten by one of the crowd, and the shouting was suddenly intensified, a concerted attack was feared. It was no easy matter to maintain a calm bearing and to restrain the crew from retaliation when thus affronted by the savage visitors. The steamer whistle blew and the boat began to move up-stream, but still the Bangalas followed. At least a dozen canoes hugged the sides of the boat

even when speed was up, and it was long before they were shaken off and the last of these savages with his murderous spear and knife vanished from view.

On August 1st, less than four weeks after leaving Arthington station, the *Peace* reached its turning point, the town of the great chief Mata Mayiki. As the boat anchored fifty yards from the bank a large body of armed men rushed to the water's edge. In their minds this boat which kept at a distance from them, and bore a strange flag, must carry enemies. They remembered the strange white man, Stanley, who had gone down the river seven years before. On that occasion they had filled sixty canoes and had fought him for five hours. They were prepared to give the present visitors a reception of equal hostility. Their discovery that the *Peace* had two of their tribesmen on board added to their excitement, for they imagined they had been secured through some stratagem of the white men. It was only after long palavers and explanations that the two men had been rescued from a capsized canoe, and that the white men had come on a peaceable errand, that they were permitted to land and establish friendship.

Nothing but an urgent need to return to Arthington prevented Grenfell from proceeding up-river all the way to Stanley Falls. The people mostly appeared friendly, and the steamer was working admirably. No mishap had occurred to delay her progress or to stop her engines. Her light draught had enabled Grenfell to find a channel in the shallowest parts of the river. Her speed had outpaced that of any native boat. The *Peace* had more than fulfilled the highest expectations and had survived the most rigorous tests.

CHAPTER VIII

MAKING A HIGHWAY

1884–1886. Age 35–37 years.

DURING the next two years (October 1884 to December 1886) Grenfell made five extensive voyages in the *Peace*. On these he covered at least fifteen thousand miles. By their achievements he sprang to the foremost rank of African explorers, and for their results he was loaded with praises from his fellows and with honours from governments and learned societies. Through them all, however, the geographical feat was kept subordinate to the missionary enterprise. Grenfell saw from the beginning that intelligent advance was impracticable until unknown territory was explored. Strategic sites for mission stations could be selected only when the most populous areas were discovered. Permanent settlements could only be attempted among them when the riverine peoples were accustomed to the presence of the white men.

In this view Grenfell was supported by his colleagues in Congo, and by Mr A. H. Baynes, the Secretary of the Society. Only those who lived through the early years of the Congo mission know the magnitude of the part played by Mr Baynes in its development. The enterprise drew many critics, who argued that Grenfell and the other missionaries were neglecting the primary duty of evangelization.

Others questioned, in the almost complete absence of converts, the wisdom of continuing the work, while yet others called for withdrawal because of the frightful toll in lives exacted by the climate. While Grenfell maintained silence under these showers of barbed shafts, his colleagues were moved to strong, sarcastic speech on his behalf. They referred to the comfortable, fireside, stay-at-home critics, who regarded explorations as charming excursions, and lost sight of the weariness, privations and dangers that attended them. They poured scorn on those who were thrilled by the adventures of the way, but who omitted to count the risks from the poisoned arrows and the spears of wild cannibals. They stressed their own preference for the quiet life of an ordered mission station, but argued that the inevitable privations and exposures of pioneering must be endured, so long as that part of the task remained unfinished. In spite of detraction and disaster, Mr Baynes never swerved in his purpose. He fought the battle of the absent missionaries and fortified them by his unwavering confidence.

This persistent geographical quest has long since been vindicated. All those who have followed in the path of the pioneers, whether missionaries, traders, administrators, or travellers, have gained by its thoroughness. To this day, though forty years have passed since Grenfell first mapped the unknown waters, and other explorers have gone over the ground he covered, steamer captains use his charts and guide their vessels by his observations. The main streams form a broad highway for hundreds of steamers belonging to the government and numerous trading companies. They bear their varied

and valuable cargoes of merchandise and mineral wealth for the enrichment of the world, and maintain vital communications with the most remote places. As each and all pursue their sure course amid the lurking shoals and swirling currents, they pay unconscious tribute to the missionary who, in the loneliness of the pioneering days, applied himself to his task with unflagging faithfulness and scrupulous exactitude.

Grenfell was supported further by the determination of the home Committee, whose members were, in those opening years, set upon an ambitious programme. "Our aim," they affirmed, "is to plant ten stations between Stanley Pool and Stanley Falls at an average of a hundred miles apart. We must look for sites in the neighbourhood of the mouths of the larger tributaries so that they may be placed conveniently for the *Peace* on her journeyings. We must call for reinforcements sufficient to man these stations, and, as a beginning, we set ourselves immediately to establish the first two of the new stations." With an urge of this nature at his back it is little wonder that Grenfell persistently worked towards the consummation of his task.

The exclusive and all-absorbing occupation of these two strenuous years was, then, the methodical unveiling of this most liberally endowed of Africa's waterways.

Before Grenfell embarked upon this enterprise, more deaths threatened to upset his plans. About these he writes:

I am stricken dumb by the unparalleled series of disasters in getting the men up: and yet I cannot but acknowledge God's rich blessing on the work I've had

in hand. . . . I must make the best of the resources we have, and drill our country boys into engineers and stokers and sailors. I seemed to wish to devote myself more exclusively to mission work direct : the Lord seems to say, " Make use of the people you have : make them help themselves, by doing the work of the steamer."

So while tracking the course of the streams he began that training of his Congo assistants which later was to yield such rich reward.

The first of the voyages which Grenfell made in the second half of the eighties was notable for four results. He reached the farthest limit of the main river navigation at Stanley Falls, and discovered and steamed for four hundred miles up the Mobangi, the most important tributary of the Congo. He also penetrated the lower waters of several tributaries to distances sufficient to give him a knowledge of their courses and their possibilities, and of the peoples who lived in their valleys. On this journey, finally, there burst upon him the ghastliness of the Arab slave traffic which had spread westwards in the wake of Stanley's advance and threatened to envelop the entire Congo area.

A foretaste of the disagreeable adventures that were to befall him at intervals throughout this journey was received in the Lefine, the second tributary which he attempted to penetrate. Throughout the five days spent in careful examination of its features the *Peace* was pursued by crocodiles and was fired at by natives. One of their poison-tipped arrows narrowly missed Dr Sims, of the American Baptist Missionary Union, who was, like Grenfell, in search of a mission field.

The next deflection from the main stream was

against the current of what Grenfell had hitherto regarded as a branch of the main river; and it was not until he had gone a hundred and thirty miles that he was convinced that he had lighted on the Mobangi. Further progress was barred by swarms of angry natives, decked with fighting attire of elephant and buffalo hide and armed with spears and shields, who lined the banks or circled about the steamer in crowded canoes. Efforts at conciliation were vain. Explanations that the white men were human beings like themselves, and not harmful visitants from the spirit world, were fruitless. Food supplies were denied the voyagers. The only course at that time was to turn back and slip away under the cover of darkness.

While at anchor one night on her way down to the main river, the *Peace* was suddenly shaken from stem to stern and nearly capsized by a huge island of floating vegetation which was plunging downstream on a rapid current. As soon as he realized what had happened, Grenfell got up full steam and slung the boat round head on in hopes of forging a way through. This unequal contest continued for two hours, during which time Grenfell expected to hear at any moment the tearing grind of the boat on a submerged snag, or to feel her heeling over as she was caught by an overhanging tree. It was not until the crew sprang to the island, and with hatchet and saw cut away the maze of roots and branches from the bow of the *Peace*, that she was set free and her captain was able to breathe a prayer of thanks for their emergence.

Entering the Congo again, Grenfell's next discovery was the Ruki, or Black River, and his next ascent the Kalemba. Here the river traffic con-

sisted of canoes laden with knives and spears, made by local metal-working tribes, for sale nearer the coast. In this region they lighted upon a town, curiously enclosed by a ditch twelve feet across and six feet deep, with an inner wooden barricade twelve feet high. Entrance to the town was gained by three single planks leading to a similar number of narrow openings in the fence, which could be promptly barred in an emergency. The unheralded appearance of the white men in this close preserve created a panic, and, for a second time, Dr Sims barely escaped becoming a target for a chance poisoned arrow from a startled native. As elsewhere, the peaceable intentions of the newcomers aroused the suspicions of the people, who were used only to warlike approaches.

The peculiar type of beauty culture followed in this area appealed to Grenfell as being more hideous and grotesque than any he had hitherto encountered. It consisted of raised facial cicatrices, some of which consisted of lumps as big as peas. Some of the people displayed a line of blobs down their noses, or a single lump on the upper lip suggestive of a rhinoceros horn. One girl bore one under each eye, equal in size to a pigeon's egg, with the result that she could see before her only when she bent her head.

Grenfell's long-cherished admiration for the craftmanship of the Congolese was heightened by what he now observed in a chief's palace near by, a building consisting of a large roof, seventy feet by twenty-five feet, supported by ornamental and carved posts, and used for debates and receptions. Among the miscellaneous assortment of articles suspended from the roof were African fishing nets of all kinds, with

meshes ranging from the size of a finger to a span in length; and ingenious trumpet-shaped wicker rat-traps, so designed that the more fiercely the rat struggled, the more firmly it was gripped. In this particular area Grenfell found that the pathway to the principal town ran across a swamp, and that it was bordered by gruesome rows of human skulls supported on sticks. From the fact that the people filed their own teeth down to the gums and that most wore necklaces of human teeth, he knew that he had come to a cannibal area where, for the prize of human flesh, every town maintained perpetual warfare with every other town. His stay was made horrible by the sight of the bodies of slaves being prepared for a feast which he was powerless to arrest.

The next place of importance at which he stopped was Upoto, now the centre of a flourishing mission station. This town was built on either side of a reef of rocks which straggled for a quarter of a mile into the river at right angles to the bank. Its people, vigorous and enterprising, were mostly engaged in making hoes and axes for their neighbours, while the more adventurous among them travelled hundreds of miles to the east and west for trade or pleasure.

At the most northerly point of the giant arc formed by the river, where the opposite banks are twenty miles (their widest distance) apart, Grenfell noticed definitive tribal characteristics and customs which separated the natives from their cannibal neighbours. Their mud houses had rounded ends and bark roofs. Instead of mutilating their teeth, they pierced their ears, distending the lobes into rope-like formations, and decorated their bodies in

an elaborate black and red colour scheme. Grenfell might have thought at first that he had lighted upon a vast farmyard, for the common method of salutation employed was an imitation cock-crow. Still funnier was the fashion of hairdressing used among the tribes on the Itimbiri, a local tributary, the hair being arranged in three tufts.

As the *Peace* now headed south-eastwards for the last stage of her outward journey, Grenfell became aware of a growing resistance to his progress. He decided to tackle the Aruwimi, one of the most important of the farther tributaries. Here he was opposed by impassable cataracts, but still more by armed hosts. For centuries an organized traffic in slaves had extended over Congo. Its victims were brought in droves from the forests and along the tributaries to the main stream, where they were either sold for food to the cannibal Bangalas or transported to Stanley Pool. At the latter centre they were sold again, generally to white men. Shiploads of these Congo slaves were carried to Brazil, Cuba, and Porto Rico, until in the middle of the last century the inhuman business was broken by British cruisers. A new and more devilish outbreak of slavery attended the spread of Arab influence in central Africa. Grenfell now met this at its height.

One afternoon he observed, ascending on the horizon, dense volumes of smoke which he at first imagined came from burning vegetable matter. At midnight, however, the silence of the river was broken by the splash of oars and the frantic cries of human voices. The *Peace* was soon surrounded by terrified fugitives fleeing before Arab raiders, who were hunting for slaves and ivory. While Grenfell

talked to these panic-stricken runaways, the river became choked with the wreckage of hut roofs, beds, stools, calabashes, fishing nets, ropes and other impedimenta from their burning towns. The next morning he steamed onwards, to find smoking ruins in place of what a few hours before had been prosperous villages. A few survivors skulked in their ruined gardens, crying: "We have nothing left, nothing! Our houses are burnt, our plantations are destroyed, and our women and children are all gone!" The whole of the wide valley between the Congo and the Lomami, a parallel stream, had been devastated and depopulated. Ten thousand people had been killed, captured, or forced to flee by these long-bearded, light-skinned Arabs, led by the notorious Tippoo Tib, and by the black Manyema folk, whom the Arabs had first decimated and then impressed into service against their own kinsmen. In town after town which Grenfell visited, the occupants were standing by their canoes, containing their food supplies and chattels, ready to flee at a moment's notice.

The entire terror-stricken population slept in their canoes in case of a surprise night raid, returning to the shore in the daytime, and leaving a canoe sentry or two to keep watch on the river. As he counted in a single day the smoke of twenty-seven burning villages, and measured the tale of the vindictive brutalities of the raiders, Grenfell was moved to indignation against the iniquities of the traffic. He refers to its perpetrators as being "the most pitiless of marauders of this or any age" and declares that "common humanity claims that steps should be taken against a scourge, the bitterness of which it

is impossible to overdraw." At Stanley Falls he met Tippoo Tib, who commanded a following of a thousand men, and who boasted that he would shortly have three times as many at his disposal, with whom he would sweep westwards and claim the whole of Congo to the coast for his over-lord, the Sultan of Zanzibar.

Christmas fell during Grenfell's halt at Stanley Falls—" the strangest I ever spent, with the poorest dinner I had ever eaten. Fried fish, cassava roots and a one pound tin of preserved plum pudding between four of us." But he had ample happiness in the choice associations of the season.

Before turning back in his tracks he attempted the ascent of the Lomami. From its mouth to the farthest point he reached, a hundred and forty miles away, violent opposition was encountered. The natives, naturally savage, had been stung through the ravages of the Arabs to reprisals against any men of light skin. Their opposition proved so menacing that the steamer's arrow-guards, made of finely-meshed wire netting, were placed in position around the sides and above the deck. Against these, dense showers of poisoned arrows clanged harmlessly, while the men who shot them were bewildered at the lack of response from those against whom they were directed. Grenfell decided to go no farther when, at a point where the altitude above sea-level was one thousand three hundred and fifty feet, the river narrowed to eighty yards.

The homeward journey proceeded without interruption until Grenfell again found himself off the mouth of the Mobangi. He was lured once more to turn into its pale red waters, and on this occasion he

succeeded in steaming four hundred miles along its course. He observed everything with the eye of the alert explorer. His methodical and beautifully written journals contain copious notes upon the varying colour and rates of flow of the water; the formation of the country and the nature of the soil; the diversity of the animal life; the prodigality of forest and plantation; the distinctive characteristics and customs of the many tribes bordering the river; their languages, occupations and dwelling places; and everything and anything else that came within his ken.

Hour after hour on these long journeys [writes Bentley in his *Pioneering on the Congo*] Grenfell stood behind his prismatic compass, taking the bearings of point after point as they appeared; estimating from time to time the speed of the steamer, and correcting all the work as occasion offered by astronomical observations. When the steamer was running, his food had to be brought to him, unless in some straight run towards a distant point he could slip away for a few minutes.

This second exploration of the Mobangi was again the occasion of an antagonistic reception from the people. At one point the attack was delivered by as many as fifty large and small canoes from which spears, arrows, sticks and stones were thrown at the steamer. Here conciliatory efforts were soon successful, and resulted in the exchange of spears and knives for the glittering treasures displayed by the missionary. Elsewhere the on-coming of the steamer was a signal for a general stampede. Villages were abandoned by their inhabitants, who rushed pell-mell into the bush, leaving cooking pots simmering on the fire, and houses open, with their contents in

confusion. In several places the children were left behind to meet whatsoever evil the white men might do to them. At one town a mass of braves in full battle array thronged the beach. As the *Peace* approached the bank they executed a war-dance, and with blood-curdling yells charged forward as if they intended to rush into the water and massacre her occupants. The presence of Mrs Grenfell and her children in the *Peace* exerted a pacifying influence, because in Congo women and children were never at hand when fighting was intended.

Two hundred miles up, the bed of the Mobangi was strewn with immense masses of quartz rock which almost baffled Grenfell's skill as a navigator. When at last he got through, his further passage was accompanied by a continuous rain of deadly arrows. By means of rope ladders, which they drew up after them, men, women and children climbed over-hanging trees. In the forked branches of these they had built little forts, from which the fire was directed. Had the steamer crew fired a few shots in reply the opposition would almost certainly have been quelled. As it was, their silence was treated by the natives as a sign of cowardice. The shooting intensified and the arrows hailed incessantly against the wire guards on the top and sides of the steamer. Warnings were sent on to the tribes ahead, who put out fleets of canoes to form a barrage across the river. The *Peace* was caught in a position from which advance was hopeless. The boat was there-fore swung round and directed at top speed down-stream. At this pace she was soon clear of the pursuing canoes. While still steaming rapidly she suddenly struck a submerged rock and, within three

minutes, two of her watertight compartments were flooded, and she began to settle. The only chance of saving her lay in running her on shore, where the night was spent in temporarily stopping the three largest holes in her sides with boards, clay, and cotton waste. The next day she resumed her journey, with the crew bailing out the water as it continued to flow in. In this condition they emerged through the gap in the hills to smoother water and more friendly people, among whom the boat was grounded on a sand-bank and thoroughly repaired.

When the *Peace* went forward along the lower reaches of the Mobangi, the natives were as gracious in their welcome as they had been hostile on the previous passages. They knew by this time that the white man was no spirit whose mission was to add to the bondage of fear in which they were held by innumerable spirits who inhabited all nature around them and who invaded their dreams by night. They began to entertain some glimmering of consciousness that the white man's presence among them might make for their advantage. So they begged Grenfell to settle among them and build. He was greatly attracted by the prospect. He had noted many evidences of bigger populations here than in the Congo valley, and, generally speaking, the people were of a better type. The river promised a direct link with the Nile and Niger. So sites for mission stations were noted, and later on plans for their occupation were made. These were eventually abandoned, however, because of the superior claims of the main river. Grenfell completed this second journey in March 1885. About its experiences he writes :

Thank God we are safely back! It might have been otherwise, for we have encountered perils not a few. But the winds, which sometimes were simply terrific, and the rocks, which knocked three holes in the steamer as we were running away at night from cannibals, have not wrecked us. We have been attacked by natives about twenty different times, we have been stoned and shot at with arrows, and have been the marks for more spears than we can count.

After six months spent in superintending the mission at Arthington, in organizing transport between the lower Congo stations and Stanley Pool, and in making a dock for the steamer, Grenfell began, in August 1885, his third voyage in the *Peace*. This was devoted to the group of southern rivers about the Equator. His passengers included his wife and daughter and von François, a German explorer. As they started out, a lurid light was cast upon Congo mentality by the sight of a woman's body hanging from a tree over the river. She had suffered the extreme penalty for charging the white men only double the normal price for food, instead of the usually much higher figure at which they were assessed.

Among the almost innumerable incidents and adventures which marked this journey, those which took place on the important Lulongo, Buruki and Juapa rivers are especially noteworthy. Here Grenfell met with the light red-skinned Batwa pygmies, no more than four feet in height, whose enormous bearded heads sprang almost direct from squat shoulders. These Ishmaelitish nomads, unlike most Congo tribes, were notable for their large families. Their houses were of the simplest order, as they moved from place to place every few weeks, living

in trees on the way. They maintained perpetual warfare against the other tribes, killing women as well as men, and were reputed to be cannibals.

This central river system was sufficiently near to the Lomami river for the natives to have heard of the Arabs, and in consequence strong dislike was shown to strangers of every description. The armed resistance experienced elsewhere to the advance of the *Peace* was intensified here, and at an ambush in a narrow part of the river a flight of poisoned arrows was aimed with such deadly precision that Grenfell scarcely escaped with his life, and the entire crew was in danger of being shot. Grenfell writes :

> When being asked why they are following the steamer along the river with bows and arrows, they say they understand a big canoe, but a big thing that goes without paddles on the water they are afraid of. If we stop to go towards the bank they will run away.

Against this opposition there may be set an incident of another sort. Grenfell landed at one cannibal village, where he was offered a magnificent woman for his wife, in exchange for one of his best developed boatmen whom the people desired to eat ! Grenfell's comment was : " Yet there are plenty of oil-palms, sugar-cane and cassava ! " The conclusion of this voyage was reached in October 1885.

The fourth of Grenfell's exploratory tours covered the nearer tributaries—the Kasai and Lulua. The steamer had hardly got under way when she ran sheer on to a hidden reef, and was torn open. In three minutes her fore part was flooded and she

began to settle. With frantic haste Mrs Grenfell and her daughter, with the mission school children, were taken off, and as much of the instruments, food and bedding as could be collected was removed. To add to the peril of the situation, a tornado was seen to be approaching. Captain and crew strained feverishly to haul the steamer off the rocks, after which she reeled helplessly before the gale and the deluge, only to drive hard on to a sand-bank. Here she was put right again with new steel plates, and, after additional labour was secured from Stanley Pool, she was dug out and released to proceed on her journey.

The enormous, complicated maze of rivers flowing into the Kasai is approached from the Congo by way of the deep, surging, red-brick-coloured Kwa. These western tributaries were known to Portuguese merchants and missionaries four hundred years ago. The upper waters of the Kasai, six or seven hundred miles to the south-east, were lighted upon by Livingstone in 1854. This extensive river basin was amply provided with extraordinary physical features and natural products. Traces followed by early explorers proved the existence of a primeval inland ocean. The river courses were broken by dazzling waterfalls and by raging, swirling currents which teemed with leaping fish and snorting hippopotami, while above all was the fiery glare of the tropical sun.

Impenetrable forests, their rich green foliage in vivid contrast to the gleaming yellow waters of the Kasai, stretched away on either side to the mountain summits twenty miles beyond. Away to the south, giant mountains towered range behind range, peak

above peak, sharply outlined against the sky. Grenfell found in this area the raffia palm, from the gigantic orange-yellow fronds of which the fibre was obtained for weaving the celebrated Kasai pile cloth. Here, also, were great groves of palm-oil trees, and abundant plantations of pineapple, originally introduced with success from America. Grenfell's diaries contain copious notes about the number and variety of the tribes encountered in this area, and about its rich possibilities for missionary activities.

A fifth voyage was completed within three weeks, and was directed to Lake Leopold, which lay about a hundred miles east of Bolobo and was reached by way of the Kwa river. Though brief in duration, this voyage was rich in incident. At the head of the lake, the steamer's coming was awaited by five hundred armed men, who executed a war-dance while twenty of their number advanced up to their waists into the water, brandishing their spears and shooting arrows at the *Peace*. After ten minutes had passed the boat veered round, and a shrill blast was blown on the whistle. As its first sound split the air the entire rabble of natives took to their heels and fled in undisguised panic from the shore, while the occupants of the steamer shrieked with laughter.

On this trip the *Peace* was once again in danger of foundering, this time through the heavy rollers which disturbed the surface of this far-inland lake and broke over her. She also suffered from repeated daring attacks from hippopotami which seized the bows in their jaws and stripped the planking from the gunwale, sending showers of spray over the deck with their splashing.

In the final exploration, in December 1886, Grenfell took Bentley up the Kwa and along the Kwango in the hope that the latter stream might prove an avenue of approach to San Salvador. Falls only "the height of a table" were found to bar the way two hundred miles from the river junction.

Grenfell thus describes one amusing incident of this voyage:

> People were friendly everywhere except at one place. Here one morning four men came out with guns to bar our way, as they threatened they would do the previous evening: but when we blew our terrible pair of steam whistles, and made them shriek their loudest and most discordant notes, the way the warlike expedition collapsed, and the warriors helped their paddlers pull for the shore was so comical that we could not forbear a hearty laugh: and as we passed the abandoned craft on the beach, from which it had so vauntingly set forth a few minutes before, I am sorry to say our crew indulged in rude chaff to the best of their ability (they have great capacity in that direction) for the benefit of the runaways, who could not have been out of earshot.

The last days of the year, like previous intervals of sojourn at Stanley Pool, were devoted by Grenfell to the elaboration of a huge chart, drawn to a scale of about a mile to an inch, which showed the results of his explorations of the main river and its upper feeders. The sheets of this chart, when spread out, extended a distance of a hundred and twenty-five feet. Parallel with this draughtsmanship, he classified his vast stores of notes on natural history, folklore, religious beliefs, manners, customs, languages and all else that he had accumulated.

The anxieties of these two years were no less in number than those of the preceding period. The

climax to the anticipatory whale-boat trip was repeated on Grenfell's return from his second voyage in the *Peace*. On this occasion he received news of the loss of three men, including Comber's doctor brother, Sidney. By these deaths the staff was reduced to five men besides Grenfell, and on them rested the burden of maintaining the vital line of communications to Stanley Pool, of developing the Lower Congo mission work at San Salvador, Wathen, Underhill, and Arthington, and of keeping Grenfell free for his specialized task. Little wonder that he writes home, "Eyes, head and heart are aching. May the good Lord help the Congo mission! We are down very low, and as usual, I am alone." His faith quickly asserted itself, however, for he writes at the same time: "It seems strange that God should have blessed us so very markedly for awhile, and then have allowed sorrows like a flood to overtake us, yet 'our trust, our trust is in Him.'"

Yet, all unknown to them, reinforcements were on their way. Such was the passion of the home churches that, for every man who fell from the ranks through death or sickness, at least a dozen volunteered to take his place. But in the meantime the very stars in their courses seemed to array themselves against the up-river extension. It was decided in 1886 to shift Arthington station to a more convenient site on the shore of Stanley Pool, and while this was in actual process a disastrous bush fire, started by Congo boys, swept down upon the station. In a few hours everything except the houses was a blackened ruin. Plant for the projected up-river stations, steamer stores, spare gear, the missionaries' food supply, clothing and other

personal effects, vanished in the blaze. Grenfell arrived from the third voyage in time to see the smoking debris. The material damage, estimated at three thousand pounds, was outweighed by the inevitable postponement to a dim future of any up-river work. The story of the fire ran through the churches of Britain, and was the signal for a spontaneous outburst of generosity which quickly secured a sum sufficient to make good the entire loss, and nerved the harassed missionaries to fresh endeavours.

Writing about this calamity to Mr Hawkes, Grenfell says :

> We shall have to pull along as best we can. Some of us will, in the native idiom, " see trouble," but we seem pretty jolly notwithstanding. There's a sort of desperate " Mark Tapleyism " abroad, as we consider the last bar of soap and the last packet of candles, and who knows how many months before our orders are filled ? These personal matters are only things to laugh about : it is the throwing back of our work which hurts us all.

Yet another attempt to settle men up-river ended in disappointment. Two recruits joined Grenfell on his fifth voyage, with the intention of staying behind at Lukolela to establish the station there at the conclusion of the Lake Leopold survey. On the way one of them became so seriously ill that a hurried return had to be made to the Pool to save his life. Such other reinforcements happily arrived at this juncture that it became possible immediately to allot two other men to Lukolela. They went up in the *Peace* without Grenfell, in November 1886. The Upper Congo mission was in being at last.

Language observations proceeded on each journey. At the end of one trip Grenfell notes :

The matter of languages spoken on the banks of the river is one of the most important to which we can direct our attention in these early voyages. During this journey I have been able to make a collection of fifteen hundred new words. There is much sheer hard work to be done before we can hope to do much direct mission work among any of the people. I fully intended to have printed, on my return, the various vocabularies I have collected, but they were all destroyed by fire. I am afraid I felt their loss, and that of the gear belonging to our much-prized steamer, far more keenly than the loss of the more costly bales of cloth and boxes of beads.

As if to demonstrate that the darkest hour was over, a ray of light now appeared on the Lower Congo. The tangible results in converts that had been looked for were tardy in their appearing. Eight years had sped since Grenfell and Comber first set foot in San Salvador, and still no signs of a Congo church could be discerned. But in 1886, Comber's personal boy, Mantu, responded to the patient teaching and lofty influence of his master, declared himself a Christian, and was baptized in a stream a mile beyond the town, in the presence of the principal men, a few women, and fifty boys from the mission school. At special gatherings held somewhat later in a church built of stones from the ruined cathedral, no less than a hundred men and women were enrolled as enquirers and many publicly discarded their fetishes and charms. Several of the king's wives declared themselves Christians and persisted in attending the services in face of their lord's opposition. Persecution and punishment failed to frighten them. They were absolute in their determination to follow the new way. "Never mind if he kills us," they said; "we do not mind dying for Jesus

who died for us." As the result of Comber's persuasion, the king withdrew his opposition after a time and his wives were allowed to attend the services unmolested. Some eventually joined the church.

To Grenfell, away in the isolation of Stanley Pool, and in the detachment from spiritual activities enforced upon him by his set task, this news was electric. He writes: "It seems as though the Lord had chosen the most unpromising places in which to reveal Himself in might and power, and to encourage us to go forward." If he had ever doubted that the clouds would break he was triumphant now in his assurance. He had chafed at his separation from San Salvador, but he now rejoiced that other men had entered into his labours. He could reckon confidently upon the day when similar awakenings would be seen along every river he had charted. In this temper he left Arthington station on January 5th, 1887, to take furlough in England.

His one hesitation about leaving Congo was due to the fact that his beloved *Peace* must pass temporarily into other hands. The extent to which she had become a part of him is to be gathered from these sentences written to a fellow missionary:

> In my mind, nobody will ever do for her as I have done. That's egotism, no doubt, a sort of paternal weakness for the craft, for which, perhaps, I may be excused. You can understand something about the feeling, I fancy, if others cannot.

CHAPTER IX

CREATING A BASE

1887–1895. Age 38–46 years.

THE volume of the welcome which Grenfell received from the churches on reaching England in March 1887 bore witness to the degree to which his activities and achievements had fired the imagination and enthusiasm of old and young. He shunned the platform and the crowd, however. His concern was to speed the progress of the mission through contact with officials and committees, and through personal work among prospective missionary candidates. But the insistent demands of learned Societies, whose members were alert to gain at first-hand the vast and unique information that he could alone supply, admitted no evasion. Their assessment of his explorations and researches is to be judged by the bestowal upon him of the Royal Geographical Society's Founder's Gold Medal.

He was summoned to Brussels early in the summer of 1887 to advise in the negotiations taking place between Belgium and France for the delimitation of their mutual frontier on the northern side of Stanley Pool. Leopold, King of the Belgians, entertained him at the Palace, engaged him in an intimate discussion of Congo affairs, and expressed high approbation of his services in the opening up of the

country. The manner of this royal reception impressed him. He writes:

> The King was very gracious. . . . He expressed great interest in those portions of the State to which Mr Arthington seems specially drawn. . . . He went so far as to hope that the Society would be able to push on in these directions.

In the popular press of Belgium Grenfell was the hero of the hour.

Returning to London in August, he was staggered by the news that Thomas Comber had been stricken with illness and had died upon the homeward voyage which had been prescribed as a last desperate remedy. The tender side of Grenfell's nature came into play with the passing of the first paralysing effects of the shock. He shared the oppressive duty of breaking the news to Comber's father, and revealed his own grief in a letter to Mr Baynes, who was away from London at the time:

> I scarcely know how to write it—my heart is indeed very sore—for one of the heaviest blows that could have fallen on the Congo Mission has just come down with a crushing effect. Not only does this blow fall upon us who have lost a loving-hearted friend and devoted fellow-worker, who was ever ready to sacrifice himself, and whose charity never failed, but you will remember, as I do, the heaviness and bitterness that this stroke will bring to the heart of dear relatives, and a wide circle of affectionate friends. You know, my dear Mr Baynes, the especially close bonds of sympathy which bound my dear colleague, Tom Comber, and myself, and how intimately we have been associated during the last ten years: you know, too, many of the difficulties we have faced, and many of the sorrows we have borne together, and will, I am confident, sympathize very sincerely and tenderly

with me, and with those who mourn the loss of the greatest and dearest of friends.

In this extreme hour Grenfell's thoughts turned to his colleagues in Congo. None knew better than he how acute would be their need under the loss of a leader so dowered as Comber with enthusiasm, strength, and affection. For him, there was but one sure, solitary path, and therefore he took swift action. The day upon which the foregoing letter was written he dispatched, at intervals of about an hour each, three telegrams to Mr Baynes. The first apprised him of Comber's death; the second suggested his own immediate departure for Congo; and the third announced his readiness to start. A second letter the same afternoon included the laconic sentence, "I have already commenced to pack my things."

The vein of obstinacy which lay hidden below his gentler qualities was struck by the opposition with which his decision was met. Against the solicitations of the secretaries, the committee, and other supporters, who were reluctant to jeopardize another valuable life, and against the adverse opinion of the Society's medical adviser, he was adamant. His brethren were in dire need. His wife was ready to go with him. Therefore, although he was far from fit, he must shorten his furlough and go. So he caught the first available boat from Liverpool, a crippled craft which crawled southwards for seven weeks, with an impatient man on board. Underhill was reached in October 1887. Here he found ample justification for the course he had taken, if such were needed. Death had opened two more gaps in the

ranks of the missionary force, and the peril of the situation was such that it was obvious that Grenfell's experience was essential in the front line at Stanley Pool. After spending several weeks in the reorganization of the base at Underhill, he went forward with the growing conviction that he had not erred.

With the completion of the exploration, the up-river work entered now upon a new phase. A clear way was opened for the creation of mission stations at which sustained propaganda could be carried on. The missionaries forthwith surrendered themselves to the attainment of their plan of a chain of ten stations along the main stream. Grenfell was at last able, after having spent nearly ten years in Congo, to realize his cherished hope of initiating a progressive work that should issue in the Congo Church. We shall see him henceforth as a missionary settled at a station, though much of his time was absorbed perforce in steamer work which he assumed unselfishly so that younger men, who might have taken it over, should remain in uninterrupted service at Arthington, Lukolela, and Bolobo.

The Arthington district, where Grenfell was mostly engaged throughout 1888, proved a hard soil in which to sow the missionary message. The chief, on being called to account by the missionaries for killing one of his people, replied: "You say it is not good for me to kill—why then does God kill my people? And you say God is good—the next time God kills one, I will kill three!" Here in the heart of Africa, and from a pagan mind, Grenfell came violently against the age-long and universal problem of the character of God in His dealings with His children.

As a set-off against this, six boys from this par-

ticular tribe, which was regarded as being the most stubborn of any hitherto encountered, began to attend the school. Good cheer also arrived from San Salvador—" They have had a baptismal service," is Grenfell's exultant record, " and are full of hope and enthusiasm ! I wonder when we shall be able to chronicle similar good tidings on the Upper River ? "

The beginning of Bolobo was in this fashion. During Grenfell's furlough in 1887, relations between the Congo Free State authorities and the Bolobo people became embittered to the point of rupture. The State buildings were fired and destroyed, and severe punishment was inflicted in revenge. The *Peace* chanced to call while the resentment of the people was still flaming, and was greeted with a reception that increased in hostility every minute. Bentley, who was on board with his wife and infant son, suddenly recollected that a white woman had never before been seen in this region. He called to his wife to bring the baby on deck, and their appearance was greeted by an instantaneous hush on shore. Spears and knives were dropped, while the excitement of the warriors centred upon this fresh interest. As their minds began to grasp the new fact that the white man with his wife and child was not a god " come down in the likeness of men," but was a human being of the same species as themselves, they beckoned, with shouts of delight, to the steamer party to come among them. Nothing would satisfy these sooty, oily, red-dyed savages but that they should dandle the white-gowned baby in their arms. So he passed from man to man and from woman to woman, to the accompaniment of ejaculations of

admiration and delight. His mother was equally scrutinized and praised. Antagonism surrendered to goodwill. The missionaries were assured henceforth of friendship. The foundations of the Bolobo mission were laid through the unconscious influence of a baby boy.

In the early part of 1888 Grenfell ran up-river in the *Peace* as far as Lukolela, where he noted with pronounced pleasure the clearance of eight acres of forest on which a fire-proof, clay-walled store had been reared. For his two colleagues' sake he was perturbed by the inadequacy of their grass dwelling-house with only three twelve-foot rooms. The missionaries had already gained some knowledge of the language, while the people, from becoming friendly and cordial towards the white men, had begun to respond to their teaching. The most auspicious result of this trip was that on the outward passage one West African and two Congolese were disembarked at Bolobo, about mid-way between Arthington and Lukolela, to begin building. By the time the boat called on the return journey, three acres of shrub had been cleared and two small grass houses had been finished.

About this time Grenfell sent home a summary of his conclusions upon the situation of the mission, which produced a salutary reaction on the part of the churches. He called attention to the numerical impoverishment of the staff and to the enormous encroachments of steamer work upon time and strength. He continued:

> We are working upon a terribly extravagant scale, considering the work we are doing. We have organized elaborate overland up-river transport, and expend the

greater part of our strength in keeping the machinery running. The same machinery would serve for the ten up-river stations. But as for one up-river station, we cannot work with less machinery. You can easily realize the wasteful conditions under which we are placed, and you cannot be surprised that there are not a few of us who are very dissatisfied at spending so much strength for so little more than nothing.

If there is any prospect of the original programme being filled, or even half-filled, we will still be glad to do the drudgery, and keep the machinery running; but if the Society has decided to call the flag back instead of bringing the men up to the flag, the sooner you sound the call and begin to re-organize the better. We can't continue as we are. It is either *advance or retreat*; but if it is to be retreat, you must not count on me. I will be no party to it, and you will have to do without me. . . . My heart is hot within me, and I feel I cannot plead. If love and duty and sacred promises are nothing, nothing that I can say will avail.

Happily, advance became the accepted order of the day. The high mortality of the preceding years was now greatly reduced, liability to fever diminished with increasing knowledge of the laws of health, and steady reinforcements appeared to man existing stations and to found fresh ones.

Grenfell now made his home at Bolobo, a choice taken for other reasons besides its promise as a missionary sphere. Arthington was subject to periods of privation owing to the inadequacy of local food supplies to maintain the natives and the increasing white population, and to the irregularity and costliness of conveying imported stores from the coast. Bolobo offered prospects of improvement in this respect. Arthington had also proved inconvenient as a steamer base. Bolobo provided greater facilities for navigation and docking. Grenfell settled here

in the spring of 1889, when the river banks were lined with masses of fiery reddish foliage interspersed with crimson gold-tipped leaves, decorated with creepers of graceful convolvuli, and perfumed with scents that suggested the jasmine and honeysuckle of the English countryside. Red-berried Christmas shrubs formed rich contrast to giant snow-blossomed bombax trees. The rising river swirled between perpendicular cliffs of white sandstone and penetrated the wonderful caves and ravines in which the district abounded. The air was vibrant with the chaffering and chattering, humming and chirping, grunting and croaking, flashing and swooping of the endless orchestra of wild animal and bird life.

The first rude dwelling houses of the missionaries were mere shacks fashioned from forest timber and jungle grass, and furnished with such improvised articles as were deemed necessary to bare existence. These were gradually supplemented, and afterwards superseded, by buildings composed of better material imported from Europe and carted up-river, which in due time set standards that provoked efforts among the natives towards richer and fuller modes of living. Educational and spiritual beginnings were attempted on human material which also was primitive and unpromising, but which underwent extraordinary transformations through the influence of the new Way of Life introduced by these white men of God.

In one of his early letters from Bolobo, Grenfell states that the best that could be said of these people was too bad to be written down. This exaggeration was at least pardonable in view of the things that he saw and suffered. A series of photographs sent

home to friends about this time is commented upon thus :

> No 5, the dancing group, will hardly do for the pages of the *Missionary Herald.* I suppose it would be too shocking, and yet it is respectability and decency itself, compared with reality and the greater part of our surroundings.

Rapacity, superstition, and lawlessness seemed boundless. Every man's hand was active against his fellows. Possession of the least degree of power or wealth served as an excuse for the oppression of the common man. Traps would be laid for an unsuspecting victim, oft-times with the connivance of his wife. Should the ruse prove successful, exorbitant damages would be demanded, with the result that the hapless wretch might sell himself into slavery, under compulsion, to pay the bill. Witchcraft stalked through the district unrestrained. Any man who suspected another of injury or of evil intent, or who for some real or imagined reason desired his removal, could lay information with a witch-doctor against him. This tyrant, on payment of his toll, would call his terrorizing powers into action, and launch a public accusation against the offender who, in his conscious innocence or from sheer bravado, would submit to the ordeal of drinking the poison cup. If he vomited he would be judged innocent. If, as generally happened, he fell to the ground, his death agonies would be intensified by the brutalities of the watching crowd.

The district was plagued with petty strife. These recurring outbursts were often prompted by trivial causes and sometimes persisted for many weeks. The

occasion might be the discovery of buried goods, such as ivory, or tusks, the right to which was disputed by two or more parties, none of whom might be the real owners. The range of the conflict might quickly widen until many villages were involved. Notwithstanding that hostilities might not be sharp or casualties many, their subtle character involved widespread suffering and dismay. Slaves, who had no concern in their masters' conflicts, were impressed into the fighting and endured most of the losses. The privations of the innocent were acute. Their houses were burnt, their plantations destroyed, their goods plundered, their infirm and aged banished and their women abused. Often the cause of the quarrel was forgotten as the warfare ran its weary course. But the mere presence of the missionaries now suggested a new hope to the distressed women and children who crowded their compound for protection and maintenance. A New Year's Day at Bolobo in the early nineties was heralded by a " scrap," which took place less than a hundred yards from Grenfell's bungalow, over fourpence. A general mêlée ensued in which the participants slashed each other's bodies with long knives to the point of exhaustion, after which their friends on either side took up the challenge and continued the fight in the bush with old flint-lock guns until their appetites were satiated.

Besides their domestic and clan differences, a fresh element was introduced by the imposition of additional restrictions and restraints, consequent upon the development of the Congo Free State. These set up irritations which stirred hot, undisciplined passions. The murder of a State soldier or soldiers

would be the signal for ready reprisals. Villages would be burnt as a punishment, and compensation in the shape of money and military service would be demanded as a guarantee of good behaviour. Almost interminable palavers would ensue, during which ill temper would be excited and antagonisms against the white man intensified. Grenfell was often called upon to act as peacemaker. One typical dispute dragged on for weeks before a reconciliation was effected. Grenfell thus describes the happy sequel:

> The night after the final settlement had been arrived at, the chiefs sent a pig to Mrs Grenfell, as a token of their thanks for the part she had played in the matter. Officially, of course, the missionary's wife could do nothing: but indirectly she did a great deal to strengthen the hands of the moderates, and to make the nasty pill, of submission to the "powers that be," palatable.

Grenfell, his confrères and their families lived in momentary peril from men whose law was that of the jungle. Human life was of so little consequence that the population would have wiped itself out but for the fact that it was replenished by the purchase of slaves. These were so easily obtained that their execution was frequent and unnoticed. When Grenfell remonstrated on one occasion he was met with the answer, "We must kill slaves to keep the others in order."

Into this awful situation, where the mutual forces of strife and superstition, cruelty and craftiness, abomination and avarice, combined to resist anything nobler and higher, the leaven of the Gospel began slowly but surely to work.

> It is more difficult to make a beginning at a large centre like Bolobo [Grenfell writes] than at a smaller

place. . . . But the leaven of the Word is permeating the mass, and though its visible results as yet are very, very slight, yet it is certainly at work, and in God's good time it shall be manifested in His glory.

The practice of evil openly was discontinued by some, and though it was followed in secret, a sense of shame had been stirred. A comprehension that the missionaries stood for something finer is to be seen in an incident that followed the death of an old chief notorious for the number of living slaves he had buried with the corpses of his dead subjects. Several lives were sacrificed at his own funeral, but one woman who was being conveyed down-river for this purpose, began to shout as the canoe passed the mission station, " They are going to kill me! Come and take me, they are going to kill me!" Two parties of schoolboys set out in pursuit, at Grenfell's instigation, one on the river and the other along a hidden bank path. The canoe drew inland to escape from its pursuers, only to land in the arms of the other party. Defying the threats of armed townsmen, the weaponless mission boys seized the bound woman, rowed off with her and carried her in triumph to the station. The success of so defiant a challenge to this sacred custom of antiquity was proof of the operation of a new dynamic in the youth of the district, and of the weakening of the strangle-hold of heathen rites upon their elders.

Old prejudices, beliefs and habits were long in dying, however. The missionaries were told that the natives saw no harm in killing witches, or slaves whom they had bought, or in stealing or lying, if these could be practised with impunity. Grenfell writes in 1889 :

I have just finished translating the Ten Commandments. "They are very good" the people say; but none is willing to be fettered by the awkward conditions involved by accepting them. They would be very glad if their neighbours would accept them, for they can see the advantage of living among well-behaved people. They cannot at all see, though, why a Supreme Being should trouble about their dealings one with the other, and why they should be answerable to Him for their wrongdoings.

Advance at Bolobo accorded with precedents set elsewhere in Congo. An unremitting acquisition of the language was accompanied by an assiduous cultivation of friendly relations with the people. Early attempts were made to gather the children into simple boarding schools, in which, isolated from the harmful associations of heathen life, Christian truths might be absorbed by them and disciplined habits cultivated among them. Grenfell and his colleagues were quick to realize the danger of creating a mere vacuum through the prohibition of certain tribal manners and customs, and, with true genius, sought to fill it by teaching trades and handicrafts. With characteristic foresight they discerned in these school-children the future Christian teachers and preachers, home-makers and tribal leaders, through whose witness the Kingdom of God should be established.

Their first efforts to secure scholars met with ill-success. "How much will you pay me for the fish I shall not catch while I am at school?" was the not unnatural question asked by one lad. The difference between themselves and the mission boys brought from other places, and the increased trust reposed in the missionaries, produced its effect

in time, and the first mission school was established. By the spring of 1889 the progress made warranted the erection of the first meeting house. "Only a very modest sort of chapel," Grenfell described it, "about twenty-two feet square, with walls of sun-dried bricks three feet high and doorways on each side." The roof was of grass supported on poles, and the arrow guards from the *Peace* were used for the sides. The opening services, which were attended by about seventy men and women, who mostly found seats on the brick walls, were happily planned for Easter Day. Grenfell was the preacher, and the joy with which he rang out, to these bound and fearful folk, the triumphant message of new power for this life and assurance for the life to come is easy to imagine.

The members of the small missionary fraternity found full scope for the exercise of their varied talents in these early days. The men were busily absorbed, from morning until late evening, in an ever-widening round of duties. However restricted their early conceptions of missionary life, these were broadened as they faced their task. In the play of such talents as they possessed they found other talents added to them, so that before long these men were sharing the responsibilities of supplementing the rudimentary school education with training in agriculture and horticulture. They experimented in making bricks from local clay, and once success was achieved, they established kilns and yards which produced bricks and tiles by the hundred thousand for the station buildings. They started a smithy, a saw-pit, and a laundry. They opened a dispensary where such knowledge as they possessed

was used for the good of a suffering community. They transferred the printing press from Lukolela, and so thoroughly initiated young men into the art of printing that in a few years their work was included in an exhibition at Brussels—to the consternation of certain labour leaders, who professed to detect in this evidence of African ability a menace to the security of white labour. The missionaries' wives played a noble part among the women and girls and were at least as busy as their husbands. They shared in the school work. They taught housewifery, and introduced home life to the district. They gathered girls around them and taught them to read and to sew. They ran a laundry. They showed new and more advantageous ways of cooking and serving the common native foods. They gave instruction in the care of infants and in the treatment of illness with the object of lessening the appalling mortality.

Grenfell was often absent from Bolobo on voyages taken in the *Peace* to maintain communications with the lower river, to found new stations, and to make fresh explorations. Yet he was at hand for periods sufficiently lengthy to share in the developments and to rejoice in the spreading influence of his colleagues. He writes in 1896 :

> There are not lacking signs that fill us with hope for the future. Chiefs no longer exercise their power of life and death, and are losing their hold. They are evidently having a bad time of it with some of the young sparks in the town. To-day, girls are beginning to act independently. They see the mission boys and girls marrying as they wish and do not want to marry the oldest man in their homes.

Another letter written about this time strikes the same note of progress :

> Among the young people growing up round us we have some really fine brave lads, and I am not a little proud of the way they have behaved on several occasions when they were placed in very trying circumstances. They have their failings, like other lads, and often try me by their crooked ways and wickednesses ; but they have the makings of brave-hearted, honest men, and I am full of hope that God will make use of them in producing a new order of things among their down-trodden and much suffering countrymen.

The goal of these varied efforts was the creation of a church at Bolobo, and everything was directed towards its attainment. Progress was, however, slow and cautious in order that the superstructure might be capable of bearing the shocks and strains to which it would inevitably be subjected. Such enquirers as appeared underwent a long and exacting discipline and training. The baptism of those who gave proof of the reality of their faith was deliberately delayed. The church was actually formed in 1889 with a membership of five. At the beginning of 1896, the number had only increased to twenty-seven, including the seven missionaries on the station. Services were held daily in the school-house. A day school was attended by about sixty children. Classes for others were held in the evenings, and the surrounding villages were visited regularly. During 1896 the number of day scholars leapt forward to a hundred and twenty, and the Sunday scholars to a hundred and fifty. Compared with those of other Societies in the country these results were meagre, but the B.M.S.

missionaries were spared the disheartening experience of their more eager brethren of other Societies, who were obliged later to record heavy reversions to heathenism among those whom they had too hastily enrolled in their churches. Membership in the church involved witness in the community. Everyone was a missionary, and some were set apart as whole or part-time evangelists. Persecution was the lot of these early disciples, and the fact that they generally stood firm amid peril and privation and subtle alluring temptations to return to their former life, is eloquent of the reality of their Christian belief. Grenfell's admiration for their fidelity was sometimes tinged with quiet amusement at their methods. Some of the evangelists were known to summon sleeping members of their congregations to stand up, and to accelerate any tardy responses with a stick. Congregations were sometimes permitted to bring handwork to the services in order to employ their fingers while they listened to the preaching. This practice had to be discontinued, however, when the handwork was extended to include cracking palm-nuts with hammers or chopping firewood!

The internal conflict between the old life and the new is illustrated in Loleka, who came under Grenfell's influence in 1887 and was brought by him to Bolobo, where he advanced so steadily that at the end of nine years he became his chief carpenter. He was intelligent and strong as an ox. He was constantly embroiled in native quarrels, and on one occasion fought six State soldiers single-handed.

If he were as good as he is intelligent and strong [Grenfell writes], I should be much happier on his account. . . . Big as he is, he is happily willing to listen to Patience

[Mrs Grenfell], who manages him, all things considered, wonderfully well. If he comes to good, it will be largely by her influence.

Mbala was a slave boy, brought down-river by Arabs in 1886 and sold at Bolobo. He was gripped by the missionaries' teaching and began the practice of visiting a village three miles distant from Bolobo once a week to pass on what he had learnt at the mission, with such effect that the chief asked later for a resident teacher. Mbala was united in Christian marriage—a novelty for Bolobo in those days—with a girl who was chief laundress to the mission. Her activity and helpfulness made her in Grenfell's eyes an effective answer to the "unutterable laziness" of the negro.

Such individual results were the promise of a great ingathering which, though delayed until after Grenfell's death, justified the care and caution of these early years.

By 1895 the station had so enlarged that Grenfell was able to report:

Bolobo has not only its special staff to provide for, but also the steamer and press workers, and is thus fast becoming quite a big station—that is, as Congo stations go. Did I tell you that last year we earned over five hundred pounds by carrying freight for other missions by our steamer? Even this meant work—freights are not so plentiful this year, so we shall not do so well.

In a letter covering some photographs he comments upon one in particular:

I imagine the group of youths and young men will be as interesting as any of the pictures—to me it is the most interesting, being even fuller of immediate promise

than the school group. More than one-third of those composing this picture are members of our church, and some of them are active and capable workers in the Master's service as well as that of the mission. The best workers at their trades are the best and most consistent in serving the Lord.

The coming of a new day for the manhood of Congo was already foreshadowed.

CHAPTER X

STRATEGIC ADVANCE

1889–1893. Age 40–44 years.

"A MAN of forty is certainly going down the hill in Africa." Grenfell wrote these words on Christmas Eve, 1889. He was approaching what was to prove the half-way mark of his African career. The sobering realization that he had entered middle life made him pause, and its effect upon him revealed itself again and again in his letters of this period. Before he left the crest of the hill he turned once more to survey the road he had travelled, and then faced the future with the resolve so to husband his resources that he might at last pass through the "Sunset gate of life" in triumph. He was conscious of his own grey hairs and of the loss of so many of the companions of his earlier years. "It is surprising when I count, how few seniors I have on the coast. I don't know of one in Congo, I don't mean in age, but in years of African service." His thoughts ran back to the distant years and found expression in this suggestive piece of self-revelation:

> This is a shrivelling up sort of work, so much alone, so much surrounded by sorrow and sin. One longs for old friends and old times and gets impatient now and then for the good times that are surely coming.

He set his pace along the way that awaits him:

I find I must relinquish a lot of my intentions and be content with a much smaller programme than hitherto I have found myself equal to fill. I find that if I am to do anything I must concentrate my efforts upon my purpose in life with a fuller consecration than ever before. I feel that what I do I must do quickly now.

Echoes of a bitter theological controversy that was rending the Baptist Church at home brought this rejoinder from him :

There is nothing like work on the mission field for widening one's horizon. Where I am exactly I don't know, any more than a good many *celebrities* at home know where they are. I know John iii. 16, and that's good enough holding ground for my anchor. When I see the littleness of some of you Christians I am glad to be away from it all, as I am glad to be away from the interminable Irish question. As you say, " Christianity wants more of Christ's spirit and less of theology." So say I. Our Christianity is too much a matter of words, and far too little a matter of works. One might think that works were of the devil by the assiduity with which the great proportion of our church members keep clear of them.

He found pleasure in a rare opportunity to engage in the congenial task of translation :

I think I told you of my having translated the Ten Commandments, and sent them down to Underhill where they have a printing press, to be printed there. I am now busy with the Gospel of Mark, but I find it slow work. . . . I find it very difficult to translate many of the ideas which are really of great importance. For instance, I can find no word for " forgiveness " and it has to be translated by " cleansing." " Sanctification " I have not ventured to grapple with yet. Of course at the best in these early days a translation is only an approximation to what it ought to be, but if I can only manage to give the people an idea of the truth I shall be glad.

It was not long the lot of Grenfell to indulge his linguistic gifts, or to follow out his set purpose to limit his activities. Until the close of the year 1890 he was in sole charge of the *Peace*, which was worked at full pressure in connection with the founding of two other up-river stations besides Bolobo. Afterwards he was involved in a stubborn controversy occasioned through the forcible seizure of the *Peace* by the authorities of the Congo Free State. He was called next to supervise the construction of a new and larger mission steamer. He was requisitioned for a prolonged period as the leader of an International Boundary Commission. Then in the mid-nineties there began to reach him the first mutterings of a storm that ere long was to involve him and his colleagues in sharpest conflict with the administration, and to bring in its train vexatious hindrances and obstacles to the growth of the mission. This bitter experience arose in connection with the brutalities resulting from the exploitation of the Congo peoples in the sordid and devastating quest for rubber. All these happenings fell during the opening up of Bolobo, described in the last chapter, and the tale of their unfolding in the next few chapters is necessary for adequate appreciation of the part which Grenfell played in them.

The minds of the missionaries were greatly concerned during the latter part of the eighties with the choice of suitable sites for fresh spheres of service. Grenfell cast his vote for Bopoto, or Upoto, as the next to be entered. It lay on the north river bank, four hundred miles east of Lukolela. It was well populated and its language was common to an extensive area. It promised to serve as a Christian barrier

against the anticipated advance westwards of the Moslem Arabs. The arrival of the *Peace* at Upoto in February, 1890, was greeted by a vast crowd of naked men and women, who were attracted from their squalid villages by the noise of the steamer's approach. The boat's company included five Upoto men who had been carried into slavery years before by the Bangalas and who travelled on her now, at their own request, up-river from Bangala. Their presence contributed to the enthusiasm of the welcome extended to the missionaries—Grenfell and Lawson Forfeitt—and to the alacrity with which the chief assisted in the allocation of land for the proposed station. The site agreed upon extended a hundred yards along the river front, and sloped upwards from the bank in two terraces, with still higher land behind. It was secured for a price of eight hundred brass rods, two pieces of cloth, three empty jam jars, two knives, two forks, two spoons, two mirrors, a cup of beads and a cup of cowries—eloquent of primitive days long since vanished! The Upoto people, whose villages lined the river bank for ten miles, maintained established communications, of which the missionaries hoped to take advantage, with interior tribes. Their fine physique impressed Grenfell. His judgment upon their moral standards was less enthusiastic. The utmost he would say in their favour was that they were not so bad as their neighbours. Although not cannibals themselves, they readily sold the bodies of their dead to their cannibal neighbours. Two children were received by them, during Grenfell's first visit, in payment for a body.

While, as was only to be expected, the real intention

of the missionaries was but dimly perceived from this initial contact, the people grasped the fact that the newcomers were not traders, but were anxious to settle among them for their good. The chief showed proof of his goodwill by offering Grenfell a fine goat, while the tribe sent one of their number down-river in the *Peace* to ensure her return. Within three months she was again at Upoto, this time to disembark the first two pioneers, who began immediately to build a small house with materials left behind on the first visit.

Cruising about the river on these trips between Bolobo and Upoto, Grenfell discovered another site and claimed it for the mission in July 1890. Monsembi was then the hub of an extensive riverine population mid-way between the other two places. While the Bolobo people were designated by the surrounding tribes as traders, and the Upoto people as fishermen, the Bangalas of Monsembi were generally reputed to be cannibals. Slaving and raiding formed their favourite occupations. Normally contented and friendly, the boisterous temperament of this powerful tribe often expressed itself in mischief or outrage. Unbridled passions were liable to run riot in inter-tribal combat on the flimsiest pretext or provocation. The bodies of the slain were eaten by the victors. Human limbs conveyed openly through the villages were a common sight. The missionaries' first glimpse of this gruesome practice haunted their dreams for nights afterwards. The death agonies of captives consigned to the flames were retailed with gusto by their murderers. Open contempt was displayed towards the missionaries on account of their steadfast refusal to share in the

fighting. The natives treated with incredulity their statement that they desired the friendship of all, and that they sought to make all men friends with each other. Perplexity was also caused through the missionaries' unwillingness to trade in ivory tusks or in slaves.

Three native huts formed the first homes of the two Monsembi pioneers. In seven weeks a house, fifty feet by twenty feet, had been erected on a clearing. Although it was a mere shack of mats and bamboo walls, with a roof of palm-fronds, it proved a palace in comparison with the huts, through which the rain penetrated in streams and the wind howled in wild gusts. It further afforded a measure of privacy that was impossible, either by day or night, in the earlier shelter.

Having promoted the beginning of Monsembi, the *Peace* proceeded down-river to Stanley Pool, leaving Grenfell at Bolobo on the way. The last day of August 1890 was a Sunday. The morning hours had run their normal course, but the stillness of the afternoon was broken by the approach of a steamer which carried two State officials and twelve soldiers. One of the former hurriedly boarded the *Peace* and peremptorily demanded her surrender to the authorities for the purpose of conveying an armed force with munitions up the Kasai against the Arabs. Failing a voluntary submission, he was empowered to seize her by force and place the soldiers in possession. Previous negotiations had evidently transpired, as Mr White, the missionary then in charge, replied that, while he had Grenfell's consent to the *Peace* being used to transport ordinary cargo for the State, he refused to carry military

material. The immediate crisis was surmounted by an agreement that the *Peace* should make a flying trip to Bolobo with station equipment and for repairs, on condition that she was at Stanley Pool again within a fortnight. She completed the return journey ahead of time with Grenfell on board. His soul was wrung by the despite done to his ship. "They are taking my heart's blood," he cries, "in taking the *Peace*. The best thing that could happen to the poor *Peace* would be for her to run on a rock, and sink. She will be no more the old *Peace* when they have done with her. The soul has gone out of her."

On reaching Stanley Pool, Grenfell immediately opened negotiations with the Belgian Commissaire, whose answer was to make the seizure of the *Peace* absolute, haul down her British flag and put Grenfell on shore. Within a few hours her crew was under military discipline, she was packed with munitions, and over her brass-lettered name the ugly muzzle of a maxim gun projected. And this wrong was done to her, notwithstanding the presence of three idle State steamers at Leopoldville hard by.

The affair now assumed an international complexion. Distressed and angered at the debasement of his beloved vessel, Grenfell resolved to proceed as soon as possible to Boma to lodge a complaint with the Governor. He sent a special courier down country with a request that details should be cabled to Mr Baynes, who straightway complained to Brussels. When the story was published in the British and Continental press such excitement was aroused that inspired denials were issued from Brussels. Grenfell decided to lay the case in person before the Missionary Committee and the Govern-

ments, and reached England in December 1890. Protracted negotiations followed in Congo as well as in Europe. Before long it became apparent that the Belgian State authorities were conscious that a blunder had been committed in the arbitrary confiscation of the steamer and in the rash removal of the flag which, as a British vessel, she had a right to fly. Her restoration was ordered, full military honours were to be given to her flag, and an indemnity, which was refused by the Society, was offered. The steamer was again in B.M.S. hands by the end of December, and an assurance was given that there should be no further molestation.

One other supreme matter engaged Grenfell during this furlough. It had long been obvious that the *Peace* formed a slender thread upon which to suspend the sole responsibility for maintaining the steadily lengthening up-river work. Under the strain of six years' continuous service she had worn thin. At any moment she might break, with disastrous results to those who depended upon her. Her recent confiscation by the State served further to focus the mind of the Committee and of the missionary staff upon more adequate steamer provision. As a result, the building of a second boat was decided upon in 1890. Her style and shape followed that of the *Peace*, with such modifications as experience showed were desirable, and with such enlargements as present and future requirements suggested were necessary. She was larger and swifter and more comfortable than the *Peace*, and was named the *Goodwill*. Grenfell, fortunately, was able to repeat for her the service he had rendered to the *Peace*. He was at hand to draw the plans, to prepare the specifications, and

to place the contract again with Messrs Thornycroft. Once more he was in attendance at the Chiswick yard, breaking away only occasionally for brief visits to his native county. He was present at the trial trips on the Thames, and acted as showman to the innumerable parties who travelled in her from Westminster to Chiswick and back. He reached Congo at the end of 1891, in advance of her arrival there, and superintended her dispatch by carriers up country. His expectation that other men would compass her reconstruction during his absence on the Lunda Boundary Commission during 1892 was not fulfilled, and in the end the task mainly fell upon his shoulders.

The movement of the steamer parts overland had lagged badly. Grenfell's younger colleagues who had manfully assumed the burden had been hampered by inter-tribal warfare in Lower Congo, and reduced in numbers by illness and the competition of other claims. So that on his arrival at Bolobo in August 1893, instead of finding the *Goodwill*, as he had hoped, afloat in good order she was still ashore in extensive disarray. Added to this, several vital parts had gone astray *en route*, so that others had to be forged and finished in their place. For three months, with the skilled assistance of his native youths, Grenfell was absorbed in steamer building to the exclusion of all other tasks. The boat took the water at the end of January 1894.

One of the tragedies of missionary pioneering reveals itself continually in Grenfell's letters of this period. The early enthusiasm of the churches for the Congo Mission seemed to have spent itself with the realization of the costly responsibilities of the

enterprise. Grenfell had been encouraged to pursue his explorations and to frame his schemes for missionary occupation, and none knew better than he how vast and promising the opportunities were. He saw fields of such ripeness that the harvest-time was slipping by for lack of reapers. He sorrowed at the necessity of maintaining for a mere skeleton of stations an elaborate system of communication and transport. He foresaw further disaster because of the overstrained condition of his little company of loyal comrades. Once again it looked as if, for the lack of daring on the part of the Home Committee, of persistent advocacy in the churches and of sacrifice by the members, the limit of support for the men at the front had been reached and another golden hour was to be missed. It is a story that has appeared in every chapter of missionary expansion and its end is not yet. Grenfell's heartache concerning it may be gathered from these extracts from his letters:

Between 1887 and 1890 (my previous term) we managed to open three new stations. Six more years have gone and we have only opened one! True we have had a series of hard times, but we have also had the Centennial.[1]

It is a great disappointment, after the hopes raised by the Centenary celebrations and its programme for advance, to find ourselves reduced in numbers, and, for the present, with but little prospect of adequate reinforcement. We have the best of the land still before us to be possessed, we have laid down expensive lines of communication for entering upon its occupation, and now, instead of taking advantage of these means of communication, we have to maintain them at great cost, and to wait for the opportunity to turn them to

[1] The Centenary of the formation, in 1792, of the Baptist Missionary Society, when £100,000 was raised for forward work.

account. God grant that the time may soon come when we may act more worthily of our opportunities, and more faithfully discharge our responsibilities in these matters!

I wish to goodness we could get our folk fervid enough to embark on some more or less "madcap" scheme, such, for instance, as the redemption of the promises we made some eighteen or nineteen years ago, when we talked of Lake Albert and of the Nile! I feel terribly mean when I think of these things, and the way we are settling down in comfortable homes and stations and dropping the pioneering. Comfortable homes and stations are essentials for persistent work they are stepping stones from which it is easier to move forward to-day than it was for us to leave Banana when we first landed there nineteen years ago. But folk at home seemed horrified at the thought of pushing ahead, for fear of being compelled to follow on.

Don't think I've dropped "pioneering" because I'm tired of it. I never think of it but my soul burns to be up and off again. The only inducement that would be strong enough to take me to the old country (in my present state of mind and body) would be the hope of being able to start a new campaign.

Robert Arthington's vision served once again to act as a spur to the missionaries. His letters at this time stimulated yet further advances. His faith envisaged the projection of lines of stations along the main upper streams towards the mid-African lakes where other missions were established, and at this particular juncture his attention was fastened upon the Aruwimi, which joined the main river from the direction of Lake Albert Nyanza. The *Goodwill*, on her maiden voyage, ran the seven hundred miles up stream to the mouth of this river without mishap. It was otherwise on the return. She was debarred from covering more than thirty miles of the tributary's course owing to numerous sandbanks. While pushing the boat off a sandbank an incautious

member of the crew became entangled in the revolving propeller and was extricated with a broken leg and badly mauled foot. Almost within sight of Bolobo the boat shivered against and then slid over another sandbank, which caused a leak and a broken engine shaft. In this crippled condition she was overtaken by a tornado. Fearing to let her drive before it, Grenfell turned her round to face it head on. In the process her awning was carried away and an anchor and chain were lost. She comported herself well through the fury of the storm, and when it had passed, she steamed back to Bolobo. Here Grenfell transferred to the *Peace* and made for Stanley Pool to send home the mournful tidings of the death of another missionary and to order a new shaft for the *Goodwill.* This exchange of conveyance brought home to him the vivid contrast between the capacity, speed, and economy of the new boat and the limitations and expensiveness of the old one. Nevertheless the *Peace* maintained her unshaken hold upon Grenfell, and to the end he preferred her to the other.

The itineration about the Aruwimi revived the hopes of making permanent missionary settlements in that area. Concerning the prospects Grenfell wrote: "Islam from the south-east is already in touch with Islam from the north, and the poor natives are thus, as it were, between the upper and nether mill-stones. In entering upon this region Christian missions will have to face the fanaticism of partially enlightened believers in God, as well as the heathenism of ignorant and demoralized men." But the influence of the Arabs upon its peoples had not been wholly deleterious. The few schools which they had opened had stimulated a desire for

education. The superior style of houses they had introduced, and the clothing they wore, had produced imitations among the natives, so that clay buildings were appearing in place of mat and palm-frond huts, and more ample covering was worn by people hitherto accustomed to go almost naked. The church at Bolobo included several men who had been dragged from this up-river district ten years before by the Arabs and sold as slaves. They now accompanied the prospecting missionaries, in 1895, to their native homes, to act as interpreters and to demonstrate in their own persons the value of the new way of life. At the same time, Mr White was left behind at Yakusu, twelve miles west of Stanley Falls, in the heart of this awakened area. Twelve Upoto boys and a boat also remained with him to assist in traversing the tangled maze of streams which ran in all directions over the district. White, who was a Robinson Crusoe by inclination, planned to travel in a few weeks down the main river to Bolobo in this frail craft, but his crew tired of their task after a while and ran away, so that he was obliged to make the journey in a more dignified steamer.

Before leaving Yakusu to obtain material for a first house, he handed over to the chief a doorless hut which contained, among other articles, several lengths of cloth, a small supply of brass wire and a half empty tin of sugar, with the remark that if on his return everything was intact, he would be assured that his presence was wanted. On the other hand, if the goods had been tampered with or pilfered, he would know that he was to go elsewhere. He was absent more than two months. His reappearance on the *Goodwill* with Grenfell was the occasion of a

vociferous welcome. He landed to find the hut precisely as he had left it, and at once gave orders for the building material to be removed from the steamer. As the crew and some of the natives shifted it up the steps cut in the thirty-foot cliff to the village at the top, the rest of the population danced and shouted in an ecstasy of delight that the white men had been as good as their word, and were indeed going to stay among them. No Congo station ever made a more auspicious beginning than Yakusu, and no B.M.S. station has since experienced so fine a development. Grenfell remained with his junior colleague for several days, elaborating plans for the station for submission to the Home Committee, and then left him with this prayer in his heart:

> God grant that out of the scourging inflicted by the Arabs on this poor country some good may yet arise to those who have suffered so much! Our discouragements are many, but God's kingdom is surely coming, even in this dark, dark land.

Grenfell's pleasure at the establishment of this remotest and newest station was increased by the solid achievements at the older and more settled stations. In the summer of 1893, he enjoyed the rare privilege of a visit to San Salvador with Mr Lawson Forfeitt. Here he found a church of forty-nine members in good standing, with a school of a hundred children in regular attendance, girls being in the majority. Services were conducted every Sunday in thirteen villages over a radius of six miles. In four the people had built chapels, two of which were in charge of evangelists maintained by the mother church. Some of the Christians had met

Chinese labourers working on the new State railway from Matadi to Stanley Pool, and had formed an interest in China which issued in their sending a gift of money for the work of a former San Salvador missionary, Herbert Dixon, who had been transferred to the Far East. The whole district was eager for the Gospel, and the Church was on the eve of a big advance. As Grenfell bade farewell to the ancient town, and began the long descent from the plateau on which it stood, he would have been other than human if his mind had failed to revert to that day, fifteen years before, when, eager and expectant, he had climbed the same toilsome narrow bush path to secure the first foothold for the Gospel. This man, of whom Mr Hawker has written—" a poor Congo boy passes away in his presence, radiant with the Christian's victory over death; Grenfell rises from his bedside to bear witness that the sight of such another victory would be sufficient compensation for another fifteen years of toil in Africa "—was now able to sing his Te Deum for the things God had wrought at San Salvador.

And the same was true of Wathen, though its story was checked by the tale of heavy losses by sickness and death; and of Arthington, Bolobo, Lukolela, Monsembi and Upoto. The power of the new influence that was dispelling ignorance and evil, and the light that was breaking everywhere, fed Grenfell's faith during the storms that swept over him from other quarters during his remaining years.

CHAPTER XI

A COMMISSIONER ROYAL

1891–1893. Age 42–44 years.

THE scramble for Central Africa during the opening years of the last quarter of the nineteenth century had resulted in the setting up of a hasty, ill-defined series of frontiers between the spheres of influence of the several European Powers concerned. During the initial pioneer occupation it was sufficient for the nations involved that their claims were approximately staked out and generally recognized. In the more adequate political occupation that attended the penetration of these new colonies, and with the discovery of their extraordinary material resources, it became essential to define, sharply and clearly beyond later dispute, the limits of competing claimants. In particular, at the beginning of the nineties, the authorities of the Congo Free State turned towards the Kasai Valley and the adjacent Lunda country as the line of advance in their projected flanking movement against the Arabs. This south-westerly reach of Free State territory, with its vast system of tributaries running like stringy roots towards the main river, was also the south-easterly border of Portuguese Congo. Their mutual frontiers, however, had never been established with any semblance of precision. Moreover, this area was the abode of ancient and powerful chieftaincies, whose

willing acquiescence in the new order of things it was imperative to obtain. So Belgium and Portugal resolved to tackle the admittedly difficult task of adjusting their boundaries in this quarter, and the Belgians turned to Grenfell, whose tactful relations with both Powers and whose services already rendered in similar conditions between Belgium and France, had suggested to one of them his pre-eminent suitability for the undertaking.

The quiet of Grenfell's holiday on the Cornish uplands in August 1891 was shattered by the arrival of a letter from the Secretary-General of the Congo Free State in Brussels who, after outlining the proposals, conveyed the urgent request of his august master, Leopold, that Grenfell should join the Delimitation Commission as the representative of Belgium, with the designation of Commissioner Royal. Grenfell's natural reply was that, as the servant of the Baptist Missionary Society, his acceptance was impossible without the sanction of its Committee. Thereupon he forwarded the letter to Mr Baynes with the observation, "I cannot urge that the proposal has any direct bearing upon our work. I should like to accept the proposal the King has made, but I want to do my duty even before pleasing the King." At the same time it is evident that the enterprise made a strong appeal to Grenfell, as offering a rare opportunity of visiting new territory and of promoting peace and goodwill among its warring inhabitants, as he said: "I should very much like to see the Lunda country, and the experience might be useful in working eastwards from San Salvador. . . . Is it the Lord showing us the way inland from San Salvador?"

Other letters followed from Brussels. These stressed the importance and urgency of the matter, and the prospect that, if he responded to the request, his absence from the Mission would not exceed three months. The diplomatic skill of his Belgian correspondent appears throughout these letters. This is a typical sentence: "Your Committee, the King hopes, will see that by that offer is a right homage paid to the high and best qualities of one of its missionaries."

The Committee's permission was forthcoming at its next meeting. Grenfell went to Brussels to receive his instructions and to interview the King, who invited him to dine in state at the Palace, where he expressed his satisfaction that Grenfell would represent him. The Belgians were agreeably surprised to learn that the B.M.S. asked nothing more in the way of compensation for the temporary loss of Grenfell's services than the equivalent of his modest missionary allowance. There was also a stipulation that his absence should be reduced to a minimum. Grenfell was informed that a Belgian colleague would accompany him (in the end there were two), but that he would be the chief and would be dissociated from the military side of the expedition.

In the belief that the matter was urgent, and that the Portuguese Commissioner was awaiting his arrival, Grenfell hastened his departure from Europe, and after weathering the stormiest ocean voyage of his life, reached Congo in December 1891. Alas for his anticipations! He was reminded again that "in Africa time does not count." He discovered that nothing was known by the Belgian authorities about the Portuguese appointment. It appeared later that the

Portuguese Commissioner was hampered in beginning this task in the Lunda country because he was far from completing the prior task of delimitation in the Lower Congo river area. Five months of intolerable waiting followed ere matters were sufficiently advanced for a start to be made. The delay afforded Grenfell an opportunity to organize the transport of the *Goodwill* and to attend to other mission business, but his impatience at the dilatoriness of colonial administration brought him more than once to the point of throwing up his office.

When he finally set out, in May 1892, for his objective in the distant south-easterly wilds, he was accompanied by his wife and by Captain-Commandant Gorin and M. Froment, who had received strict orders to avoid armed conflict with the chiefs, to the point of prolonged delay or even of withdrawal. The outward journey of five hundred and fifty miles to the rendezvous with their Portuguese associates was largely made overland. During the first stages the European members travelled on donkeys and in hammocks, and later still on oxen. These last proved intractable at first, especially when fording rivers or wading through swamps. On these occasions Grenfell's ox arched its tail like an angry cat, in an attempt to keep it dry. When this precaution failed, the animal rid itself of the oozy moisture by vigorous shakes which bespattered its rider from head to foot. In the early stages of its service it shied at the slightest rustle of Grenfell's waterproof, which then proved an effective spur to its speed. The time came later when the most violent shaking left it unmoved. Occasionally when an ox refused to cross a swamp or stream it was killed for food.

Troubles of this sort dogged the expedition until the end. Fifteen streams were crossed in one memorable day. Most were lined with wide swampy banks, which greatly vexed Grenfell's donkey. On three occasions she sat down in the mud, while her rider was obliged to flounder to the other side and wait for her to get through as best she could. One swamp was encountered in the early hours of the morning. The last of the men crossed it by noon, but nightfall found six oxen and three mules still three hundred yards from dry land. Torrential rain fell throughout the night, during which the cattle maintained a subdued and mournful lowing. Next morning their legs were tied together, and they were hauled bodily over the surface of the swamp. The donkeys were extricated by being slung in hammocks. At another period, when prolonged rainfall turned another vast area into an almost unbroken swamp, Grenfell donned shorts so that he might walk barelegged, with, however, disastrous results to his flesh from the knife-edge grass and its barbed seeds. Intense suffering was caused on many other stages of the journey by this tall, dense growth of virgin jungle.

Before they were many miles out, Grenfell passed close to Makuta, from which he had retired, baffled through the opposition of its chief, on his first Congo trek fourteen years before, and where Comber had been wounded on a subsequent visit. Now the Congo State flag flew over its principal town, and several of its boys were scholars at the Wathen Mission School. Of this he writes: "I was sadly tempted to turn aside and pay the old place a visit. . . . The people are very friendly now and would be very glad if we

would send a teacher. The whole country between that point and where we are now is very populous and fruitful, and would make a splendid field for a mission."

Journeying eastwards from this table-land, two thousand feet high, where the expedition suffered much from severe cold by night and extreme heat by day, territory known to be overtly hostile was entered in October 1892. Fearing that inevitable bloodshed might lead to prolonged military operations and that, in any case, his standing as a missionary might be compromised by developments, Grenfell now wrote to the Governor-General asking to be relieved of his commissionership. "Circumstances are so entirely changed from what they were when I undertook to act on this Commission, that I feel the State will be better served by my withdrawal from it, and by the appointment of a military officer in my place. Personally I would much rather return to Bolobo, and to my work, but as I have not chosen my position for myself, I feel I must not act precipitately, but prayerfully strive to find where duty leads." To his disappointment his request was refused.

The Kiamvo, the over-lord of this troubled domain, like his predecessors and his contemporaries elsewhere, played a conspicuous part in the negro history of the southern Congo basin. His hereditary title, Mwana Puto Kasongo—Kiamvo, the lord of the Portuguese—was suggestive of a bygone glory and of a proud assumption of power. His influence extended over an area of twenty thousand square miles, which he kept in a constant state of terror and turmoil by raids for the purpose of levying blackmail and cap-

turing slaves. An ungainly man of forty-five, he was only second to the Arabs for cruelty and oppression, " taking life for the slightest offence, or for no offence at all, and keeping up a terrorism by which he ruled." He disposed of sub-chiefs whose growth and strength he feared by luring them with patronage to his presence, where, without warning, he chopped off their heads. He surrounded himself with a powerful and well-disciplined bodyguard under the control of his younger brother, and refused to allow his subjects to congregate in villages of more than from twenty to fifty huts.

In 1890, two years prior to the Lunda Expedition, a Belgian military force had entered the Kiamvo's country and had built a fort at Popokabaka, close to his capital. Another small garrison of Zanzibar troops was stationed, on sufferance, in the capital itself. The despot showed his contempt for its officers by threatening them frequently with death, and, when angered, expressed his rage by attempts to pull out their beards. At other times the capricious side of his character was revealed in the play of raillery against them and in the presents of wine which he made them. Finally he threw all pretence on one side and besieged them. He cut their communications with the coast, confiscated their food supplies, killed their messengers and porters, and reduced their strength by steady attacks. As a desperate adventure the garrison resolved upon a sortie, and fought their way out sixty strong. Firing at least eighteen thousand cartridges, killing two hundred natives and leaving most of the town in flames, the exhausted remnant arrived at Popokabaka. From there they endeavoured to march westwards, but were beaten

back and pinned down by the investing force. The surrounding country was devastated and depopulated by the Kiamvo's order, and the sale of food to the garrison was forbidden under penalty of death. A bare existence was maintained on manioc roots which were grubbed from the deserted plantations, and on fish which was obtained from the river. Fortunately, too, communication of a sort was established with Stanley Pool, and intermittent supplies were secured from that quarter.

Into this tense situation, so fraught with frightful possibilities for the garrison, there came the tidings of the approach of Grenfell's expedition, which by now had been reinforced by four hundred armed men. The Kiamvo also heard, through an advance message, of this fresh menace to his power. Warning was given him that, while no hostile intention was entertained by the Belgians, they would return blow for blow if opposition were offered. After a period of four weeks, in which Grenfell and his followers waited at Popokabaka, the Kiamvo providentially made an amicable response. Attended by twelve hundred armed men, he sealed a peace compact, amid universal manifestations of delight, by the customary rite of blood-brotherhood. By this ceremony, which generally consisted of the intermingling and sometimes the drinking of the blood of few or many chosen representatives, the parties concerned became one with the other. Land on which the invaders might build a station was provided close to the Kiamvo's town of nine hundred houses. Here tents, huts, and shelters of every sort and shape were hastily put together for the accommodation of the expedition.

The day after his arrival at the Kiamvo's capital, Grenfell had an audience of this African potentate. He was accompanied by his wife, Captain Gorin, and M. Froment. Carrying chairs for their own comfort, the party proceeded until, within thirty yards of the stockade around the royal residence, they were challenged by the military guard. Presently a folding chair was brought near them and draped with red cloth. Two hundred armed men swung into position on either side of the path from the house to the spot where Grenfell's party had halted. The mellow notes of a flute then announced the approach of the ruler, who took his seat on the folding chair and entered at once into conversation. Rain began to fall, and the talk continued under the shelter of a shared umbrella. Grenfell expressed his satisfaction that peace was in prospect, and then, without further ado, passed to the discussion of religion. He explained that he was in Congo as messenger of the God whose name they knew and who was the Father of all men. As at Bolobo and other places, the people responded curiously to the recitation of the Ten Commandments, the Kiamvo proudly asserting that they neither stole nor committed adultery.

In the afternoon a dance, led by the Kiamvo, was arranged in honour of the visitors. The customary relaxation at such a festive event was the execution of a number of unlucky slaves. On this day, in honour of the visitors and in recognition of the peaceful relationship established between himself and the Belgians, the Kiamvo commenced to dance brandishing a stick instead of the regulation sword. After a few turns, dismay was spread through the

ranks of his subjects when they saw him substitute the sword for the staff. Their fears proved baseless, for the fateful weapon soon found a resting-place upon the ground instead of upon their shoulders.

Grenfell's satisfaction at this treaty was natural. He wrote to Mr Baynes :

> If the terms of the present peace can only be maintained—and I am very sanguine of it—immense benefits will accrue to the population of an area of some twenty thousand square miles, who hitherto have been subject to raids, systematically arranged at the capital for the levying of blackmail and the capture of slaves.

Grenfell witnessed more than sufficient evil here to reinforce beyond question his conviction that primitive negro autocracy was a much less desirable form of government than independent patriarchal village life, even though the latter invariably resulted in anarchy. He left the Kiamvo's territory, nevertheless, with an important part of his task successfully accomplished, and as a further sign of the over-lord's friendliness, a boy and girl were placed in his charge with a view to their being trained in a mission school, and to act later on as interpreters between the State authorities and their own people.

The route for the next twenty days followed the course of the river Kwango, which here formed a natural boundary between the Portuguese and Belgian spheres of influence. "A very hungry country," Grenfell describes it.

> No meat or fish unless we catch it. Francis Steane [a Cameroons native] is our great hunter and fisherman. This work is less dignified, perhaps, but is not less important, than his help with my observations. He gets

my instruments ready, and takes time with the chronometer as I take the altitudes. Last week he was patching boats damaged by hippopotamus's teeth; to-day he is mending his cast-net—so you see he has to turn his hand to all sorts of things. Luckily for me, he has both the ability and the will to do it.

Grenfell's diary teems with comments upon the varying tribal conditions, and observations upon the features of the country. One tribe, the Baholo, is described as "very timid . . . the long plaited hair of the men falling to the shoulder and often to the breasts and making them look very effeminate." By contrast, their neighbours, the Bayaka, were never without their guns in readiness to "fight, fight, fight and kill." The landscape was bare, save only for stunted trees and scrub, owing to the ravages of the annual bush fires started by the natives to destroy the relentless advance of the dense bush grass and its prolific animal life. Like other places, this region was in danger of becoming one vast desert.

Swinging eastwards, the expedition was obliged to cross the Tungila River which, owing to an abnormal rainfall, was "about as safe and easy to ford as the Thames would be at high tide at London Bridge." The scared natives refused the use of their canoes, and Grenfell was obliged to build a raft of sticks and dried papyrus stalks. On this perilous craft, measuring only twelve feet by four feet, the expedition was ferried across the swirling torrent in batches of five, and after many hours spent in this strenuous manner, the natives, seeing the strangers were resolved upon attaining their objective, at last brought out their canoes. Between

the river bank thus gained and the nearest town about two miles away, the path lay through a swamp. For six hours the entire company squelched through mud and water four feet deep, and then toiled up a steep hill, sustained by nothing more than a few roasted corn cobs.

Incidents and adventures served to relieve the tedium and inconveniences of every stage of the way. A chief here assuaged the hunger of the soldiers and camp-followers by killing some of his cattle for food. A second cast covetous eyes upon a dog belonging to one of the Belgian officers, and actually offered three cows or three slaves in exchange for it! Resentment was aroused in another district by the pilfering of the porters, who raided the manioc plantations. Seeing that the townspeople were set upon killing the thieves in retaliation, Grenfell intervened by offering compensation. "No!" replied the natives, "we insist on shooting the offenders." Grenfell requested them to mark the numbers and equipment of the soldiers, and added, "If you kill only one, there will be war. If you will bring your manioc, we will buy it; hungry men must be fed." His firmness and tact prevailed, and what might have produced an ugly conflict ended in the establishment of agreeable relationships.

Famine, aggravated by native policy, stalked over the whole countryside, and intensified the difficulties of the expedition. The death of any important chief brought into operation a law which imposed a complete cessation of labour for six months. Food supplies were reduced almost to vanishing point, and slaves were commonly exchanged for eighty manioc roots. The introduction of the expedition

into this " desert country " aggravated the straitened condition of its population and multiplied the problems of the commissariat. The rainy season was at its height, and resulted in an almost daily soaking of the caravan.

In the Tungila valley the Belgian party came up, at the end of December, with the Portuguese members of the Commission who, under Senhor Sarmento, had been awaiting their arrival for three months. The local tribes imagined that the contact of the two armies of four hundred on the one side and three hundred on the other, could mean nothing less than war between them, with inevitable misery to themselves. Their relief on discovering that the reverse was the case found expression in a wild firing of old flint-locks and an unrestrained orgy of dancing, to the accompaniment of music which impressed Grenfell as being the finest he had heard in Africa. The leading chiefs and their retinues, arrayed in a miscellaneous assortment of hats and shirts, with occasional black frock-coats and trousers, red sashes, dragoon helmets and ample country cloths, and carrying bows and arrows, marched in ordered procession about the European camps, until spent with fatigue. These animated proceedings added yet another piece of evidence to the conclusion that the people were weary of strife and privation, and were eager for peace among themselves and their neighbours.

The combined expedition travelled eastwards towards the completion of its march. They were now upon the south-central African plateau, three thousand feet above sea-level. Its reddened surface was deeply scarred with ravines worn by rivers and

winds, and the continuous negotiation of these involved hard travelling which was aggravated by a continuance of the extraordinary rainfall. Fresh reverberations of inter-tribal strife reached Grenfell as they progressed. Here two chiefs involved their people in a bitter struggle for a coveted royal fetish made of human arms and legs. There the way was barred by the stubborn will of the chief of a powerful tribe, who smote terror into the minds of their milder neighbours. Elsewhere their passage was made well-nigh intolerable by extensive thieving and extortion. Every pretence was seized upon to extract money from the expedition. The loss of a paddle from a borrowed canoe, the yapping of a dog, or opposition to open plunder, was made a pretext for raiding the pockets of Grenfell and his companions. Intense inconvenience was experienced as a belt of fly-country was encountered. The air was thick with banks of midges who penetrated eyes, ears, nose and hair, in spite of a barrage in the form of wisps of grass or bunches of leaves whirled in front of the face. They blew blindly about the expedition, and a slight movement of the hand would kill scores. Grenfell's suffering from the attentions of these pests is evident from his remark: "I can sympathize with the Egyptians—a plague of flies is no joke."

A more pleasant incident was occasioned through the purchase of a dead monkey as food for the camp. Its captor brought with it its unweaned baby, which passed into the care of Senhora Sarmento. Painstaking efforts were made, without success at first, to get the monkey to take milk from a feeding-bottle. After a day or so, it became part of the routine of

the meal table for the animal to be brought in, wrapped in a huge handkerchief, to imbibe its drink. Tremendous excitement prevailed through the camp as the experiment proceeded, and the lamentation was great when, at the end of a fortnight, the monkey died.

The opening months of 1893 saw the Commission making slow but sure progress towards the consummation of its task. Famine pressed ever more acutely, however, upon the carriers as the distance from the settled parts lengthened. Smallpox worked havoc among the men and increased the responsibilities of their leaders. The life of the country had grown disrupted and unsettled through the harassing raids of the wilder chiefs. The extended hostility and lawlessness of these remote rulers was the deciding factor which induced Grenfell to desist from his initial intention to push eastwards as far as the Belgian State post at Luebo on the Kasai River, along which he hoped then to make the return journey to Stanley Pool. His final camp was made only about ten days' march from this place, and he turned back with the knowledge that the delimitation had reached a stage that should commend itself to the governments involved. "The work of the Commission progresses satisfactorily" was Grenfell's summary.

With a caravan severely reduced in number through death and weakened in resisting power through lack of food, Grenfell and his associates set out westwards in April, 1893, for the coast of Portuguese West Africa, seven hundred miles away. As on the outward route, so now on the homeward way, the countryside seethed with unrest and strife. Tides

of war surrounded the advancing party, happily without engulfing it. But the beating and battering to which it was subjected decided Grenfell to change his plans once more and to send his carriers and sick men down to Stanley Pool by the river Kwango, while the Belgian and Portuguese officers remained with him for the march to St Paul de Loanda. Its closing stages were made for ever memorable to Grenfell by the discovery one day that they were walking in the footsteps of Livingstone. As he and his wife followed the track of the hero of his boyhood and youth as far as they dared in the face of opposing natives, Grenfell exclaimed: "I did not think I should ever tread the path Livingstone trod!"

The confines of civilization were reached in June. The Governor-General of Portuguese Congo arranged a special train to convey the party over the new railway line that ran a few miles inland from the capital. Apartments in his palace were placed at their disposal during their stay at St Paul de Loanda, so that they might prepare their official reports and maps. Banquets were held in their honour and other tokens of hospitality were lavished upon them. "I am rather oppressed at being such a 'distinguished' guest," was Grenfell's comment upon these ceremonials, "and shall be very glad to get into the quieter atmosphere of Underhill." On the day of their departure the State barge conveyed Grenfell and his Belgian colleagues from the landing stage to the waiting gunboat. The Portuguese Admiral gave them into the charge of the gunboat's captain, and in this manner they made for Boma. By July, 1893, Grenfell shed himself of the last semblance

of his official rôle, and returned, glad and expectant, to his true vocation and to his colleagues at Bolobo. His conclusion upon this enterprise was: "I shall be very slow to undertake a similar commission."

CHAPTER XII

SHADOW AND SUNSHINE

1893–1899. Age 44–50 years.

THE opening months of 1897 were gladdened by the prospect of the arrival in Congo of the Grenfells' eldest daughter, Patience, as a reinforcement to the missionary staff. The joy of the parents at the approaching reunion with the girl they had left at school in England six years earlier was heightened by the knowledge that she was to be associated with them in service at Bolobo. Both Mr and Mrs Grenfell went to Stanley Pool in the *Goodwill* to receive their daughter on her appearance on the 1st of July, and to introduce her to honorary probationership in connection with the B.M.S. Before they left for the upper river, Grenfell penned a note to Mr Hawkes, her guardian in England, which contained these sentences:

> She has already commenced to pick up the language and seems in earnest about it. We are very hopeful that she may be quite a help and comfort to us.

During the remainder of the year, save for a pleasure trip to visit missionary friends farther inland, Miss Grenfell served a diligent apprenticeship at Bolobo, assisting her father in miscellaneous duties in the temporary absence of her mother, and, more particularly, taking a share in the school work.

Her natural aptitude for languages gave her a ready command of the vernacular, and raised general hopes that she would prove a valuable addition to a staff all too inadequate for the expanding work.

In the following year she was sent forward to Yakusu. Here, in the opening up of the school work, she displayed the same zest and ability that had so commended her at Bolobo. The pioneer stage at Yakusu was marked by vicissitudes similar to those of the older stations. Man after man fell ill and was obliged to leave, and the hardships of the life left their mark upon those who were able to remain. Although some anxiety had been occasioned by the state of Patience Grenfell's health shortly after her arrival in Congo, she was reported well and happy at the beginning of 1899. On the last day of February she joined her father on the *Goodwill* for a journey down river to Bolobo. When most of the distance had been covered, the *Peace* was encountered travelling up-stream with five missionaries on board. The Grenfells exchanged boats with them, and turned aside into Lake Mantumba on the smaller vessel in order to visit friends of the American Baptist Mission. The next morning the steamer retraced its way to the river, but before it had crossed the lake Miss Grenfell showed signs of fever, which at first appeared to be nothing more serious than the malaria to which all were liable. By noon, however, it was diagnosed as the far more deadly blackwater fever, and both patient and parent knew, in their isolation from skilled help, the gravity of the case. As the afternoon wore on the distracted father divided his attention between administering such relief as was possible and urging

the steamer forward. The vessel was worn and out of repair, and in consequence her going was laboured and far below normal. She continued her journey while daylight lasted, and after she was tied up, Grenfell spent part of the night in overhauling her machinery, the invalid being left in charge of two girls.

Another unfortunate event occurred early next morning. The steamer had scarcely left her moorings before she lodged on a sandbank, and Grenfell spent a miserable hour supervising the efforts of the crew to refloat her. His toil of the night went for naught, for progress was as slow as it had proved the previous day. His state of mind through the long hours of that day can be imagined as the boat crawled forward, while every moment the fever was increasing its grip upon his daughter. His distress was intensified by the knowledge that, if only the steamer had run well with a clear course, they would have arrived at Bolobo during the afternoon.

Missionary records surely contain no incident more poignant than this situation on board the *Peace*—a dying girl counting the dragging hours before she could reach her mother, and a distracted father frustrated in his purpose to lessen their number by a boat that for once refused to respond to his will.

Night fell with the boat lying to in an exposed anchorage. The patient's state was so critical that Grenfell dared not sleep. As he watched and waited, the darkness was broken by thunder and lightning, and, with the dawn, a tornado burst upon them. The boat rocked and reeled under its force. Everything loose was carried overboard, and at one point Grenfell feared that the cabin would be wrenched away and the vessel become a total wreck. Morning

was well advanced before it was safe to set out on the last stage of the tedious journey. The lights of Bolobo were sighted two hours after dark. The approach of the *Peace* had been drum-tapped down river, and her arrival was signalled by a deafening welcome from the community, which, when it was known that a sick woman was on board, was succeeded by a silence even more trying. When Mrs Grenfell hurried on deck, a faint smile of recognition was the only greeting her daughter was able to give her. Loving hands moved the sufferer on shore, but after two hours the Grenfells' bungalow was made desolate by her passing.

Many sorrows had overtaken Grenfell during the twenty-five years he had spent in Africa. Other children had died in infancy. From others who had survived he had been separated during their school days in England. But this was the crowning tragedy, which destroyed all his hopes of happy fellowship during his remaining years and all his joy in watching the development of a loved child in the service to which his own life had been so fully dedicated. Mrs Grenfell, too, herself in indifferent health, was stricken by the blow, and, before she had recovered from it, was still further overwhelmed by alarming reports of the illness of a younger daughter at school in England. In her grief she cried : " Pattie only came home just in time for me to see her die, and now Gertrude will die without my even seeing her ! " Fortunately the next mail brought better news.

Grenfell maintained contact with each of his children through a long series of delightful letters. He hungered for news of their progress at school

and of their physical development. "I want you," he wrote to Gertrude, his third daughter, "to send me a piece of string, to show us how tall you are. You must stand against the wall and get Carrie to make a little mark on a line with the top of your head, and then you can easily send a piece of string just as long as will reach from the mark to the floor. I also want another piece of string to tell us how tall Carrie is."

He remembered their birthdays, and in anticipation of them, he wrote in 1893 to Mr Hawkes :

On my return from San Salvador I got letters from my bairns saying their Bibles were old and shabby, and asking me for new ones. Kindly spend sixteen shillings or a pound on two Bibles, with Concordance, Maps and "Aids." I think they should be "Revised" and on India paper. I like limp binding. Please write in one :

"For Pattie's thirteenth birthday, with Father's love, June 6th 1893."

In the other :

"For Carrie's tenth birthday, with Father's love, October 22nd 1893."

Please also send them postal orders for five shillings each for pocket money. The dates of their receiving these gifts won't be exactly right, but they will forgive that.

To his second daughter, Carrie, he penned this acknowledgment in 1894 :

You ask in your letter of October 10th whether or not I got your enclosed photograph and your friends' in the pocket book. Yes, it reached us all right, and we are glad to get it and look at the faces of some of those who have been so good to you. The pocket book is kept on my writing table, so far at least, and receives special notes I want to make and keep. Perhaps it may descend to the depths and darkness of a coat pocket some day, when its glory has been dimmed by dirt and time : it is altogether too bright for such a dismal fate as yet !

He continues, in the effort to maintain contact between her and the Congo people among whom she was born :

Lokela is almost a young man now. He was quite a little boy when he came on the *Peace* first (I believe you were on board at the time). He was afraid his old master was at the point of death and that he would be buried with him, so he cried for me to ransom him. I think I gave about three hundred yards of brass wire to secure his freedom, but even when the price was paid he would not trust himself on shore again, though we stayed at the beach some three or four days. He is a fine, manly fellow, and I am hopeful he may turn out a great help to us, for he has a great deal of influence among the young people round us—is quite a leader amongst them, in fact. You must pray for him and for Dot and for several others who like them and like yourself are trying to follow the Lord Jesus. It is not easy work anywhere and it seems especially hard here in Congo.

Two years later this delightful experience is described :

Only a few days ago we discovered we had been making a queer mistake for a very long while. You remember the place where Jesus says, " It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." What do you think we have been saying ? Just this : " It is easier for a camel to go through the point," for to the Bobangi man the eye of a needle is its point ; what we call the eye they call the nose. They say the eye has no hole to let anything through.

He watches over their spiritual development and advises upon their problems. Carrie received this help in 1896 :

The great thing is to wish to be good, and if you really wish it you will get all the help you need: for God's promise is sure, and it will come out all right, whatever people may think of your having tried and failed before.

Gertrude, also in England at school, must have been delighted by this note:

Father and mother kept your birthday. We had a nice cake, only the cook boy, when he took it out of the tin, pulled the top away from the bottom. But it tasted just as good. We also had some of your friends to dinner in your honour, and made quite a "good time" of it, considering we are quiet Congo mission folk. And, only fancy, we played "snap" and "happy families," and it is many a long day since your father played "snap," though your mother does so often with the little Congo children who come to our house for an hour or two in the evenings before going to bed.

Here is a family picture, also sent to Gertrude:

Your little sister Grace is growing quite fast, and is trying to write letters to everybody. She makes such a lot of funny little straggly signs that are quite original, but keeps them fairly well in line, and regular as to size: but whether they are a's or b's or x's the cleverest of us cannot make out. However, you may soon expect to get some sort of an answer from your dear little G. I. G. She can sing several Bobangi hymns, has been to school once, and is going again to-day. Perhaps she may begin to recognize real letters, and how to make them, instead of her original ones. I am sending you a new picture of your sister: it is not a very nice one, but it will show you that she is growing.

The father heart is opened in this paragraph addressed to Gertrude in the next year:

Now about those wretched "blues" or "dumps"—what can I say to you? Girls about your age and with

your volatile spirits are often subject to them, I fancy, so yours does not appeal to me as an extraordinary case. It has just got to be met by ordinary expedients, and first and foremost by your getting out of yourself as far as possible. Too much introspection does not tend to comfort or confidence in yourself.

To Carrie, approaching womanhood in 1903, he writes :

We are anxiously looking for the photos you have had taken, and are wondering if being twenty makes any visible change ! You will see I am sending you two I have just had taken of mother. Mother sends you lots of love, as I do too, and as we do for Gertrude and Isabel. God bless you, dear children, and make the way for you all to be very, very plain and especially just now for your dear, dear self.

And, the next year, as Carrie was facing a new experience in Belgium, he writes :

Whatever you may do, or leave undone, don't forget your Bible reading, at least a chapter for every day, and one paragraph of the New Testament read and thoroughly grasped. I mean grasped in such a way as would enable you to explain what it was about : and this is not always so easy when it happens to be in the Epistles !

This same letter closes with a solicitous message :

Be a good girl, dear Carrie ! our hearts can know no greater comfort here than the assurance that our children are preparing for a happy and useful future when we shall have left them. Mother and I send you more love than we can say.

Like many another man in similar circumstances, Grenfell found solace for his griefs and loneliness in

the work that lay to his hand. Transport duties absorbed much of his time. He wrote about one period of six months, shortly after the death of Patience, of which only six weeks were spent at home at Bolobo. As always, he cheerfully accepted the drudgery involved in this work, when he might reasonably have delegated it to younger and stronger men. He was content to serve tables, if thereby others might engage more directly in evangelization. He welcomed, too, the opportunities afforded by his travels for uninterrupted thought and prayer upon the work of the mission of which he was the father in a real sense, and for serious study of his loved books.

Troubles still continued to fall about him. The year 1897 proved almost as disastrous in losses as the " black year," 1887. Four deaths made serious inroads upon the thin extended up-river line, and other withdrawals through breakdowns in health threw heavier burdens on those who were left. Through them all, as at the death of his daughter, his faith held and his courage survived. He writes about one bereavement :

> Our hearts are heavy for the loss we have sustained, and also because our work is losing much needed help. But we all rejoice at the blessed manifestation we have had that the Lord is King, that He is conqueror over death and the grave ; and though we weep, we praise Him for the joyous going hence of our sister to share in His kingdom and victory, as well as for the soul-sustaining vision that has been vouchsafed to us of His love and all-conquering might.

Steady progress continued at Bolobo. Notwithstanding some disappointments, it was clear that

the foundations of the church had been well laid. The majority of its members stood firm against opposition. Its light was shining in the midst of a terrible darkness. Christ was being uplifted in changed lives and was drawing others to Him.

> How can I get into the dumps [Grenfell exclaims] when as I am writing this there are over forty young folk squatting round on the floor of the next room singing a translation of "Lo, He comes with clouds descending" to the tune "Calcutta" with a swing that makes my poor old heart beat fast again with the assurance of our blessed hope!

Not even a peremptory notice by the State, happily withdrawn subsequently, to vacate Yakusu station, caused him more than a temporary disquiet, and it was more than compensated for by the assurance of the Burgomaster of Brussels, who, after visiting several mission stations, made sympathetic allusions to B.M.S. methods and agreed that they were right.

Further pleasure was derived from the fact that fugitives from the terrors of witchcraft found shelter in the mission compound, and from the requests of non-Christian people to be permitted to build houses under the shadow of the mission, in order that they might be freed from the cruelties of tribal life. Grenfell entered into their plans with zest, and watched with pride the springing up of a colony of compact clay-built houses which were far superior to the general ramshackle grass and mat shanties.

Signs of life appeared at Yakusu. By the summer of 1899 a substantial dwelling-house was completed. Schoolboys had made forty thousand bricks from clay obtained from neighbouring ant-hills. The

foundations of a new school-house and a second dwelling-house had been laid, and, better still, sixty boys and twenty girls were in constant attendance at the temporary school, and the Sunday services were well supported. The establishment of good relationships between the missionaries and the people had been favoured by an unexpected circumstance. A girl captured by the Arabs during a raid in the Yakusu district had been taken down-river by her master, and after several turns of fortune, had been passed into the hands of the missionaries at Monsembi. Here during the early nineties, she grew up, was received into the church and married. When Mr and Mrs Stapleton left Monsembi for Yakusu, Salamu and her husband accompanied them. To the delight of all concerned, she was reunited on arrival to the kinsfolk from whom she had been torn, and, in spite of the years that had elapsed, she had so retained her knowledge of the language that she was able to relate her story of the kindness she had received and of the new faith she had acquired. From the beginning she acted as interpreter to the missionaries, facilitated their language study, and shared in the services. Through her and her husband a Congo Christian home was established without delay in the midst of this unrelieved heathenism, to serve as a vivid evidence to the uplifting power of the Gospel.

The claims of the transport service and the attraction of the prospering work at Bolobo, Yakusu, and other stations, were not permitted to obliterate the call of unreached peoples in the heart of the continent. Grenfell's natural inclination induced by advancing years to a settled life, and his desire for

steady attachment to one piece of work were opposed by the old stirrings towards the opening up of new territory. Lines of possible advance and the elaboration of plans for progress appear constantly in his letters. And even had his own enthusiasm waned, Robert Arthington's persistent advocacy and support would have sufficed to sustain it. The old man in Leeds still cherished his dream of a chain of stations across the continent. In 1898 he wrote to Mr Baynes, and to Grenfell, urging that a way be found from Yakusu north-eastwards to Lake Albert Nyanza, as the first stage in an advance towards the Nile, and offering seventeen thousand pounds for the expenses and for a steamer for the lake. Making reference to these proposals in a letter to Mr Hawkes, Grenfell says :

> I am not at all pushing the matter—it seems to be pushing me. I have just completed the estimates and order sheets for the equipment, so that the Committee may put the matters in hand without further delay, should they decide upon pushing eastwards. If I thought anyone else stood in as good a position for making a success of the prospective journey as myself, I would gladly back out in his favour, for my poor old body is weak enough to be quite content with a less arduous enterprise. However, I am glad to say the spirit will be more than willing if God points the way.

The Home Committee was reluctant to pledge the Society to any considerable extension of its responsibility while its existing commitments were inadequately supported, and nearly a year passed by before permission to make a cautious move reached Grenfell. The choice of two river routes towards Lake Albert lay before him—the Lindi and

the Aruwimi—and he first attempted the former, which entered the Congo a little below Yakusu. Memories of many earlier ventures crowded upon him as, with Mr Stapleton, he set out in 1899 in open canoes. Ten hours' paddling brought them to the first series of rapids, around which they dragged their boats and equipment overland. Then by easy stages they pulled up-stream for another thirty-two hours until their course was again barred by waterfalls. Their intention to round these, until a point was gained at which navigation was once more practicable, was frustrated by the disturbed condition of the country, owing to an Arab revolt, and they turned back, having covered about a third of the distance towards their objective.

Conscious that success in this direction was remote, Grenfell decided to attempt the Aruwimi. The fascinating record which he gave of this journey makes it clear that the last of his pioneering voyages during this period was among the outstanding experiences of his life. The old *Peace* slipped into the mouth of the tributary under her captain's guidance at the close of October 1899. She made ninety miles without any check more serious than a familiar tornado, and an interval of half an hour devoted to the capture for the boat's larder of a wild boar that was swimming across the stream. The country was slowly recovering from the Arab depredations. Coffee plantations, developed by the Belgians, and the gathering of rubber from the forests, absorbed hundreds of workers, while the cultivation of produce and the maintenance of the necessary transport service gave occupation to many more. Owing to the state of anarchy and oppression that happily was now passing,

the villages were usually built on elbows at the bends of rivers, or in the midst of chains of rapids or in the vicinity of islands. Such environment afforded facilities for observation and warning in case of attack, and shelter in the event of forced retreat. The style of architecture adopted by the people differed radically from that of other parts of Congo. The almost universal type of gable-end house, with a ridge sloping to each side, of all sizes from that of an earthenware crate or big packing case to that of a railway truck, gave place to tall conical-shaped constructions from fifteen to thirty feet high. Above a circular foundation a framework of narrowing rings of cane was imposed. Long palm-frond stems were braced about these and tied together at the top, the whole being covered with leaves. These erections had the advantage of being easily portable in case of voluntary or forced removal. The quieter state of the country was, however, already resulting in the adoption of better and more permanent clay-walled houses with windows and doors.

After the *Peace* had covered ninety miles, the bed of the river, which had already been marked by rapids, was now so frequently broken and so shallow that punting poles were used instead of paddles. The crew of sixteen men had a singular method of progress. When approaching a rapid, half of them planted their poles securely to prevent the boat from slipping back, while the others found a forward holding-place for their poles and impelled the boat ahead, the first team repeating the process in turn. This spider-leg method proved a tedious business, especially when the rapid was a mile or more in length and the slightest slip sent the boat back over

the ground painfully gained. Other rapids resembled a series of steps, each one or two feet in height, which were scaled by disembarking and then lifting and pushing the canoes one step at a time. Altogether in the canoe journey of a hundred and eighty miles, thirteen major rapids and many more minor ones were successfully negotiated, though not without adventures and hairbreadth escapes. The pole-men experienced several involuntary immersions which, followed by hours of toil in the hot sun, converted the ordered designs in which their bodies were painted into a series of irregular stripes and muddy patches. On the unbroken stretches of the river the two crews were pitted against each other in strenuous and thrilling races, in which, however, the speed seldom exceeded five miles an hour.

Of the villages visited on this trip, Banalya was the most important. Although its population only numbered fifteen hundred, it was the centre of thriving trade routes, which radiated north-east towards the Nile, east to Lake Albert, west down the Aruwimi, and south to Stanley Falls. Its chief, Lupu, was one of the ugliest and at the same time one of the finest men on the river. The Arabs had taught him something of God and the future life, and Grenfell used the opportunity to graft on to this knowledge a little of the Christian faith. The Banalya people were virile and versatile. Grenfell went among them and watched their varied occupations, which he describes with the enthusiasm and detail of a tyro. He stood by a blacksmith's shop while the hands worked ingenious bellows of a type similar to that depicted in Egyptian sculptures, and fashioned brass anklets on sandstone anvils with

pyramid-shaped hammers. The line of the anklets was perfect and their surface was frequently chased with beautiful patterns. Some weighed as much as seven pounds. Besides these anklets the smiths were making knives and spears, ornamented with intricate patterns in fluting and chasing work, which they produced with hammer and chisel.

He passed to the carpenters' shops where bedsteads, wooden pillows, five-legged stools, platters and mortars were being made. He saw the men felling their own trees in the adjoining forest, splitting them into the required shapes with hard-wood wedges, small axes and single-headed adzes, planing them with long sharp knives or wide flat chisels, and again decorating the finished articles by means of heated irons. He watched other workers weaving the baskets used as head-coverings and as various substitutes for boxes. Yet more people were engaged in stripping the inner bark from fig trees, soaking it in water, and then beating the pulp into felt, which served as clothes for the men of the district.

His attention was diverted by a procession of men and boys surrounded with leaping and yelping dogs, driving before them three antelopes which they had captured in large basket-work traps and were marching through the village preparatory to their being killed for food. In a neighbouring district he was introduced to the smelting of ironstone, and the various processes by which the molten iron passed into earth grooves, where it hardened into ingots which were next hammered into bars about an inch wide and half an inch thick, and finally beaten into knives, spears, axes, hoes and thin-bladed razors.

He notes that the ironstone, which is especially rich, is smelted in small ant-hill-like cupolas, in which it is placed together with a certain quantity of charcoal. Fire being applied, a strong blast is maintained by means of bellows similar to those used by the native blacksmiths till the melting iron flows through a blowhole and takes the form of a rough ingot in a groove prepared for it in the earth. Each ingot or "pig" weighs about twenty-five or thirty pounds and is worth four yards of strong calico.

"I cannot urge," he writes to Mr Baynes about the Banalyas, "that their numbers are such as to promise a great and immediately prosperous field for mission effort, but they certainly belong to no decadent race."

The characteristics of the people made as deep an impression on Grenfell as their occupations. One chief, in particular, was notable for his exceptional age of eighty years, his mental preservation, and for his clean-cut features, light skin, and prominent cheek-bones, which composed a picture bearing a striking resemblance to the Pharaohs. The survival, through the prolonged cruelties and horrors of the Arab regime, of so considerable a population as the district contained, proved their vigour and resource, and held out the promise that they might easily play a leading part in the future life of the country. These factors stirred Grenfell's ambition to win them for the Kingdom of God, and urged him to press their claims upon the Committee at home.

He turned back about a hundred and eighty miles from the point at which he had left the *Peace*. On his descent he gave the bank a wider berth than on

the outward trip, and was struck by the view this gave him of the flatness of the country. Here and there a few hills relieved the monotony, but none exceeded a hundred and fifty feet in height. The river was busy with the heavy transport traffic, and almost every rapid was marked by the wreckage of canoes which had been worsted in their attempts to negotiate it.

"I cannot claim that this journey has been an important one, but it has certainly been very interesting," was Grenfell's pronouncement after his return to Stanley Pool at the end of November. At the same time it had given him his bearings for another effort to the north-east, and it had revealed the pitiful condition of the attenuated remains of the once prosperous people who occupied the vast central lands of the continent, and he felt the obligation to share with them the Gospel that had so enriched his own life.

For two years Grenfell's mail had contained reiterated appeals that he should take furlough in the homeland. His present term in the Congo had long outrun the normal duration, and his friends grew apprehensive concerning his health. But to every suggestion of rest he turned a deaf ear. His colleagues needed him, and his wife feared the English climate. He felt his own health to be good, and he was convinced that eighteen months of pioneering would benefit him far beyond a similar period away from his work. So, after spending two months in routine duties at his station on the river, he set out for another voyage to Yakusu for the purpose of introducing some new missionaries to that up-river station, after which he proposed,

should nothing intervene, to leave for England. The break came earlier than he anticipated. By the time the *Goodwill* reached Monsembi he was prostrated by the most serious illness of his life, and his younger colleagues, taking matters into their own hands, hurried him back to Bolobo, where his condition caused the gravest anxiety. At the end of a month he had recovered sufficiently to proceed on the first stage of his homeward way. From Stanley Pool to Matadi he took his maiden trip on the Congo Railway, and, save for a revolt at Boma, where he boarded a waiting liner, his progress was made without noteworthy incident. Before many miles of the voyage were covered he was so greatly improved in health that he almost decided to turn back.

When he arrived in London he found the country still under the gloom of the opening disasters of the South African War.

CHAPTER XIII

THE TRAIL OF RUBBER

1874–1906. Age 25–57 years.

SHORTLY after Grenfell's release from the Lunda Expedition, symptoms of serious maladjustment in the administration of the Congo Free State began to appear.

From the deck of his steamer Grenfell had observed on his various journeys that tribes from both river banks in Free State territory above the Mobangi were dropping down-stream and were settling in French territory on the northern bank, where they were joined by other tribes from the opposite Free State side.

Landing near to the Equator on one trip he listened to a tale of horror from the lips of a fellow-missionary who, in the course of a walk through a village in the wake of a company of soldiers, had counted twenty hands which these had hacked from men, women and children. From friends in Britain Grenfell had lately received press cuttings which contained similar stories. He was reluctant at first to credit these as being more than the unauthorized acts of isolated officials, faced with the necessity of imposing a new order of government upon an undisciplined and truculent people, and of raising the revenue required for the development of the country. He was loath to believe that in the background there existed,

inspired by greed of gold, a vast, organized system of terrorism. When at long last he realized its sinister nature, he was foremost in its denunciation. In order to appreciate his action, it is once more necessary to retrace, from another vantage ground, the road of his African course from the day he first landed in Cameroons.

The first ten years of that life were passed under unrestrained African rule—four years in Cameroons and six in Congo. Of this decade Grenfell wrote :

> The bitter experiences of that time have burnt themselves indelibly into my mind and memory. I saw the havoc made by the liquor traffic over wide stretches of the country, where bottles of gin and rum were the staple currency, and where it was useless to go to market to buy food without them. It has fallen within my experience to see slaves brought down to the white man's store and sold for gin and rum and barter goods paid over the counter. I have been in the midst of an Arab raid in the centre of the continent, and within twenty-four hours counted twenty-seven burning or smoking villages, and had myself to face the levelled guns of the raiders. I have seen the cruel bondage in which whole communities have been held by their superstitious fears—fears that compelled them, lest a witch might be suffered to live, to condemn their own flesh and blood, and to inflict horrible cruelties upon them. I have all unavailingly stood by open graves and tried to prevent the living being buried with the dead, and altogether have seen more of the darker side of human nature than I care to think about. I claim to know better than a great many what is involved by " native rule."

Hence, during their formation and early development, the plans and policies of various European groups in the Congo regions had no more ardent admirer and apologist. The loftiness of the avowed

motives of their promoters won his support. The character of the early leaders inspired his hopes for the future. The apparent sincerity of Leopold, King of the Belgians, the prime mover, secured his whole-hearted allegiance.

As the outcome of a Conference convened by King Leopold in Brussels in 1874, an International Association was formed with a three-fold object: (1) To abolish the slave trade, (2) To minimize rivalry or privilege as between different religions, (3) To make a vast Free Trade area, in which the commerce of all nations should receive equal treatment. Owing to the subsequent emergence of national rivalries and ambitions, this Association slowly evolved into a number of national committees whose activities found vent in various parts of the African continent. Thus it came to pass that the remnant of the original Association devoted its operations at first to East Africa, thereby arousing the apprehensions of other Powers. Stanley's sensational passage of the Congo, however, shifted the centre of interest to the western half of the continent, with the result that, in 1878, another Committee was formed in Brussels, again at the instance of King Leopold, to survey the Upper Congo basin. Within three months Stanley began, in the interests of this Committee, the task of organizing the Congo Independent State. He landed in Congo in August 1879, and worked on parallel lines to Grenfell and Comber in forcing a way to Stanley Pool and established a line of State posts along the route. International fears and jealousies during the next few years operated to bring about, in 1884, the famous Conference in Berlin, by which the Congo Free State was established and definitely

recognized by the fourteen Powers represented round the table. The immense area involved was placed, without reference to its occupants, under the trusteeship of King Leopold, who was pledged to observe freedom of commerce, to prohibit monopoly and privilege, and to ensure fair treatment for the natives. The Baptist missionaries, who had hailed Stanley's enterprise with acclamation, because it foreshadowed the dawn of a better day for the country concerned, received this further step with equal enthusiasm.

The Baptist Missionary Society's report for 1885 contains this record:

> We regard with the highest admiration the philanthropy which first planned such a scheme, the consummate skill with which the various stages were slowly and surely elaborated, and the high ability with which diplomatic arrangements of great difficulty were conducted and brought to a successful issue, in spite of such jealousies and forces. While according our full homage of grateful appreciation to King Leopold of the Belgians, we see a Higher Hand working in all this. . . . Doubtless King Leopold's greatest joy is this, that not only is he benefiting millions of his fellow-creatures, but that he is the chosen instrument in God's hand of accomplishing this end.

Up to this time, the State was almost solely financed from the private purse of King Leopold. During the next few years, other monies were invested, as the Belgian power extended its tentacles along the main river and its chief tributaries. State steamers began to ply on the river, and trading relationships were established with the natives in the neighbourhood of the posts. Exploratory parties penetrated the hinterland, and their reports, together with the observations of the down-river officials on the regular native

trade routes, indicated something of the richness of the prize that had dropped into the hands of those fortunate enough to secure it. Though under Belgian auspices, this enterprise wore at first a British aspect through the personnel of its leadership but, largely through French representations, the British officials were gradually replaced by Belgians, until in 1891 the control of this virgin area, as big as India, was directed from Brussels, the capital of a small nation hitherto without experience of colonial administration.

It is easy to see, at this distance of time, that the problems that were inevitable in the assumption of the control of the destinies of so huge and thinly-peopled an area were increased by the circumstances of the situation and by the methods employed. The centre of administration was fixed at Boma, on the coastal edge of the colony. Between it and the wide-spreading interior, with its vast river system, there lay the restricted corridor of the lower river basin, with its unscalable barrier of cataracts and its forbidding series of heights and jungle. Sir Harry Johnston, whose knowledge of conditions at this period is unrivalled, says that—

> These limitations made it scarcely more easy for the Belgian Governor-General of the Congo at Boma to gauge and grapple with the awful problems that must be raised by European interference with the lives of millions of negroes than if he had lived at Brussels, and merely acted on the written reports of his subordinates.

In accepting this opinion, it should be remembered that the Missionary Societies were in like position in having their headquarters near the mouth of the river,

and that it was only within recent years that they and the Government shifted their bases to Stanley Pool.

The administration was hampered further by inadequate financial resources on the one hand, while, on the other, it was hastened in its efforts to overtake its task by the covetous approaches of stronger Powers towards the centre of the continent. Its leaders were in the position of seeking to establish and expand a business on insufficient capital with an untried staff, against the rival activities of more powerful competitors who were straining to enter their ground. The outlay involved in these initial years in conveying overland to Stanley Pool steamer parts, machinery, munitions, stores, food supplies and other essentials, besides the maintenance of the State posts and a large native army, exceeded sixty thousand pounds annually. Against this, it was only possible to set an almost negligible income derived from the creation of a royal monopoly on ivory. It became clear that richer sources of revenue must be discovered or devised. By the terms of the Berlin Conference, no import duties could be levied in Congo, but on the pretext of obtaining money to fight the slave-trade, yet another International Conference was held in Brussels in 1889–90, where authority was given for the imposition of the necessary duties.

Commerce, in the shape of limited liability concerns, now cast eyes upon the Congo. Before the end of 1886, the first company was formed to develop the country and to build a railway through the lower region. Other companies sought and obtained concessions in the rich forest and mineral areas, and proceeded to establish legitimate and lucrative trade

relationships in ivory and rubber with the people on the river banks.

In the interests of the future it was now deemed desirable to deal a death-blow to the Arab menace, which had assumed threatening proportions as the Belgian occupation progressed. Apparently the Arabs had resolved, in the early nineties, upon the building of a powerful Moslem State in Central Africa. Already, following upon their occupation of the Lualaba-Congo and Lomami valleys, they had laid out upon the ruins of their former desolations splendid towns with schools, and had lined the river banks for miles with plantations. No colonial power could tolerate the existence of so dangerous a rival across its path. So in 1892-3 a Belgian expeditionary force, under Baron Dhanis, weak in numbers and inadequately equipped with munitions and supplies, set out along the Kasai valley and then across the Lunda country which Grenfell had just surveyed. By a series of daring and astounding successes this army of negro regulars and irregulars, pitted against such traditional fighters as the Arabs, broke the might of the Moslem in Central Africa and left it leaderless. The horrors attending this campaign can scarcely be excelled in history. Thousands of irregular troops, on either side, were undisguised cannibals who slaughtered without mercy and gratified their carnal passions without restraint. Sir Harry Johnston says :

Nothing but a few bones were left of the killed the morning after every fight. The crocodiles swarmed in the big rivers to devour fugitives who took to the water as their last chance. As to the Arabs, when in the earlier stages of this struggle they caught a Belgian living, they

would flog him to death and leave his mangled remains to be cooked and eaten by the auxiliaries. . . . On the other hand, such Arabs as fell into the power of Dhanis' native irregulars were killed and eaten.

The Arabs remained in considerable numbers in the Upper Congo region, and are flourishing, industrious, and peaceable.

Grenfell, as great an authority on the second period which closed with 1894 as was Sir Harry Johnston on the previous period, has penned this illuminating summary of it:

A marvellous change during the second decade of my African life came over the country I had previously known under the chaotic sway of hundreds of independent chiefs. I have often maintained, and I believe that I have been justified in so doing, that in no other colonial enterprise, even in twice the time, had such an extent of territory been opened up or brought more or less within the range of ordered government. The drink traffic had been effectually restrained within the narrowest possible limits of the coast-line; cannibalism and the slave-trade were no longer dominating the land and flaunting themselves everywhere, but greatly diminished by the persistently repressive action of the law, were being driven into the dark corners and hiding places; and most arduous work of all, the wave of Arab conquest which I met in 1884, and which by that time had swept from Zanzibar to Ujiji and on to Stanley Falls, and would undoubtedly have overwhelmed the Congo valley right down to the sea, was swept back by the forces organized by King Leopold and the death-blow given to the Arab domination in Central Africa. . . . The change was such as would have gladdened the heart of any man able to compare, as I could, the early days of the Congo State with the chaos that had preceded it, and I was proud to wear the decorations of the monarch who had initiated the enterprise and who had laboured and spent as Leopold had done, to secure its success.

But the call for revenue was insistent—revenue to recoup those whose money had fathered the undertaking, to finance its extension, to meet the cost of administration and to cover the equipment of a standing native army. And revenue was to be secured in abundance from the untapped wealth of the country. Labour, too, existed in plenty. What was easier and more natural than for the new over-lords of Congo, in their own way, to harness this labour to the task of wresting from these places the riches that lay about them? Decrees were issued by which all vacant lands were claimed as the property of the State. The hunting by the people of elephants for the prize of ivory, and trading in rubber and copal, were prohibited. A large native soldiery was enrolled, mainly by armed raids on villages. By these and other steps the Congo State, with its bewildering treasure in economic resources and human life, was gradually and completely placed at the disposal of Leopold. Before long his behests were made known and his will was worked through his agents. Steadily increasing pressure was applied to the State officials to swell the yield of ivory and rubber. Their zeal was stimulated by the bestowal of bonuses in varying forms according to the returns from their districts. The early response of the Congolese, a people hitherto accustomed to work as and when they pleased, was totally inadequate, and so sterner measures, which in time reached almost incredible lengths of cruelty and ferocity, were adopted. Stories, which far outstripped the horrible legends of the earlier slave traffic, began to come to the ears of Grenfell and his colleagues at Bolobo and elsewhere. Without any provocation, the army of Congo recruits was used to

raid defenceless villages, and to make exorbitant demands for rubber and ivory. Pending compliance, women and children were seized and carried away as hostages. Others sought refuge in flight before the ravages of the troops, and took to the forests where, hunted and harried, many fell victims to wild animals, while numbers died from exposure and starvation. In a few years extensive prosperous areas were depopulated and ruined.

Soon these luckless people were to find themselves driven to these same forests in the never-ceasing quest for rubber to provide their masters with revenue and dividends. For in 1898 great trusts, formed in Belgium, were granted rights over enormous areas, one of the most spacious being reserved for the private purse of the King. Exploitation without mercy became the established practice. In order to meet the exactions, the natives were compelled every fortnight to travel one, two, or more days' journey into the forest in search of the rubber vine in sufficient quantity. Their first task on these excursions was to fashion improvised shelters as a protection against the uncertainties of the weather and the attentions of wild animals. Frequently their journeys took them into the districts of tribes from whom, owing to long-standing feuds, they were in danger of armed attack. Outweighing all these hardships were the traditional fears and beliefs which, by day and by night, peopled the shades of their gloomy environment with spirits of darkness whose unceasing mission it was to work them harm. The actual collection of the rubber juice was slow and exacting, and when the quota demanded had been obtained, it had to be carried to the depot of the State or

company. One missionary describes the long files of men, each bearing his basket of rubber under his arm, approaching the depot with trembling timidity. There each received a milk tin full of salt as all too inadequate payment, with an additional two yards of calico for the head-men. Then they slunk back to their village homes, only to be forced away after two or three days for another spell of rubber-hunting. Throughout the occupied rubber areas of Congo, more than three hundred days annually were occupied with this gathering of the raw substance.

Hostages, who included old and wasted men and women as well as younger women and children, were often taken to the concentration camps around the European stations, where with ropes round their necks and other ropes linking them together, they toiled under supervision for eight hours in the heat of a tropical day, with a hide whip as a monitor to spur their flagging strength.

Failure or refusal to comply with the demands for rubber met with drastic reprisals. Villages were burnt and crops were razed to the ground. Chiefs were tied up. Defaulters were shot without mercy. Their bodies were hung head downwards as a warning to others, and their hands were cut off and brought to the Commissioner. Sometimes the hands belonged to children. During the absence of their husbands in the forest, women were left to the pleasure of the soldiers, and the seeds of disease were sown broadcast over the country.

Another oppressive form of taxation was added to this crushing burden. The State ordered that the provisioning of its army, now thousands strong, should be a charge on the population. This took

the form of contributions of oil, fish, fowls, goats, and prepared food. Women were engaged from morning till night in grinding flour and cooking cassava puddings, and the old trading paths were crowded every few days with processions of women and children bearing their loads of puddings in order that, while they themselves starved, the soldiers might have plenty. Inevitable deficiencies which arose were made good sometimes by purchasing supplies from more fortunately-placed tribes, at prices which involved the selling of some of the buyers as slaves. In other instances, lives were again sacrificed in punishment.

A few years of this treatment, of which what has been written is merely illustrative and by no means exhaustive or extreme, served to break the spirit of the people and to reduce them to poverty. The condition of Israel under the Midianites and the Assyrians was no more parlous than that of the Congolese under the Belgians. Desire for improvement, and even for the continuance of life, was smothered. The extent to which once populous areas were depleted through disease, death, and forced or voluntary exile, is amazing. The Monsembi district contained seven thousand inhabitants in 1889. In thirteen years the numbers had fallen to a thousand. The numbers in Lukolela were reduced in six years from six thousand to seven hundred. Bolobo showed a loss of two-thirds during a somewhat similar period. From a fourth district of fifty thousand in 1890, forty-five thousand had disappeared by 1903. According to Mr John H. Harris, in his *Slavery or "Sacred Trust,"* the total deaths exceeded five millions. It seemed as if the administration and its directors in Europe were prepared to

pursue their reckless purpose regardless of the fact that they were swiftly destroying an entire people and producing a state of complete bankruptcy.

They were not allowed to do this without protest. The wail of the sufferers was heard as far back as the early nineties, and, as the impositions of the State increased in strength and extent, the cry became more passionate and importunate. Grenfell was among those who raised their voices on their behalf. He interviewed district officials, and bore witness in *The Times* to the trustworthiness of some of the charges made against the administration and to the indisputability of the facts. An enquiry resulted in heavy sentences of imprisonment being passed upon two Belgian officers. The powers of individual agents were restricted and reductions were made in the tax. As the outcome of Grenfell's representations, King Leopold next appointed a Commission for the Protection of the Natives, upon which Holman Bentley and Grenfell served. Owing to its members being so widely separated from each other that communication was more difficult between them than it was between the capitals of Europe before the days of the telegraph and railway train, and that they lived hundreds of miles from the seat of the current troubles, the Commission never really functioned. The two occasions on which it met only served to reveal its impotence. That Grenfell was frankly sceptical concerning its utility and regarded its appointment as mere camouflage is evident from his observations upon it. He says:

By the time we could set foot in it [the district in question] to make enquiries, we should find ourselves

face to face with interested officials prepared to block our way at every turn. Seeing that most of the charges in the papers could be substantiated, it was needful to do something. What better to allay excitement than the appointment of a Commission of missionaries ? And what steps could be taken that would interfere less with the powers that be out here ? If the State is in earnest about reforming these abuses it can do it, but if it is not in earnest, no mere commission of unimportant missionaries can make it.

Grenfell was still reluctant to believe that King Leopold or even the higher officials in Belgium and Boma were responsible for, or even that they were fully aware of, the terrible deeds that were being done in their name. He recognized, however, that where revenue was collected on commission by soldiers who were practically uncontrolled in their contacts with the people, serious wrongs must arise in the natural endeavour to extract from them the utmost amount, and that the evils were bound to multiply through the encouragement of slave-raiding by the State system of purchase and liberation. He agreed that, under such conditions, excesses were inevitable when territory of a million square miles in extent was administered by no more than five hundred officials, mostly ignorant of any African tongue, with the questionable help of an army which had the merest veneer of civilization. But as evidence began to accumulate, gathered by respected colleagues in widely separated inland districts, of appalling atrocities, and flagrant examples came under his own observation on the main river, he was driven to the painful conclusion that a master controlling hand was at work in the background. It was no longer possible to attribute the misdeeds to the irresponsible

acts of madmen unbalanced by recurring fevers and far removed from supervision. They could only be deliberate stages in a well-considered campaign of terrorism and extortion. What this conclusion cost him is evident in his statement that " It was with nothing less than consternation that I was compelled to accept the evidence and to believe what looked like the incredible." His impulse was to hasten to Europe to make his protests in the highest quarters, but he contented himself with more useful interviews with the Governor-General of Congo, and with numerous letters to London and Brussels.

By this time the matter was in other hands with better facilities for agitation. The Congo Reform Association had commenced the brilliant and tireless campaign which focussed the attention of the civilized world upon this African plague spot. Its revelations proved beyond dispute the astonishing extent to which those in high places were involved in all that had happened, and the colossal degree to which they had recouped themselves for any outlay they had made at the beginning.

As the result of sustained publicity on the platform and in Parliament, and the support of an almost unanimous Press, the weight of public opinion in Great Britain ranged itself alongside those who bore the brunt of making the exposures. Many Belgians likewise courageously took up the cudgels in the interests of the Africans, until it was possible no longer to assume official ignorance of the condition of affairs or to deny the charges that were so extensively and authoritatively made. A Commission of Enquiry, appointed by King Leopold, toured the Congo, taking evidence from numerous varied

witnesses, Grenfell among them. The publication of its report was awaited with misgiving by those who had at heart the interests of the Africans, and whose eyes were being opened to the evil workings of the Congo system. Grenfell hardly dared to hope that evidence which was so damning would be published. His apprehensions were justified when, at the end of 1905, the Report came into his hands. Notwithstanding the cleverness of the compilers, the document caused uneasiness to the mildest critics of the State, and it soon became obvious that it was in the nature of a blind. The old order continued for years after Grenfell's death. Indeed, it persisted until the change of Government from the personal authority of King Leopold to the control of the Belgian Parliament, which Grenfell declared was essential, became an accomplished fact.

CHAPTER XIV

THE FLOOD-TIDE

1901–1903. Age 52–54 years.

IT is an afternoon in the summer of 1901. Grenfell and a junior colleague, Mr John Howell, are walking round a park on the outskirts of Birmingham. For the time being they are oblivious of the city behind them, with its factories engaged in the feverish manufacture of munitions for the lengthening war in South Africa. Their conversation is centred on a contest, which, for the time being at least, is more engrossing to them. Even the beauty of their surroundings passes unnoticed, for the younger man, just home from Bolobo, is describing a more wonderful rejoicing of a wilderness and a more gorgeous blossoming of a desert. The furrowed, grey-bearded face of the veteran lights up as he drinks in what is nectar to him, and then he proceeds to outline his hopes regarding new ventures, which he has lately received permission to attempt, into the very heart of the still dark continent. The skilful planning of gardeners which has produced the beauty at his feet is for the moment as nothing to him, for his mind is visualizing the colossal river system he knows so well. Mr Howell has graphically described the occasion:

The map of the unopened country was stamped on that single eye of his. His dream was one of a quick

march into the dismal night of heathenism with the light. His magnificent plans flashed six hundred miles this way, eight hundred miles another, with little trips up the Lomami two hundred miles, Itimbiri one hundred, etc. spoken of as "small asides, hardly worth mentioning."

"All this I want to do when I return to Africa!" he exclaims, and the younger man, fired by his enthusiasm, replies, "Let me come with you!" Thirty years before Grenfell had walked the same way with an older friend to whom he had confided his youthful hopes of missionary service. Now, after a life of hardship and achievement in exhausting conditions under tropical skies, the consecrating fire burns more strongly than ever within him, and he strains to be away.

A merciful headquarters saved Grenfell from the normal deputation experiences of furlough. He had come home to rest and recuperate and, in spite of the disappointment caused throughout the country by his absence from missionary platforms, he escaped the wear and tear of constant journeys and public advocacy. But idleness was alien to his nature. As the man whose career extended over the entire history of the Mission, whose hand had largely made its record and whose mind was shaping further developments, it was essential that he should be considered on every question that arose, and that he should proffer his advice to all who needed it. Every outgoing Congo mail carried his letters to the brethren he had left behind, and every incoming mail brought news and questions from those who were perplexed. Baptist ministers in seaports were approached for likely candidates among their congregations for the

post of steamer engineer. He prepared an appeal to the theological colleges for students having a knowledge of printing to take charge of the press at Bolobo. He interviewed Mr Baynes and the Committee regarding fresh ventures and the provision of a third and still larger steamer for the upper river. He bore the personal joys and sorrows of his brethren, discussed experiences with those who came home and counselled those who went out. He crossed to Brussels and had audiences with King Leopold and his ministers about the atrocities, and made requests for the removal of disabilities under which Protestant missions laboured. He spent much of his time at Sancreed, near Penzance, with his mother, and at Birmingham with his lifelong friends.

These and other activities engaged him until the eve of his departure for Congo at the end of September 1901. Within a few weeks of his arrival at Bolobo in December, he set out for the Aruwimi, fortified by the assurances of the Vice-Governor-General, whom he had interviewed at Boma *en route*, that sites for stations would be readily granted. He stopped at Yalemba, a village fifteen miles above the junction of the Aruwimi and the Congo, and surveyed the spot long before noted as desirable for a station. He then followed the line of his previous journey along the Aruwimi as far as Yambuya, the limit of steamer navigation, where he again drew plans for a site forty feet above river level, and prepared his formal application to the Vice-Governor and the District Commissaire during a somewhat leisurely return journey. He was greeted at Upoto by news of the death of Mrs Millman at Monsembi and the lingering illness of Mrs Dodds. His time on reaching Bolobo

was mainly absorbed in the elaboration of schemes for the removal of the steamer base to the original Stanley Pool neighbourhood. His arguments in this connection received concurrent reinforcement through a violent storm in which, owing to bad beaching facilities, the *Peace*, *Bristol*, *Plym*, and *Goodwill* were driven ashore together. As a result, the *Plym* knocked three holes in the *Goodwill*, and the latter also lost her funnel.

By the beginning of the summer Grenfell set out for his most distant easterly objective, bearing letters of introduction to State officials whom he would meet on the way. Once more the steamer bore him to Yambuya, where he took to canoes on past Banalya, of crowded memories, for six weeks to the limit of the Belgian territory. His goal was Mawambi, where he touched the western outskirts of the Church Missionary Society's sphere. He was thrilled by the prospect of glimpsing the snow-capped Mountains of the Moon, and was almost persuaded to push on in order that he might drink the waters of the Nile. But he contented himself with having gained a knowledge of a country that would inevitably grow in importance and population with the coming of the contemplated railway from the Congo to the Great Lakes. "I could have gone on farther," he wrote, "had I cared to do so, but I was plainly in the Church Missionary Society field, and at the end of my pioneering for the Baptist Missionary Society in this direction."

He returned to Bolobo in time to spend Christmas 1902 with his wife and colleagues, and to share in the celebrations with the increasing Christian community. According to plan, he was off again in February

1903 with his face towards the Lualaba. The earlier stages of his voyage were interrupted by vexatious delays and by his own serious illness. Much of his time was spent in bed, and when at length, after six weeks, he reached Yakusu, at which his pioneering would begin, it was to discover that Mr Moore, who was appointed to go with him, was dying.

Grenfell's own health occasioned such anxiety that his younger colleagues urged him to abandon his task. His rejoinder was, "If God gives me strength to go, I am going."

Immediately above Yakusu the seven cataract areas, which form the Stanley Falls series, lay across his path. Two canoes, with coverings over their centre sections, were sent forward round the rapids, while Grenfell followed in their wake. Five strenuous days were spent in dragging the caravan and its equipment around the obstacles to the smooth water beyond. On the sixth day Grenfell was on the Lualaba river, with a clear three hundred miles of smooth water before him. On this occasion, as on recent journeys, he took with him from the church at Bolobo young men whose homes, before they were stolen by the Arabs, were in the parts visited. With their aid he had the joy of preaching the Gospel for the first time to the people amongst whom he stayed. In a fortnight he had reached Nyangwe. The hours of the Sunday on which he rested there were devoted to writing letters to his English friends, and to quiet brooding over the past and future. Nyangwe was eloquent with the influence of David Livingstone, whose sacrificial heroism had fired his own boyish enthusiasm and had set him a standard by which he had shaped his

own life. Here Livingstone had stumbled on the Arab slave-trade in its full ghastliness, and had penned those appeals which set the conscience of Europe a-quivering and inspired a tremendous stride forward in world evangelization. From here, broken in body and racked with pain, but with face still like a flint, he had gone on to make his supreme sacrifice for Africa. As Grenfell rested in his tent and walked the village paths, his thoughts turned to all that had happened since in his own life. These thirty years had seen the completion of the way inwards from the west. Central Africa had been claimed for the Kingdom of God. The open sore of the world was disappearing before the healing of the Gospel. The age-long sufferings of the peoples were lessening in the light of knowledge. The prayer of the lonely man dying in the hut not far removed from him had indeed been answered. "The lonely man in the hut!" . . . Yes. And Grenfell knew that the sands of his own life were fast running out. A few short years at the most and he would be gathered to his fathers. How essential, therefore, that every remaining hour should be surrendered to the Highest!

So this sacred day passed. The next morning he was once more on his southward road to take his boy Kasongo to his home forty miles beyond. This journey taught Grenfell many things that he could learn only by going over the ground. It proved to be the line of the next B.M.S. expansion. Illness hampered him almost continually on the homeward way. He halted at Yalemba, and then at Upoto, where weeks were spent in enforced idleness, and on reaching Bolobo he was sent still further down country for medical advice.

His loved steamer also required attention. He says :

> The poor old *Peace* is in a really bad way, but I shall have to patch her up for a year or two yet. Perhaps she will last my time !

Notwithstanding all these deficiencies and experiences, yet another voyage was made before 1903 closed—this time along the Kasai and Kwango. The impediments encountered in the shape of unprecedented currents and frequent rapids proved almost too much for both steamer and captain, who aimed to reach a point nearest to Kibokolo, a station founded four years earlier as a memorial to the Comber family. Grenfell commented thus upon this journey :

> I have never had to face such a continuous body of strong water, and the poor old *Peace* I suppose was never in worse fettle for it.

And he might have added that he himself was never less fit to endure the strain which these conditions imposed upon him.

With this episode the long and brilliant sequence of Grenfell's exploratory successes was brought to a conclusion. But he was never at rest until the final call came from the Master in whose name they had been accomplished and recorded. Henceforward he went hither and thither among his brethren at the up-river stations, guiding them in their fast developing responsibilities and rejoicing in their signal successes.

After four years of apparent stagnation at Bolobo, the tide began to flow again in 1902. Notable additions were made to the Christian community, and the

little church not only took up the burden of its maintenance, but supported an evangelist at an outpost fifteen miles away. Other villages were responding to the message, and were providing candidates for baptism. Larger and more permanent buildings became necessary for the prospering work, especially among the children, of whom two hundred and fifty were in regular attendance at day and Sunday school. On one itineration around the out-stations Grenfell halted at a village to inspect the work. Twenty years earlier a barrage of spears had confronted him when he attempted to land there, and he had been forced to seek refuge on a neighbouring sand-bank. Now he was hailed by the teacher and school children, who read to him from primers in their own language, printed at Bolobo, and was afterwards faced by a congregation of a hundred, who sang from their own hymn-books and were careful listeners to the sermon that he preached. Presently he stood by the cross that marked the grave of the evangelist who had given his life for this precious enterprise, and thanked God for the grace that had been revealed in him.

Another evidence of the power of Christianity encouraged him. The dreaded sleeping sickness plague had gathered Bolobo in its sweep. While great numbers of the people succumbed to its insidious ravages, the Christian community, owing to the better mode of life that its members had followed, was practically immune, and Grenfell surmised that the large attendances at the services, which were now the order of the day, were in no small measure due to the recognition of the townspeople that there was something in Christianity which ensured a greater security for this life, however they might esteem its value in

relation to the life beyond. Demands from the villages for teachers embarrassed the staff, who were unable to respond to them. At frequent intervals along the river and in the country behind, school-chapels were built by the people and day schools and services were conducted by evangelist teachers, who spent a few days each quarter at the central station for the instruction which they passed on when they returned to their posts. So acute was the thirst for knowledge that in several places schoolhouses, over which the people appointed one of their number who possessed a smattering of knowledge, were erected without any stimulus from the missionaries.

At Yakusu the advance far outran that of the other stations. Over a big area the appetite for book learning broke all bounds. Little fellows paddled their slender canoes a hundred miles down-stream, braving the terrors of crocodiles and of what were to them fearful distances, that they might purchase the little primer that would teach them their letters and introduce them to the prize of knowledge contained in the white man's book. Supplies were exhausted again and again, but still the demand increased. Those who were disappointed borrowed books from others, or were taught their letters by teachers who traced the outlines in the sand. Towards the end of 1904 the influence of Yakusu had so greatly extended that Grenfell and Stapleton spent three weeks in a round of visits to the out-stations on the river banks. This tour included the Lomami on which, twenty years earlier, the appearance of the *Peace* had been saluted with showers of poisoned arrows. The population was now much reduced from its former state. Slave-raiding had proved only too effective.

The scenes that unfolded themselves here and on the main river before Grenfell's eyes were in amazing contrast to those he had found before. Where he had met smoking villages and cringing fugitives, he found Christian buildings and eager scholars. In many villages the schoolhouse was far and away the biggest building. Reading books and cards were frequently shared by five children because of the fever for learning. Deputations of villagers met Grenfell at every turn with requests for teachers, and in some places he saw an empty school building, erected in dumb confidence that the teacher would come. A finer music was superseding the traditional songs that were a questionable heritage from their fathers. At landing-place after landing-place a choir of children serenaded the arrival of the *Peace* with the strains of familiar hymns. Music, of a sort it is true, was in the blood of these folk, and the novelty of a fresh kind of melody and of poetry found vent on every occasion.

One evening in 1905 the *Peace* was cruising for a sheltered night anchorage against a prospective storm. Suddenly the tense stillness was broken by the strains of *All hail the power of Jesus' Name*, floating across the water. It was the local fishing season, and the fleet included a number of canoes manned by mission boys who had brought their lesson books with them, and who, on recognizing the *Peace*, had greeted her with the song they were teaching their companions. Grenfell says his heart was moved by this incident, and little wonder, for at that very place he had stumbled first upon the trail of the charred remains of the Arab slaving drive of 1884.

Grenfell, rejoicing in this extension at Yakusu and

in the smaller but nevertheless similar progress at Bolobo and Upoto, was quick to recognize that, unless missionaries were present in sufficient strength to grapple with all that it involved, it might easily become an embarrassment instead of an encouragement.

The education of the children, the shepherding of the converts through adequate preparation for church membership and for Christian witness in heathen communities removed from the central stations, made imperative the inauguration of training classes for men teachers and evangelists, and for the women who, as wives, would accompany them to the villages to set up homes as patterns to their neighbours.

Grenfell shared in the separate station discussions and in the united upper and lower river conferences, which evolved a policy common to all, and he exulted in the assurance this gave of a future that should be stable and enduring. The one blemish in the stirring story that was unfolding before him was the abandonment, in 1903, of Monsembi as a residential station, which action was decided upon after he had made an inspection of its district and had found it to be almost depopulated as the outcome of State oppression and waves of plague. He took part in the last scenes there, and took Mr Weeks, who had been in charge, down river towards Wathen, where he was needed to help shape the enterprise in that flourishing region.

CHAPTER XV

THE SPUR OF DISAPPOINTMENT

1901–1906. Age 52–57 years.

"WE will receive with sympathy any application you may make for land for your mission stations." In words such as these the Vice-Governor-General of Congo responded to Grenfell's request at his interview on returning to Congo in 1901. Instead of the prompt fulfilment of this promise, all subsequent letters and plans submitted by Grenfell and his colleagues were either ignored or evaded. Notwithstanding the fact that local State officials endorsed the requests that were made, the excuse was advanced that the restlessness of the people made it dangerous to concede land to any white man. After each voyage fresh applications were presented by the men on the spot to the administration and were supported by official correspondence between London and Brussels. A delay of months while each appeal was considered was only to be expected, but year after year there came only silence or refusal. Some secret power was operating in the background to checkmate every overture, and it became clear that Protestant missions were in eclipse with the State because of the part their representatives were playing in the Congo agitation. On the other hand, undisguised favours were extended to Roman Catholic missionaries. Concessions were awarded them in

the very areas towards which the B.M.S. was looking. Priests and nuns entered the country with every sign of official patronage, and extended their activities to districts in which the Protestants were well established. Grenfell, who had long enjoyed friendship with many Catholic fathers, found it difficult to conceal his chagrin under such flagrant breaches of international treaties, especially when English Roman Catholic emissaries were given entrance to the country, and no opportunity to irritate members of Protestant missions was allowed to slip. He saw the Catholics gaining ground by adopting methods which were repugnant to him. His observations only served to strengthen his emphasis upon the supreme necessity of giving the people the Bible in their own tongue and, by efficient educational work, to afford them facilities for understanding it.

The State began to show its hand more openly. A Roman Catholic journal seized upon a small extension of Protestant propaganda as an occasion to announce that "the request of His Majesty King Leopold II., who wished to prevent the installation of Lutheran ministers, and the repeated requests of the natives, have determined our missionaries to delay no longer in putting this project [a fresh Catholic aggression] into execution." District officials, acting under instructions, foreshadowed steps which threatened to remove children from Protestant stations and to place them under Roman Catholic instruction. Jesuit missionaries incited the State to banish Protestant missionaries from the country. The tension grew so acute that, in 1903, Mr Lawson Forfeitt, as the legal representative of the B.M.S. in Congo, was called home to advise the

Committee and to state the case in person at Brussels. Still there was no response from the Government. A deaf ear was turned to an offer by the B.M.S. to forgo, in favour of Yalemba, its rights in a site which it had purchased on the Itimbiri and which the State had afterwards occupied. The ill odour in which Protestant missions were held was exhibited in a bitter interview between Grenfell and the Governor, during which the latter accused the former of behaviour worse than that of all his brethren in regard to the atrocities. In the face of a new decree forbidding settlements of more than a fortnight in any place without legal authority, the younger missionaries urged that possession should be taken without permission, no matter what the consequences might be.

So stiff and unjust an attitude on the part of a Government, with which throughout his career he had maintained intimate relations, was gall to the soul of Grenfell, and the friction did much to sap his strength. Without in any degree slackening his protests or his efforts to secure a change of front, he found consolation in the almost unlimited openings which presented themselves in places already occupied, and he continued to hope for the dawn of a brighter day.

At the end of four years the State made a grudging concession by granting a lease for land at Yalemba on which buildings might be erected. As far back as 1902 Grenfell had posted in this district Disasi, a Yalemba youth who had been trained at another station, and the latter had lost no time in opening a day school and in holding services. On a subsequent river journey, Grenfell delayed his progress for a

week-end and took part in public worship conducted by Disasi, during which he heard for the first time the Lord's Prayer repeated in Heso, the local language, which was unfamiliar to him. Yalemba now became a regular place of call for the mission steamers, and Grenfell noted with joy during his visits the manner in which those whom he and others had trained were commending their faith to the people. A roomy clearing in the forest and a substantial clay-walled house and a store, each about fifty feet by sixteen feet, stood to their credit. They had pressed inland from the river and made contacts with the villages which they found in greater numbers than they had expected. The experience of these visits must have revived recollections of distant pioneering days at Bolobo. The people were strong in body and masterful in mind. Personal and tribal quarrels broke out on the flimsiest provocation, and were settled by appeal to the knife and spear. On more than one occasion Grenfell felt compelled to interfere, notably when he took his life into his hand in a manner that he graphically describes:

When at Yalemba last week I had to interfere to prevent things becoming too serious; as it was there was lots of blood flowing and one man seriously hurt. I got in between the rival factions, but my poor shouting was simply nowhere. When they got a "howl" on I had to resort to a piece of bamboo I had in my hand for making an impression. They got it on both sides indiscriminately when the lines closed up for another charge. There were over a hundred of them, many of them with no other covering than their shields, and armed to the teeth with knives, spears, bows and arrows, and all the savage panoply of the really old-time scrimmage—feathers and paint galore. They must have felt very ridiculous standing there being licked with a stick

by a little old white man. There was "glory" in it when they could get up close to one another and draw blood, but this was altogether too tame, and so they drew off and let their tempers cool down. The next morning they allowed I had done well to give them the stick, "for," they said, "if you had not interfered, someone would have died."

Grenfell not only knew how to act in a crisis among Congo people. He also had a way with other types. An American globe-trotter visited him one day, pulled up a chair and placed another for Grenfell with the remark: "Sit down! I have interviewed Chinese mandarin and Indian rajah, secured copy from the greatest Englishman on the east coast of Africa, which will give me two chapters for my book. I want material for two chapters from the greatest man on the west coast." Grenfell listened in amused silence, and then hedged and played with his interlocutor. All the latter's skill in questioning failed to draw him, and the interview ended in failure. Those two chapters were never written.

The certainty that European missionaries would now settle at Yalemba acted as a tonic to this strained veteran. He hastened to Bolobo at the beginning of 1906 to collect the plant and stores required for the buildings. From Bolobo he proceeded to Kinshasa on Stanley Pool to share in the third General Conference of the Protestant Missions working in Congo. A bioscope had been brought out by one of the younger missionaries for the purpose of filming the mission, but the reels of animated pictures that it took failed to approach, for vividness and power, scenes that presented themselves to

Grenfell's mind as the *Peace* carried him once more down the broad waters of the Pool into the midst of his brethren. Twenty-five years before, when he saw it first, its surface was undisturbed save for the ripples from frail canoes and the movements of its fearsome inhabitants. Its natural environment was unbroken except where ramshackle native villages stood framed in the forest. Now it pulsated with the new tides that had arrived from the West. Its horizon was pierced by the gleaming outlines of corrugated iron buildings which marked the encroachments of commerce and of administration. On his earliest vigil at the lower end of the Pool, Grenfell had been anxious on account of the disastrous weakness of the missionary force in the country behind him and of the tragic absence of any messenger of the Gospel in the unknown continent before him. Now he was to share in the deliberations of colleagues of several nationalities who were gathered from all parts of the land which he had helped to open up, to glow as he listened to the tale of their successes, and to guide them in the solution of their problems. As he neared the western outlet of the Pool he must have seen again the figure of his companion of the early days hoisting the flag which signified that series of disasters which nearly broke his heart. Did he wonder whether this visit would be marked by any similar tidings ?

He entered the Conference Hall, the oldest man in years of service, a prince among his fellows, the greatest in the company because he was the servant of all. Fifty-six men and women did him honour. Fifteen were there from the B.M.S., and with them American Baptists from the upper and lower river,

Swedes from the coastal region, American Presbyterians, other British of the Congo Bololo Mission, Canadians, Germans, Norwegians, and Danes. State problems loomed large in the proceedings and the discussions issued in an emphatic resolution of unanimous protest. Grenfell spoke, in supporting it, of a time when he welcomed the honours bestowed upon him by Leopold. He continued, "But when the change of regime from philanthropy to self-seeking of the basest and most cruel kind came, I was no longer proud to wear the decorations." Matters of common policy and administration, manifold questions arising from church management, school curriculum, industrial activities, the need of united training institutions, health and hygiene, the provision of Christian literature and other related subjects—all these constituted an accumulated witness to the magnitude of the missionary accomplishment, and portended a still more wonderful future. "We are serving a great Master!" declared Grenfell. "We are on the winning side! Victory is not uncertain! The truth is strong and shall prevail! We are checked, but not disheartened!"

The Conference had its hours of bitter sweetness. The name of Alfred Henry Baynes was missing from the official communications from London. He had retired during the previous year from the direction of affairs at home. At noon on the third day, Mr Lawson Forfeitt sought out Grenfell, and in a secluded spot broke to him the announcement of the death in England of Holman Bentley. A few hours later Grenfell's mail included a letter from Bentley, and as he read with heavy heart its pages so charged with optimism and with anticipation of a

further term of service, it was difficult to believe that the voice of the last remaining survivor of the original pioneers was stilled in death.

It fell to Grenfell to conduct a Memorial Service on the following Sunday, and with obvious emotion he uttered words that were characteristic of his own faith and vision. He referred to the fact that most of his oldest missionary associates were now gone and that the " other side " was the homeland of his heart. He was conscious of a great loneliness that at times brought an unutterable sadness, but which fostered a closer communion with the Divine. After a glowing panegyric upon his friend and a tribute of affection to the widow and children, he concluded with the words :

> A good soldier of Jesus Christ has departed to be with his Lord, which is very far better. He has fought the good fight ; he has finished his course ; he has kept the faith and made good his claims to the Crown of Righteousness which the Lord hath laid up for those who love His appearing.

He did not guess how near was the day of his own coronation.

During this final visit to Stanley Pool, Grenfell stood one day by the railway while eight trucks were shunted into the B.M.S. siding. Their contents were labelled s.s. *Endeavour*. As he watched the ease with which everything was handled, and walked along the temporary tramway line which workmen had laid to the work-sheds on the beach, he could not help contrasting the existing facilities with the hardships and labour of a quarter of a century earlier, when the *Peace* loads had to be carried on men's

heads up hill and down dale for more than two hundred miles. He hailed the new steamer's arrival with delight, for none knew better than he how urgently she was needed. Once she was on the water he expected that she would discharge all transport obligations and so relieve him of the strain of travel. But with an old man's loyalty to his first love, he was sceptical about the utility of the newer and larger vessel on account of her being a stern-wheeler and not a screw-boat. When, in a few weeks, news of her rapid assembling and approaching launch reached him, he desired to see her afloat and to feel her throbbing under him; a privilege which, however, was denied him.

Steamer affairs continued to cause him concern. Like her captain, the *Peace* had grown old. No longer could she ride gaily against opposing currents. Her coverings and machinery were in constant need of repair. During one of her last journeys one of the two cylinder covers was smashed into six pieces, one disappearing overboard. Lying to on an adjacent sand-bank, Grenfell and his men discussed their line of action. At first it appeared that their only way was to run the vessel down with the stream and dry-dock her at Bolobo. Then Mawango, the resourceful boat's carpenter, resolved upon making a substitute out of hard wood. He succeeded so well that, after a delay of thirty-six hours, the up-river journey was resumed, and, with this makeshift arrangement, a distance of over two thousand miles was triumphantly covered. Grenfell's nonchalant attitude towards this achievement was displayed when a clever State official asked to see this cylinder and congratulated Grenfell upon his resolution and

resource. His only comment was: "Just as though a man would put off a planned trip because he had blown out the head of a cylinder and hadn't a spare one!"

After the Kinshasa Conference Grenfell returned to Bolobo, and in March 1906 the heavily laden *Peace*, towing three burdened canoes, followed by two equally weighted boats, crept cautiously out from the beach into the rushing current. Doors, windows, bolts, bars, nails and screws for the houses, brass wire and bales of cotton goods with which to purchase food and pay wages, tent and camping gear, paddles and paddlers, and stacks of wood for fuel, filled every inch of space and gave much anxiety, ere, with the widening of the river, the convoy emerged into smoother water. Yalemba was made by easy stages. Calls were paid at the main stations and at some of the outposts which now for long stretches lined the banks. Fellowship between the veteran and his colleagues was enjoyed for what proved to be the last time. The responsibility of navigating the *Peace* was largely delegated to trusted Congo boys, proud of their position and devoted to their chief. One boy was established in the bow taking soundings. A second, who until two years before had been a cannibal, acted as man at the wheel. One of the engineers had been rescued from slavery and had grown up in the mission as a consistent member of the Bolobo Church. Grenfell, engrossed in correspondence in the cabin, only needed at rare intervals to glance through its windows to see that everything was well.

The self-reliance displayed by his stalwart steamer team and the attainments of his Bolobo boys as

printers, carpenters, blacksmiths and tradesmen, made very evident another weakness in the State administration. The educational method followed at all the mission stations combined theory with practice. Work in the class-rooms ran alongside activities in the open air. Each Christian community, therefore, included members possessed of a knowledge of one or more handicrafts or other skilled callings that served them in good stead and gave them a standing in the sight of their fellows. A new type of African was being developed, and thriving colonies of a stable character were growing up round the central stations. Evangelist teachers were placed over wide areas, in which, by their individual initiative, they were unfolding by precept and example a higher mode of life to their non-Christian kinsfolk. While it would have been claiming too much at that time to have affirmed that the establishment of a Christian order of society might be left entirely in their hands, solid progress had been made in that direction.

The State, on the contrary, took no cognizance of its duty to create in its subjects any sort of goodwill towards itself. Its leaders were apparently blind to the need, in order to secure the establishment of the colony on a sure foundation, of winning the friendship of the chiefs. Education was neglected. Little opportunity was taken to turn the trading instincts of the people into channels that would make for their further prosperity and consequent contentment.

Because he believed that Congo could never become a white man's country, Grenfell concluded that its rulers must base their government upon the interests of the people. Instead of this he saw the

decimation of the people through oppression and disease, and the growth of a sullen discontent among those who survived. He saw also an army of mercenaries being taught to use the white man's weapons while at the same time they were gaining a knowledge of the extent to which their own rights were being restricted. He observed a breaking down of tribal barriers and the arousing of the first ideas of a mid-African consciousness, which one day might have dire consequences for the white invaders. He sounded, as occasion offered, the warning note to State officials, but they invariably retorted that this situation was of little concern to them, as they expected the existing condition of affairs would last their time. He pressed the Home Committee of the Missionary Society to use their influence and to urge his point of view wherever it might carry weight. Happily it was heeded in time, though Grenfell did not live to see the day.

CHAPTER XVI

BEYOND THE HORIZON

1906. Age 57 years.

GRENFELL was a pioneer to the very end. The solace of a settled station eluded him to his last hour. He found no quiet until he entered upon the rest that remaineth for the people of God. From the beginning his career had suffered from the dislocation of cherished plans, and its final stages were thrown into disorder by unforeseen disturbances.

He approached Yakusu in 1906, charged with the united authority of his brethren at the Kinshasa Conference to secure one of its staff for Yalemba. He planned to take back whoever was released to share in the duties of building and organizing, and then, at the end of six months, to leave the recruit in possession while he himself went to Stanley Pool for the Mission Committee meetings. Before he arrived at Yakusu, however, he was joined on the *Peace* by one of the three Yakusu men, Mr Sutton Smith, then engaged in a visitation of the down-river outposts. As this younger colleague described the surging tide of prosperity which continued to spread around Yakusu in all directions, Grenfell wavered in his determination to take any action that might check its flow, or embarrass the men who would be left in charge. "Any or all of us would quickly spring to your side," was the response

made by the Yakusu trio when they discussed the matter with him. But Grenfell was already won over. He saw that affairs at Yakusu were at the flood and that really twice the number of men were needed there to gain the spiritual fortune that it presaged. So, selfless to the end, he cheerfully resolved to assume on his own weary shoulders the burden of the new work at Yalemba, and left Yakusu at the end of 1906 alone, but with the assurance that as soon as expected reinforcements reached that station, assistance should be available for him.

Yet he was not alone. Never in all his wanderings was the Unseen Presence so real to him as when he stepped on board the *Peace*. No white man stood nearer to him, or loved him with a greater abandon, than the group of Congo youths whom he had won from the bondage of darkness, and had raised by patient endeavour to the dignity of manhood in Christ Jesus. In every emergency during the fateful weeks that followed, they showed the manner of men they were and brought a rare glory to the race to which they belonged.

Grenfell's departure for Yalemba was accelerated by news that a mission boy, through interference in a tribal brawl, had lost his life. The vexatious litigation which ensued was the cause of worry until, in desperation, Grenfell finally compensated the aggrieved party by bearing the cost of the damage—twenty shillings' worth of brass wire.

Illness held him in its grip from the hour he left Yakusu. His first night on board was wakeful, and his first morning afloat was made wretched by weakness. He landed at Yalemba, the goal of the hopes of five seething years, a broken man. He

took to his bed on arrival, and until the hour of his death, nine weeks later, he maintained a dogged fight with relentless fever. One crowning mercy was granted him. Still separated from those dearest to him in the flesh, he was supported in his death by those closest to him in the faith.

In the midst of increasing pain, others still held chief place in his thoughts. He forgot himself in face of the expected arrival of his colleagues. Day by day he issued his instructions for felling more of the giant trees whose tops stood out a hundred and fifty feet above the river, for levelling and laying out the ground, and for erecting two substantial bungalows of European materials. The hut in which he lay was rude and devoid of refinements, and the food was unsuited to his enfeebled state, but occasionally he was able to come into the open to inspect the progress made in the work, and to give practical help to the workmen. One night his hut was set on fire by some reckless Yalemba people, and though the outbreak was soon quelled, it was a dire mishap where a sick man was involved.

By these experiences he was convinced that no white man should be alone at Yalemba. Oblivious of his own danger, instead of urging his colleagues at Yakusu to come to his aid, he sent word to them insisting that the promised man should not leave until he could be assured of permanent companionship. As for himself, with the days of his earthly course fast running out, he wrote to his friends assuring them that his anchorage held as firmly as ever. Joseph Hawkes, the sharer of his boyish confidences, received from the sick bed the benediction of his mellowed convictions :

God has been very good to me through all these weeks on my back, and if some of the days have been dark, and the consciousness of my many sins and much unworthiness has been heavy upon me, yet I have not lost the assurance that it is of His grace that I am saved. I am less confident in trying to explain the Trinity, the Atonement and Justification than I used to be; but this I know, better than ever, that Salvation is by grace through Jesus Christ, by faith.

As his hold on life weakened, the solicitude of his Congo boys on his behalf increased. They urged him to go down river to Upoto, where loving hands would nurse him. They threatened to send a signal of distress to Yakusu. Other symptoms appearing, they took him to Basoko, a Belgian post about ten miles distant, to consult the State doctor there before returning to Yalemba. Most of May was marked by sharp attacks of rheumatism in ankles, knees and wrists, and by an inflammation of the mouth and throat that almost precluded swallowing. He was troubled, too, by tidings of his wife's illness at Bolobo; and he longed for a glimpse of the green hills of his Cornish home and for the sound of the running water hard by his birthplace. Towards the end of the month he progressed so far towards recovery that false hopes were raised. During every peaceful interval the affairs of the mission were in the foreground of his thoughts and prayers.

May merged into June. The patient's condition grew worse, and his anxious assistants, realizing that the time for swift action had arrived, dispatched surreptitiously this letter in their own writing to Yakusu:

My dear Sirs, Millman, Kempton and Smith,
We are very sorrow because our master is very sick, so now we beging you one of you let him come help

Mr Grenfell. Please we think how near is to die, but we do not know how to do with him.

The invalid, too, knew that his hour was come. Black-water fever, with its distressful symptoms, held him in its grip. As a final slender alleviation he was removed again to Basoko, the captain and steamer making their last brief journey together. This time the captain lay stricken to death, while the control passed to his subordinates, who played their respective parts with sorrowful pride. As the afternoon sun sank behind them and the swift curtain of night wrapped them round, Grenfell ordered his men to lay off Basoko until the next morning, lest their arrival should disturb the doctor. But the distant approach of the steamer was heard, and the doctor was by the water's side as she came into sight. Without delay, assisted by the iron will of the invalid, he began an untiring fight for the life entrusted to him.

Mr Millman, before leaving Yakusu for an itineration with the British Consul at the end of May, had sent to Yalemba asking that the *Peace* might be dispatched up the Aruwimi to meet him at Yambuyu on an appointed date and convey him back to Yalemba. Grenfell remembered this through his agonies, and two days after arriving at Basoko issued instructions for the departure of the *Peace* under Mawango's supervision, with a special pilot in charge. The battered boat must have run well, for Mr Millman was in the sick chamber within two days. His presence lightened the darkness that was clouding Grenfell s mind, and brought peace and trust to the soul of the lonely sufferer. The summons to come to Yalemba duly reached Yakusu. Kempton,

in a canoe paddled by an eager crew, covered the distance at record speed, and came on the spot just in time to be called by his name and to be welcomed with a faint smile ere Grenfell lapsed into unconsciousness.

The lucid intervals were mostly spent in prayer for the work to which the brave pioneer had yielded his life. Time and again he turned questioning eyes towards his African assistants, and when at rare intervals his lips moved, it was to voice the problems of his heart. "Do you think I shall see Mamma [Mrs Grenfell] again?" was the burden of one enquiry, to which they made the sobbing reply, "We do not know; if God wills it you will."

His few remaining words were characteristic of the man in relation to his Lord and to his fellows. A whisper was wafted from the sick bed across the room, "Jesus is mine! God is mine!" and when the doctor came to see him he was welcomed by a smile and an enquiry as to the state of his health. Then once again unconsciousness supervened until, in the first hour of Sunday, July 1st, 1906, the voyager crossed the bar and saw his Pilot face to face.

"If I die here at Basoko you will take my body and bury it at Yalemba," he had instructed his helpers as he lay ill, but this direction to his African friends could not be observed. Swift interment was necessary. The doctor decided that he should be buried at Basoko, "as great men are buried." So, by the fitful aid of a dim lamp, workmen toiled through that Sunday night to prepare a grave, while others shaped the coffin. When all was ready a

short service was held in the house. The coffin was carried to the State cemetery, escorted by State soldiers headed by their band, borne on the shoulders of Grenfell's African body-guard and attended by officials, by his missionary colleagues, and a Roman Catholic priest. The funeral service was read by Mr Millman, a volley was fired by the soldiers, and black hands filled in the earth as their last tribute of love to the man who had, in a very real sense, redeemed them. Thus, near to the heart of the continent for which he had spent his life and at the mouth of the river which was the goal of his final strivings, Grenfell's body was committed to the earth.

The dissolution of the *Peace* was also approaching. Her service for the B.M.S. ended with the passing of her beloved captain. She made two trips in 1907 for the British Government. In the spring of 1908 she returned to Kinshasa where it was discovered that she was worn beyond repair. So she was broken up. To this day, the steering wheel that moved so long and so obediently to the hand of Grenfell, and other relics of her notable record, are included in the treasures of the Baptist Mission House in London.

A soul of such refinement as Grenfell's showed itself only to a little circle of intimates. To one of these, in a moment of self-revelation, he lifted the veil that usually enveloped his inmost feelings. The occasion was one of the last voyages of the *Peace*. "You know," he said, "I sometimes feel lately as though my work were nearly done. What will there be for me to do in the next life? I can only explore. All my life has been spent in learning how

to explore. What use will God be able to make of me? Will it be all wasted?"

"You forget," his companion replied, with a flash of inspiration, "that there is the River of the Water of Life, and God will find you a *Peace* and exploring work to do."

"Oh!" rejoined the veteran, his eyes lighting up, "if God would use me to explore His hidden things and reveal a pathway for His messengers, what a delight it would be!"

This pretty conceit absorbed his mind and speech for days. He pictured himself exploring on the River, hailing Livingstone, whom he expected to see on the banks because he was the better walker of the two, and others of the great missionary dead. On more than one occasion he exclaimed: "I have begun to design my steamer for the River of the Water of Life!"

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