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James Thayer Addison

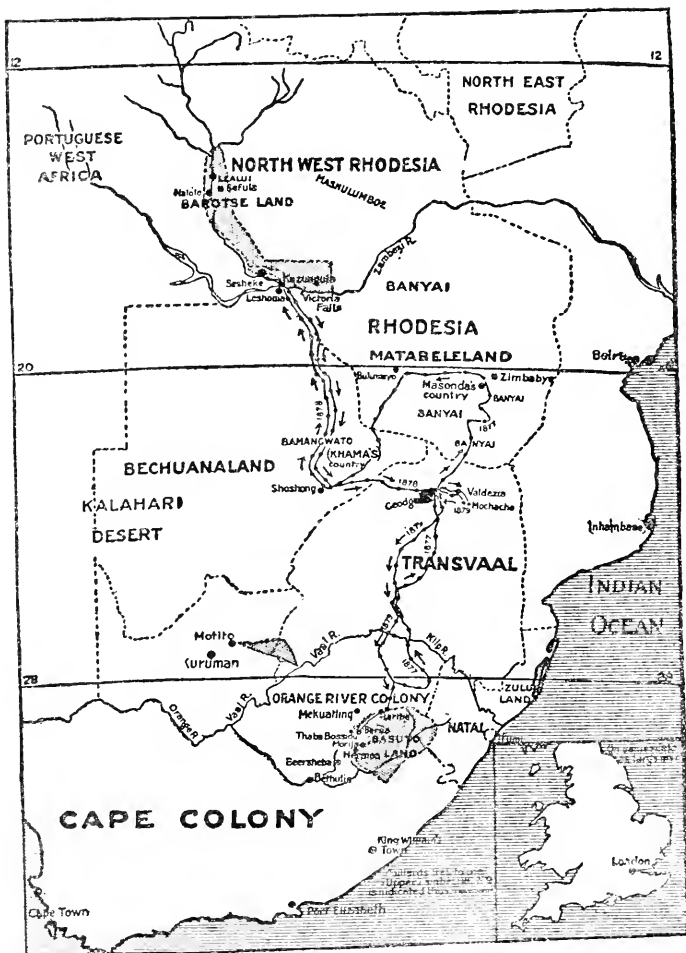
Professor of the History of Religion
and Missions at the Episcopal
Theological School, Cambridge, Mass.

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Showing the places mentioned in this book, and
Coillard's Trek to the Upper Zambezi in 1877-9

[Courtesy of Doubleday, Doran & Co.]

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To
A. A.

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1. C. W. Mackintosh: Coillard of the Zambezi.
2. F. Coillard: On the Threshold of Central Africa (translated.)
These two books are out of print.
3. Edward Shillito: François Coillard. N. Y., Doran, 1923.
4. Edouard Favre: François Coillard (In French) 3 vols. Paris, 1912-13.

FRANÇOIS COILLARD

I

Over seventy years ago, in September 1857, the sailing-ship *Trafalgar*, bound for Capetown, was beating against a head wind in the Bay of Biscay. As she was already twelve days out from Gravesend, her passengers had begun to wonder why they had ever boarded her. One of them, a very sea-sick Frenchman named François Coillard, had noted in his journal that he would rather be a village cobbler than the captain of the best ship afloat. The *Trafalgar* was still afloat, but she was far from being the best of ships. She reeked of bilge-water and swarmed with what Coillard quaintly describes as "cocquerodges". When calmer weather set in he found it easier to forget the raw discomforts, and through the long idle days in sunnier waters to let his mind dwell on the last hours in France—France *ma patrie bien-aimée*—where in the little village of Asnières the peasant women sat sewing under the trees in the Place d'Aujonnière wondering what news would reach the widow Coillard from the son who had said good-bye. Then once more the sea darkened, and before a prolonged and heavy gale the *Trafalgar* rolled and wallowed far off her course until one grey morning the weary passengers awoke to find the crew in a fever of activity, and the captain told them the remarkable news that they had nearly run upon an island off the coast of Brazil.

It must have been rather disconcerting to Coillard to find himself so nearly aground upon the wrong continent, and it was even more disturbing to learn that to him and his fellow-voyagers M. and Mme. Daumas the sailors attributed most of their steady ill-luck, for it is well known that missionaries are the worst sort of Jonahs aboard a ship, and M. Coillard had openly acknowledged that he was going to Africa to spend his life as a missionary among the Basutos. But the worst was soon over; the ship headed once more for the southern point of Africa; and in the weeks of voyaging that remained passengers and even sailors found

in their missionary Jonah not a few redeeming traits. Shy and slight and gentle, with the eyes of a child and a child's simplicity, he seemed to those who met him ill fitted for the rough work to which he was pledged. They were not aware at first glance of that will of steel which held him steady. But some of them discovered the charm of his sympathy and forgot his possibilities as a Jonah in his readiness as a Good Samaritan. The rich Mr. Easley of Natal, depressed by the miseries of melancholia, talked him nearly to death with his troubles. And because his charity always began at home, Coillard could write, "Poor Mr. E., I suffer for his sufferings." Then he added quite naturally that motto of the career that was to be his—"Everything seems nothing in the presence of a soul to be saved." Easy enough to write—but, as it happened, he meant it.

One November afternoon, after ten weeks at sea, they sighted the Cape, and Coillard, worn and "ocean-weary", beheld for the first time the great mass of Table Mountain rising above the town. Behind it stretched unseen the infinite reaches of the Dark Continent, the new land for which he had forsaken France and in which he was to serve thenceforth as a pioneer. The first man he met was M. Arbousset, the masterful leader of the French Protestant Mission in Basutoland, who had hurried to warn him that war was brewing in that disordered kingdom and that he could not at once set out for the interior. But the long wait that followed, amid the busy and swarming variety of cosmopolitan Capetown, was in itself an education for an innocent newcomer. During the next three months, in which he met and talked with English officials, with French and American and Dutch missionaries, and with the negroes themselves, Coillard learned much of peoples and events of which he had hitherto known little.

The French missionaries whom he had come to join had been at work among the Basuto for twenty-five years. Arbousset, Casalis, and Gosselin—men of force and genius—had entered Basutoland at the invitation of the famous chief Moshesh. Heartily welcomed from the outset and afforded every protection, they identified themselves to a remarkable degree with the life of the nation; and for

eighteen years their mission achieved a genuine and growing prosperity. Basutoland was then an independent kingdom, guided by an exceptionally able ruler, protected by its position from the fighting Zulus and Matabele to the north and east, and enjoying friendly relations with the British to the south. But the Basutos fell to quarrelling with the neighboring tribes; Moshesh began to intrigue with the Transvaal authorities and the leaders of the Zulus; and in 1851, Sir Harry Smith, Governor of Capetown, dispatched a small force against Moshesh and his warriors. The British were badly defeated, and another expedition in the following year suffered a like reverse. Yet Moshesh wisely sued for peace and Basutoland retained its freedom. The political outcome of these years of discord was the withdrawal of British sovereignty over the Orange Free State, which joined the Transvaal as an independent Boer republic.

But the religious results of the bitter contest were of far more consequence to the French missionaries. The progress of Christianity was sharply checked; most of the chiefs, who were either Christians or pro-Christian, reverted to heathenism; and the dream of a Christian Basutoland faded into the distance. To aggravate a situation already depressing, war had just broken out between the Basutos and the Boers of the Orange Free State. One of the mission stations had been destroyed by the Boers and several others ravaged. At this unpropitious hour François Coillard was waiting at Capetown to enter his disorderly field of service. Seldom had a beginner received so trying an initiation. He could easily be forgiven for writing, "Why has God called me into this Africa and exacted of me that I should sacrifice my studies? Was it only that I should be a witness of the destruction of those tribes among which I came full of joy and enthusiasm to offer to God the sacrifice of my life?"

Missionaries have an interesting habit of thriving on hardships and they seldom surrender. So at the end of January 1858 Coillard set out with the Daumas upon the long wagon journey to Basutoland. It took them four months; and for another four months they had to live in their wagons, until the distracted country grew more tran-

quill and work could be resumed. At last, in November, the council of missionaries yielded to Coillard's request for a pioneer post, and three months later he entered his new station of Leribe.

The mountain of Leribe gave its name to the cluster of huts which it dominated. Above the village towered a wide semi-circle of jagged and rocky heights, sloping below into wide and stony pasture land diversified by huge boulders and here and there a cluster of trees. It was a true South African scene, a fair and open land of broad spaces and lonely altitudes—a "white man's country" where no white men were in evidence. Coillard had not a single companion nor could he find in his village a single Christian. The native huts, gathered within a stockade about the central dwelling of the chief, seemed to symbolize the tribal unity and the complete dependence of the tribe upon their ruler. That ruler was Molapo, a son of Moshesh, and a life-long friend, enemy, and problem of Coillard. Once a Christian, he had long since abandoned the new religion, and exerted in opposing it as much energy as was consistent with enjoying the honor and the convenience of having a missionary at court. He had begged for Coillard, but he had no intentions of giving him a free hand. Instead, he devoted all the resources of a wily intelligence to the double task of encouraging the missionary and nullifying his efforts. On Sundays he would exhort the people to become Christians; but those who were later converted found him fully prepared to make their lives miserable.

Molapo assigned a hut to Coillard, and one of the royal wives offered him the daily services of a small girl about twelve years old. With several years of training, she might have made a cook, but she achieved nothing more than the ruin of all the kitchen utensils. The little food he could find, Coillard prepared himself. Before long, however, appeared an old woman, a Christian refugee from the area of war. She promised with much pathos to serve him for the love of God, but she did not serve God for naught, and in the course of time became a domestic tyrant impossible to dislodge. Because she was old and lonely, her gentle master suffered her for years, his irritation tempered by the thought of his

own mother. For always his mother was close to his heart and never long absent from his thoughts. He used to write her letters in large printed characters, to make the reading easier for her failing eyes; and the photograph of "*ma tendre et bien-aimée mère*" adorned his little hut and went with him everywhere. "There are very few Basutos," he wrote her, "who have not already gone into ecstasies over your portrait. 'Show us our mother,' they said. 'Eh, can't you see the ring on her finger! What a beautiful woman! She is the mother of kindness. She is the mother of us all.'"

Many, however, were not satisfied that the missionary should have a mother. They refused to regard him as sufficiently mature to teach until he had a beard and a wife. The beard he was able to produce with reasonable promptness, but for the wife, in these first years, he could only hope. Early in his last year in Paris he had met Christina Mackintosh, and knew at once that he wanted her for his wife. Christina was a Scot, an independent and forceful character, masterful and of rare charm. Brought up in a devout Presbyterian family, she had the same intense evangelical piety as Coillard and felt much the same attraction toward the adventure of missions. When he reached Africa he wrote to their mutual friends in Paris a proposal of marriage which was formally presented to the Mackintosh family and definitely refused. Two years later, in the squalid village of Leribe, out of a heart heavy with loneliness he wrote again, and after weary months of suspense, came the answer "Yes". "I cannot believe in my own happiness", he says. "Molapo, now he knows I am going to be married, considers me a man, acquaints me with his affairs, and asks my advice!"

These two years of long-distance courtship were years of crowding experience. For a shy new-comer, with little in his make-up of self-confidence and much of sensitiveness, it was not easy to work his way into the inner life of an alien and primitive people. Yet since the people were to be his people and he their *moruti* or teacher, he could not falter. Month by month he grew to know them better; with amazing speed he mastered the Sesuto tongue; and in the central *lekhothla*—a sort of combined club and tribunal—he sat with the village elders and young men and listened to the

confusion of their speech and wondered through what opening he might reach their secret souls. Through all this trying period of adjustment Coillard had only one strong friend. Molapo was of course a dubious patron; but Molapo's cousin, Nathanael Makotoko, became a genuine companion. As a popular hero of several wars and a leader wise in counsel and of high prestige, he proved the best of allies. He helped the *moruti* to know his people and to find a place of honor in the tribal life, and when sorrow came to Nathanael in the death of his wife, he turned to the new teacher to receive a warmth of sympathy which he never forgot. It was a strange relationship—this bond between the little Huguenot pastor and the powerful young black with his mixture of intelligence and simplicity, of valor and craven superstition. The two had many long talks together. "Talk with Nathanael about his soul," wrote Coillard one Sunday evening. "N. said, 'Your words about Saul last week pierced my heart' . . . One evening he was weeping at my feet over his sins, and the very next day, covered with all the ornaments of paganism, he stifled his conscience in the midst of its festivities." Makotoko was slow to win, but when he made up his mind six years later, he kept as a Christian all his old courage and vigor of mind.

Just as soldiers, even in war, spend but few of their days in fighting, so the missionary beyond the edge of civilization can devote only a fraction of his time to preaching. As with other soldiers, his tasks are rightly called "fatigue duty." How to get a house built sound enough to keep out wind and rain and large enough to shelter a few friends; how to make bricks for the church that might some day be finished; how to keep the pigs from devouring the bricks after they were made; how to prevent the dogs from eating the candles and breaking the eggs—these were some of the daily problems outside the field of theology. Yet religion, for Coillard, was central; all the drudgery he bore for the sake of a Message; and to the call to "win souls" he was ever acutely sensitive. Preaching to his neighbors or riding about to stations in outlying districts or facing the restless groups who gathered in the village for the weekly sermon, he could respond to the thrill of being on active service. But when night fell

and he sat alone in his hut beside a flickering candle, the oppression of the swarming pagan life around him grew heavy. Outside he could hear all the night noises of an African village—perhaps only the murmur of voices in near-by huts or the barking of dogs, perhaps the loose brawling of drunken men or the savage yells that marked the movements of a tribal dance. In the center of that life so flagrantly alien, so cheerfully absorbed in its animal activities, so derisively indifferent to any new or finer issues, it was desperately hard to sustain hope. "Everything," he said long afterward, "everything seemed to conspire for the ruin of my faith and the death of my soul." And yet even in the first year he could write in his diary, "It is just *because* I have suffered at Leribe that my heart is so much the more attached to it. . . I cannot live without loving these Basutos."

Though years of hardship were to succeed one another until the end, the months of loneliness were soon over; for in November 1860, Christina sailed for South Africa. To meet her at Port Elizabeth, Coillard travelled five hundred miles overland, only to find that she had landed at Capetown. Too eager to wait for a boat, he caught a wretched post-cart and embarked on another journey, equally long, driving night and day over rocky roads at break-neck speed until he reached the Cape in record time. For two weeks Christina had been suffering suspense and apparent neglect. To travel from Scotland to Capetown to marry a comparative stranger who would not even materialize, did not seem a happy prelude to the wedding day. But they were rare souls, both of them, and they understood each other. A month after their marriage, as they were about to set out for the interior, Coillard wrote in his journal, "A month of pure happiness, a month of true union . . . Every moment reveals to me a new strand in her character and renews my love for her and my gratitude to God . . . She is energetic, active, sensitive to a fault . . . she is devotion personified. . . Really I am not worthy of her. . . O my God, teach me to make her happy." Thoughts and phrases like these are not uncommon during honeymoons, but there was not a day to come for thirty years when Coillard could not have repeated

them from his heart. As for Christina, she had already written him, "May I, by my constant love, fill all the empty places of your heart." And to that wish she added the pledge, "Wherever God may call you, you shall never find me crossing your path of duty." The wish came true, and in keeping the pledge she never wavered.

By easy stages the Coillards reached Leribe in July, toward the close of the South African winter. Leribe could no longer be called a hermitage, but it was certainly an unweeded garden; and many months were to pass before the two young workers could lead an ordered life. That life soon became enormously and continuously busy. They started a school and kept it alive, despite the opposition of Molapo. Every week they rode out on horse-back through the surrounding country to preach to the people in scattered hamlets. It was heavy and up-hill work, to which they would always address themselves with hope and from which they could seldom return without a sense of weariness and futility. Their audiences were often genial but seldom serious. When the *moruti* spoke from his heart about God the men would laugh, the children would cry, and the women would usually run away. Indeed, as Coillard wrote, the natives seemed "afraid of the Gospel." In one field only could he labor beyond the reach of opposition and indifference. He had been brought up in a hymn-singing community, and music for him was inseparably linked with religion. So he naturally set himself to translate the hymns of his childhood into Sesuto. Artistic in temperament, with a keen ear for music, he found the task a joy and success, for once, abundant. The natives took with delight to the simple melodies and used to go about singing the sacred words with so much gusto on such a variety of secular occasions that the author had to supplement his hymns with little songs of daily life. Fables, too, he translated, adapting *La Fontaine* to a strange audience; and hymn and songs and fables alike won their way into the lives of the people and survive to this day. More important and more laborious was the task of presenting the Bible in Sesuto. To the work already begun by others he added a translation of the Book

of Proverbs, giving the ancient maxims a new setting with such skill that they found a place in popular speech.

Literary work was only an incident in highly unliterary surroundings. It had to be done between sunrise and breakfast. After breakfast François and Christina used to share the servant's work in the kitchen garden and then teach school till noon. Sewing and building and planting and weeding filled the afternoon. Dinner came at five. At sunset came prayers for the household, followed by an evening school. Only in the later evening was there a leisure hour when the Coillards could relax. Then Christina would play songs on the harmonium, while the natives clustered about, listening in fascination; or, alone with his wife, François would read aloud from a *History of England*. Christina had brought good books from Scotland, but some were a shade too metaphysical for her husband. Once, during her absence, when a mouse had chewed at one of them, he took pleasure in writing her, "I really think we have killed the blue-stocking mouse. She was frisking about this evening in the fresh air, philosophizing, no doubt, about the Properties of Matter, when we pursued and overtook her, the rogue! . . . She has nibbled a good deal out of your books. . . Poor creature, she was charming, but a thirst for knowledge was her ruin."

Coillard wrote to his friends in Paris, "You would think that our life is almost too calm. But there are a thousand and one incidents. Here is a group who come to ask for passports to go among the whites, here is a man who is looking for some medicine, here are some poor wretches who come to have some teeth pulled, which they seem to regard as a great treat. When I have pulled a tooth for one of them, he is so proud that he shows it to everybody, and as long as he lives he will display the cavity to his children and grand-children." "But," he adds, "it's a job I don't like: I do it only out of pity."

For more than a year after the return to Leribe this earnest routine continued, a life of labor with no visible reward and of solitude with hardly a break. How habitual the solitude and how meagre the visible rewards we may measure by the fact that the great events of their second

year were the visit of M. Daumas and three other missionaries and the baptism of the first two converts. Even after another year Coillard could not restrain the confession in his journal—"God help us! I am terribly discouraged." But before long his tone brightens with the announcement that "our congregations are growing perceptibly." They had moved to a new station nearer the mountain and further from the troubles of Molapo's village. "You will have an idea of the station," wrote Coillard, "if you imagine a horse-shoe formed by the mountain. At one end of this horse-shoe is a magnificent gorge with a cascade which, during the rains, falls from cavern to cavern into the ravine: it is there the village of the chief is to be found: at the other end is the village of Pagamotsi. The station is in the middle; on one side my people and my German workman have built pretty little houses at the foot of immense rocks; on the other are our little house with one room, seven feet high, of stone and brick, our tent and our wagon . . . Below the station flows the river Caledon . . . a beautiful spot but savage and bare. . . Our heart is in the work; only we are tied hand and foot by all the labors of construction." This report, however, was after a year of building. At first they had only a damp hut of turf, infested with rats and bats, beside which their tent and wagon were retreats of luxury.

II

With the year 1864 began a period of stimulus for the mission and of danger for the missionaries. The great Dr. Duff from India was touring the field in South Africa on his last return journey to England. Duff was a Scot of dominating force and intense energy, who had revolutionized the work of missionary education in India. For several days he met with the French missionaries in conference at Carmel and made upon them a profound impression. "*There is a man of God for you!*" wrote Coillard. "He preached four hours yesterday." Those devoted souls would have travelled any distance to hear a good man preach for an hour; but to hear one of the best of men preach for four hours was a privilege beyond their expectations. Whether

despite the length of his exhortations or because of it, Duff supplied the first impetus to a new epoch of energetic advance and gave both form and impulse to their hope of using the Basuto churches as centres for the evangelization of Africa. To the dynamic influence of Duff may be traced those plans of campaign which were later to lead the Coillards through long years of restless and hazardous pioneering.

Before Coillard could set his face toward more distant and perilous fields, danger invaded his own area. Boers and Basutos, since their last encounter, had been living on the verge of conflict; and Leribe itself had become the subject of an active boundary dispute. The governor of the Cape, as arbitrator, fixed the new limits of Free State and Basuto territory; but the Boer president gave the natives only a single month in which to vacate the land that was no longer theirs. With such cruelly short notice, only gradually understood, there ensued at the last moment a headlong flight of the populace toward Leribe. "For days," wrote Coillard, "there were nothing but horsemen, troops of cattle filling the air with their bellowing, women and children seeking a hole to hide in under the rocks . . . I saw thousands of women and little children wandering shelterless and foodless in the mountains covered with snow. Oh, what miseries! What evils! . . . Already famine is cruelly felt among these poor fugitives: the children cry, the mothers besiege our doors, while the men, at the risk of their lives, go and get corn in abandoned villages." Yet the suffering was not all on one side. At the hands of callous Boers the natives had met tragic disaster; but one Basuto chief, Lesaoana, an unruly nephew of Moshesh, inflicted punishment on the Boers. A free lance, outside the orbit of tribal rule, he attacked the Boer farms in the Free State and even carried his raids across the British borders to Natal. He thus roused to fury not only Boers but British settlers and Zulus. Molapo was held responsible for his wild kinsman; and Shepstone, the Secretary for Native Affairs in Natal, marched with a large force to the borders of Basutoland and sent for Molapo. The chief and his people, in dire panic, turned to Coillard for aid. In public assembly they chose

Makotoko as their ambassador and implored Coillard to accompany him. Coillard shared the true missionary's instinctive distaste for meddling in politics. He hated to be dragged into brawls, to have his work entangled with native intrigue or with measures of the white man's aggression. But he was enough of a prophet to stand before kings in time of need. He accepted the commission; and in company with Makotoko and a band of followers set forth hurriedly at twilight on a winter day. To avoid the enemy they travelled at night across the snow-clad mountains, suffering acutely from the cold and dreading the moment of arrival. But when, after three days, they reached the Zulu camp, Shepstone received them courteously, allayed their ravenous hunger with a warm dinner, and somewhat revived their fears by calling upon the Zulus for a complimentary war-dance. The warriors were only too delighted to perform—especially in the presence of despised Basutos; and Coillard and his friends were treated to a martial orgy lasting far into the night and punctuated with appetizing yells of "Give us those Basutos! Let us eat them up!" The next day Molapo's submission was offered, and war, for the moment, was averted. Not without danger the embassy returned home, dodging shots on the way and ending with gratitude their perilous trip. "I did it for the sake of peace," wrote Coillard, "to avoid bloodshed, and for the sake of these poor Basutos, hard and ungrateful as they are."

Although the British stayed their hand, the Boers had already declared war on the Basutos, and all through the winter months guerilla war went on among the mountains. Mission stations were attacked and destroyed, and Leribe was overrun with pitiful refugees. Molapo and his warriors retired to a mountain fortress on the heights of Thaba Bossio and threw back, in heavy defeat, a gallant attack of the Boers. Sporadic fighting continued long after, but the nation had been saved, and never since has known so dark a crisis.

Throughout this period of alarms Coillard's life was full of hazards. At Leribe there was a continual lack of supplies, all the harder to remedy because of the passage of so many fugitives. Coillard had to protect not only his own

household but also the wife and son of Makotoko, who lent him two cows for their support. "Anyhow," he says, "we have nearly always had something." When the thanks of the chief came to him, he called it, "the first token of affection and gratitude" that he had ever received from a Mosuto. Makotoko presented him with a magnificent red ox as "the pledge of the great affection he bears me, and the gratitude he has vowed to me . . . Oh, how this touched me and did me good!"

But lean provisions were least among the hardships of those days. The day after this welcome message Coillard set out for Berea to get the European mail, which had not reached them for eight months. After a wild night ride to escape any stray shot from a Boer rifle party, he reached the settlement half dead with fatigue. The next morning he was seized with violent pains and lay at death's door, with inflammation of the intestines. Dr. Casalis was summoned from a distance by one messenger and Mme. Coillard by another. Fearing she might be too late to see him before he died, Christina rode for sixty miles over rough country, protected only by a faint-hearted escort of natives who took cover whenever possible. Although once she lost her way for hours, the intrepid woman pressed on to Berea to find with joy that the worst was over. Yet not quite over, for François was soon prostrate with pleurisy, and weeks passed before he could set out for home.

On their return journey they stopped to see the Damas at Mekuatleng. The village there had been destroyed, but the church was still standing and Christian natives had gathered from all the surrounding areas. They were living already in a sea of troubles; but not being Christians in name only, they were willing to hide by day in order that after nightfall they might celebrate together the Holy Communion. At dawn, before the assembly had dispersed, the Boers surrounded the station and launched an attack. My servant appeared," wrote Coillard, "at the door of my hut, ashen grey. 'The Boers, the Boers are upon us!' he cried. I dragged myself out of bed and looked out. The sky-line seemed black with Boers, who were pouring down the hillsides and filling the station. . . I struggled on through a per-

fect storm of bullets; providentially not one wounded me. . . The ground was covered with the dead and dying. I found my way to the Commandant, a personal friend of mine, and besought him to stop the firing. 'War is war,' I said, 'and if these people were fighting men, I would say nothing. But you can see they are all unarmed; they have come to a church festival: it is like slaughtering sheep' . . . Seeing my entreaties were unavailing, I determined to save the lives of my own people if possible. 'You see how weak and ill I am. I cannot reach my own station without the help of my servants. Give me a safe conduct for these three men.' . . . He was touched at last, seeing I was almost fainting, and wrote out a pass for them . . . My wife and I went off with them as soon as possible; and oh! the sights we saw on the way home, travelling after dark to avoid observation—the villages reduced to ashes, the hills echoing with the howling of Kaffir dogs; the nights filled with the laughter of jackals and hyenas, which told us, when we passed, the scenes of recent slaughter."

To reach Leribe was an immense relief, but a reward not long to be enjoyed. A month or so later they received orders from the Free State authorities to pack all their goods and prepare for indefinite exile. Molapo, having recently reported himself as shedding tears over Coillard's illness, had accepted for his lands the suzerainty of the Free State and had given the President a wholly false report of the conduct and character of his missionary. Only too ready to believe the worst, the Free Staters determined to drive him from Basutoland. In spite of every protest, armed guards with wagons appeared at Leribe, and "in a few hours all was over." "Bidding good-bye to our weeping flock, we set off exiles from our only home on earth, and followed the wagons, in which they had hurriedly piled up our property. 'Make the best of it,' said the Commandant. 'Leave nothing behind, for you will never come back here.'" As the wagons groaned and jolted forward over the rocky pass and the huts of Leribe vanished behind the ridge, there seemed to vanish with them all the fruits of eight years' labor. They left behind them almost certain failure and nothing lay ahead but hardship and hope deferred.

III

Travelling night and day by wagon, often in peril of attack by the Zulus, they reached Natal more dead than alive. Yet banishment, bitter as it was, left at least time for rest and recuperation. Though they were strangers in a strange land, they met with a warm welcome, especially from the American missionaries. One of these, about to leave on furlough, offered them his station at Ifumi, and there for the next two years they found a home. Coillard was deeply impressed with the energy of these Americans. How practical they are," he wrote, "and how small I feel beside them!" When his health had begun to mend, they found in him an equal energy. As one of them said later, "The first thing that especially impressed me was the quickness with which M. Coillard got hold of the language—in three months or less. . . He also taught the school, having two sessions a day, and threw himself energetically into all the departments of the work as if it were his own. He impressed me as a man of fine education and deep spirituality, and moreover, was always most polite and courteous. . . He made himself one of us." And another friend of those days has written, "We saw much of him at that time, and soon grew to esteem and love them (both). I know no one whose character so resembled that of our Lord, and in whom the fruit of the Spirit was so evident. What greatly struck me was his manner towards the few Basuto natives who were with him; the kindness and courtesy in his dealing with them were very beautiful—he was indeed a *gentleman* in the true sense of the word."

More than ever in this time of exile they were straitened for means to live. It was long before the churches in France could show their sympathy for the distress of the fugitives; and meantime every penny counted. They would even ford a river in flood to save four shillings demanded by the boatman. Yet year by year a large portion of Coillard's little salary was forwarded from Paris to his mother, and nearly every letter he sent home from Africa contained "a little piece of gold sewn into the corner, which I know the

pastor will change for you, dear mother." After her death in 1875, he educated five of his French nephews with the scanty savings from his small stipend. While still in Natal he might have accepted security and a more generous livelihood, for he was asked to take the French mission in Mauritius; but in spite of ill health and the uncertainty of any return to Leribe, the two pioneers would not waver. "When God sent us to the heathen in Africa," said Christina, "it was for our lifetime, and He will find a way to send us back, if not to the Basutos, to others." "And besides," she added, "we have really taken a vow of poverty; we must be true to it." "Thank God," he answered, "we are of the same mind, and since that is so, we will never discuss it again." Perhaps there were in his mind the words of an earlier pioneer who wrote, "For in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

Their immediate reward may seem meagre, but they did not so regard it. For long their only news from Leribe was of continued famine and suffering. Later there came from time to time little groups of Basutos, on pilgrimage to visit their *moruti*. And one memorable morning, a year after their banishment, Nathanael Makotoko arrived with six comrades. They carried news of how the Christians at Leribe had flourished on persecution. Molapo, as acutely disagreeable as ever, had treated himself to the pleasure of using the mission station as headquarters for his harem. But in the face of official disapproval the little body of believers had met weekly for prayer in caves and river-beds and had even maintained their school. Best of all, Nathanael himself, after years of wavering, had proclaimed in public his conversion to Christianity. He said that he counted himself a new man, and he devoted the rest of his life to proving it. It was a sign of harvest to make Coillard rejoice. When he fell ill a few weeks later and nearly died, when tidings came that Leribe was to be closed to him for months to come, still the news of Makotoko sustained him.

A break in their exile came soon with a sudden invitation to visit a little mission of the French, four hundred miles to the northwest in Bechuanaland. The work at Motito was without a leader and called for help. Coillard knew well the

meaning of two months' travel by wagon; but where he saw a need he was wont to move, and within a few weeks they were saying good-bye to their friends in Natal. To say farewell was not as easy as they had thought, for two years of varied service and cordial comradeship had taught them much of new methods, and had multiplied the numbers of their friends.

By July 4, 1868 their goods were once more aboard the wagon, the oxen were inspanned, and the party headed westward for Leribe. Their old home lay right in their path toward Bechuanaland, and while they might not linger there, they could not forego the risk of a brief stay. After three weeks of slow voyaging they re-entered the familiar village, which at least in their eyes was always "dear Leribe", and alighted to receive from Molapo an ungracious welcome. He had cleared for them their former cottage (so completely that they had to sleep on the ground), and there "from early morning we were besieged by our people." To François and Christina the three days at Leribe brought crowded hours of profound happiness. The "moruti" visited his school, greeted all the new converts, preached to a great audience on Sunday, and on the last day baptized Nathanael Makotoko and five others—so that "we were not free till late into the night. We did not feel tired. . . for the work of God is greater and more beautiful than we had thought." The joy of welcoming Nathanael was a specially rich reward; and what Nathanael thought of Coillard we learn from his letter written three years later to Coillard's mother in France: "My Mother—I am Nathanael Makotoko; I salute you in the love of the Lord. . . I shall say very little, however, for I am only a child. You have sent your son to Basutoland, in the Lord's name. His love for you tells us your love for him. . . You think you have only one son at Leribe, because you sent only one. No, my Mother, you have two; the second is myself, Nathanael. It is you who have given me life in the Lord, for it is you who gave birth to the servant of God, my beloved pastor who came to draw me out of darkness that I might walk in the light. You have many children in Leribe, and you will have many more yet. As for me, I call myself your son. . .

I love the mother of my pastor, I pray for her. It is to you that I owe the happiness I enjoy in knowing and serving God. God bless you! . . . My salutation is a trifling thing, yet accept it as a pledge of the affection of one of your children. It is a black ox, with branching horns. (He sent her the value of the ox.) It is thus I make myself known to you, my Mother. May your sons and daughters who are around you know me too, and count me as one of themselves! And when you think of your beloved son whom you have sent and whom we love, think also of your other son who is called Nathanael Makotoko."

When the last morning came, Coillard writes, "We could scarcely tear ourselves away from our poor people. . . . How sad to think we are going away from such a beautiful work!" But they had no choice, and by nightfall their only home in Africa lay far behind them, and they were not to see it again for more than nine months. Heading northwest, their wagon labored slowly across the open veldt of the Free State and the plains of the lower Transvaal. It was in those days a wild and lonely country. "Spent last night," notes the traveller on August 13, "in an immense plain full of gnus and antelopes and gazelles, but no water. Towards midnight we were awakened by the howling of leopards, who were roaming around the wagon the whole night, and kept us in a continual state of alarm. The guns, newly washed, were not dry. No one closed an eye till day-break."

And the next day "we outspanned to pass the night near a slope where hundreds of zebras went by, but no water; cold and violent wind, threatening weather." More than once the wagon broke down or stuck in the mire, and several of the oxen died, so that it was not until the middle of September that they pulled into Motito—"an oasis in a dreary desert."

During the months at Motito the Coillards' labors were much like those to which they had grown accustomed at Leribe. Since the mission was soon to be transferred to the London Missionary Society, there was no pressure upon them to remain for good; and their memory of those days dwelt chiefly on their visits to Kuruman, the thriving centre

of Robert Moffat's work. The great Scottish pioneer, whose daughter had married David Livingstone, had long been a hero of Coillard's, who writes of him as "a veritable patriarch." "He belongs to a generation that is no more. He has passed his seventieth year, but his heart is still young and buoyant."

Before they could set out again for Leribe, Christina had paid the penalty of long weeks of bad food and water, and nearly died of dysentery. "Poor Christina was suffering very much. . . The wagon and tent were like ovens and swarming with flies stinging like bees." Yet the thought of home at the end of the journey supported them on their long return trip, and once again on May 9th they reached Leribe. "You can guess the joy of our Basutos when we arrived. . . Our house is very dilapidated and very dirty, for Molapo has occupied it with his wives: all the walls are shiny with grease and ochre. . . But we are thankful to have a roof over our heads and to see once more this spot, where we have enjoyed and suffered so much. What gives us great pleasure is that the work prospers."

IV

Though they had to return as mere visitors, their standing was gradually accepted, and for six years to come their lives centred in Leribe. They found the people more willing and amenable than of old; they could now count upon the aid of new and eager converts; and the sense of real progress made easier the continued conflict with indifference and opposition. Molapo renewed his efforts at petty persecution. Jealous of his cousin Makotoko he tried in vain to discredit him in the eyes of the people. In dealing with the poorer Christians he never failed as an ingenious bully. When their cattle strayed into his fields, they were promptly confiscated; but when his own cows wandered into the fields of others, their very presence was a proof of theft. So the nagging went on, driving many Christians to settlements several miles away and warning others against exposing themselves to the perils of conversion. Yet somehow the work prospered. The congregation had long out-

grown the limits of a mere house, and Coillard began to plan for a church.

"It is a terrible affair," he wrote, "to build in this country . . . but it is still more terrible to have to preach in the open air Sunday after Sunday, in good and bad weather. Now we are in the midst of summer and the sun is like fire. I use . . . a cotton umbrella lined with green, or keep my big hat on my head. My congregation hides itself under mats, but I can still see their big white eyes fixed on me, and that makes me forget all the rest."

But 1870 was a bad year for any plans of growth. During March the great chief Moshesh died, and in April the British took over from the Free State the protection of Molapo and the Leribe district. These local events, however, were of good omen. It was the news from Europe which wounded Coillard like a deep personal loss. His beloved France, at war with Prussia, surrendered at Sedan. "What an abomination," he cries, "this act of incomparable cowardice!" And to her sister Christina writes, "How poor Frank's heart is bursting with indignation and pity!" He felt not only the shame of a patriot but also the anxiety of a son. In a letter to his mother he says, "I cannot tell you the sorrow of my heart in thinking of that fearful war and of you. . . Oh, what would I not give to know where you are, how you are, if you have suffered through the winter! . . . If only I had you under my own roof, what care we would take of you, my dear, dear mother!" As a missionary, too, he had to suffer. For the trials of war and the ensuing burden of indemnity so reduced the French churches that no more money could reach the mission for several years. Only through the generosity of supporters in England and Scotland and the Cape and of friends newly won in Natal were the workers able to press on.

After a dreary interval of doubt and struggle the Coillards could rejoice at last in the dedication of the new church at Leribe. Missionaries with their people gathered from all the surrounding area; more than fifty candidates were baptized; and in the afternoon of Pentecost three hundred native Christians met to celebrate the Lord's Supper. A small occasion it may seem as one looks back fifty years

to that distant place and time, but why it should have moved Coillard so deeply we may learn from his own words, which sum up the labors of thirteen years and help us to see with his eyes.

“And so it has passed, that wonderful day, the most wonderful day of our missionary lives. Is it indeed a reality? Our whole career passed before our minds with its trials, its contests, our thousand-and-one causes for discouragement, then the war which desolated Basutoland, our expulsion, our long exile, our wanderings, our illnesses, then our return with its joys and sorrows, then our labors, our high spirits and happy harmony, and then this thick and sombre cloud which has just covered everything like a shroud—the misfortunes of our country and our own anguish. But—it is enough. It seems to us that now a divine ray comes to illumine us. . . and that we too, like Jacob, hear God’s voice telling us, for the future, of benedictions and prosperity.”

Though the benedictions were real, the sense of prosperity was never of long duration. A year or two later Coillard went through a period of profound depression. Pagan opposition had reduced the school to a handful; Molapo continued to make conversion an unprofitable venture; and not a few members, Nathanael among them, seemed to lose all interest in their new life. “Everything is going badly,” we hear. “The Church is in a very bad state.” A meeting to examine some candidates for baptism was so dismally unresponsive that Mme. Coillard, for all her valiant devotion, broke down and cried, and Coillard, in the bitterness of self-reproach, wrote in his journal, “Save me from the great waters! How well I understand that cry of the psalmist! The overflowing waters carry me away; the rage of the heathen, the lethargy of the Church, the wickedness, the corruption of my heart!” The very fact that Christina could weep at a catechism and that François could attribute to the “corruption” of his own sanctified life the failures that beset him was only evidence that their nerves were frayed and worn and their hidden store of enthusiasm in sore need of replenishment. What they wanted was rest and change. Wisely realizing it, they

planned for a furlough in Europe during the coming year (1875). But nothing ever happened as they planned it, and for five years more they were destined to undergo adventures and tribulations beyond all their previous experience. Change came to them in bewildering variety, but not in the form of rest.

V

The great new chapter in Coillard's life begins at Christmas 1874, with the arrival at Leribe of Major Malan. Malan was an amazing character. Born a Swiss, he had entered the British army at seventeen, fought gallantly in the Crimea, and risen later to the rank of major. His religious zeal had led him to resign from the army and to devote the rest of his life to serving the cause of missions with the same intrepid energy that had cost him seven wounds at Sebastopol. His crusading spirit reminds one of Gordon. He seemed to combine the traits of soldier and missionary in a kind of evangelical audacity.

During the Prussian War, Malan had sent £1000 from Singapore to aid the French mission in South Africa. So, though he appeared as a free lance on tour, he was welcomed as a friend and helper. How warm was his ardor to arouse and maintain the missionary offensive may be seen from his electrical effect on the French missionaries. To their gentle piety and fortitude he imparted a sort of galvanic shock. If he had not been an inspiring captain, he would have been an *enfant terrible* or perhaps even a bull in a china shop. At all events they observed him with a growing fervor and gratitude. Only the respect which his record inspires can render pardonable the reproaches with which he visited his saintly hearers. With a naive enthusiasm he accuses these patient and long-suffering exiles of spiritual slackness. "He finds", wrote Mme. Coillard, "that we are lacking in the spirit of prayer and far too preoccupied with our own comfort and ease"! The exclamation point is ours alone, for she accepts the indictment with a penitent acquiescence. "He has taught us all a lesson," she adds, "which I for one needed, and I hope not soon to forget."

One knows not which to admire most—the unconscious and friendly effrontery of the major or the unquestioning humility with which Christina and all her fellow-workers received the rebuke of this robust and exacting stranger.

The immediate result of the major's visit was to move the Coillards to deep regret for their past "egotism and pride" and to inspire them with renewed joy in their work. We may see small need for their regrets, but their restored peace of mind is plainly evident. The larger and later effect of Malan's work, the fruit of conference with all the French missionaries, was a determination that the young Church of Basutoland should prove its mettle and save its soul by launching forth upon a missionary venture of its own. Eight years before Coillard had written, "If Africa is to be evangelized, it must be done by her own children." The time had now come to begin that campaign.

Two Basuto evangelists who had already been exploring for opportunities, returned in 1875 from an arduous tour in the Banyai country north of the Transvaal. In 1876, M. Dieterlen, with four native workers, was appointed by the Church to lead a more effective expedition to the same wild country. The Dutch authorities at Pretoria, however, hostile to his purpose, arrested him on the flimsy charge of carrying contraband and ordered him home on pain of imprisonment. After these preliminary encouragements, the missionaries met again, more resolute than ever to take the offensive; and at the close of their conference offered the leadership to Coillard. For him and for his wife the decision to accept or refuse was a severe ordeal. At just the moment when they were ready for rest and entitled, in all justice, to reap a little where they had sown, they were now called to give up their furlough, to bid farewell once more to Leribe, and on a pure venture of faith to trek northward into the unknown. "For seventeen years, when not travelling, we had lived in temporary and very primitive abodes. We had often sighed for something better, but our life had been singularly chequered and adventurous. During the last year or two, however, our desires had been satisfied. Since the completion of our stone-built church, we had been able to attend to our own dwelling. We now inhabited a fine

spacious house, in the midst of a lovely garden, the work of our own hands. "Shall we ever eat of it, I wonder?" said Mme. Coillard one evening, as we were walking round our newly planted quince hedge. We never did." They were not born pioneers, unhappy without the sting of hardship and thirsty for new worlds to conquer. The young Christina had been used to comforts and opportunities and admiration, and François through all his life loved beauty and order and the peace of home. Small wonder, then, that the crisis made them suffer. "We spoke little and slept still less for several nights. Our struggles were terrible—especially my wife's. . . Is it true that God calls us . . . We pray together. . . . More than once, in tears, we sank on our knees before God." It was faith alone that bore them up, because theirs was real. At last the moment came when Coillard said, "Here we are—O Lord, do with us as seems good to Thee." The next day, two years after Malan's visit, the missionary wrote to the major, "God willing, we are ready to leave in April."

In April there began what Mme. Coillard's niece has described as "their Odyssey of two years." "M. Coillard," she writes, "conducted an expedition, consisting of five families with attendants, for two years through the most unlooked-for dangers and difficulties, and brought them safely home with the loss of only three lives, with their harmony unbroken, their zeal unquenched, and their object achieved. This object was to find a mission field for the Basuto Christians themselves."

Early one morning after a sleepless night and many last farewells, the voyagers mounted their wagons, and the caravan rolled out of Leribe and ploughed its way up the long slopes beyond. They travelled in three wagons, each with its team of oxen—perhaps of all modes of human travel the slowest and most exasperating. In one wagon rode Coillard, his wife, and his niece Elise, a young girl of fifteen. In the others, with their wives and children, were the four Basuto evangelists—Azael, Aaron, Andreas, and Asser. Four native drivers completed the party of twenty-seven. "We have weighed anchor," said Mme. Coillard to her husband. "God knows where we shall land."

In his journal of these first days of travel, Coillard describes, with a discerning eye, the traits and the appearance of his Basuto companions, and ends with a portrait of himself—"The chief of the expedition, a man of forty-five, small, thin, of shabby appearance, getting a little grey, but young in heart and character, appreciating wit in others, at times a little melancholy, to-day free and happy, distrustful of himself but protesting the uprightness of his intentions and of his goodwill." A figure, as we know, of courtesy, gentleness, and great power of endurance, yet surely a strange captain for a wilderness campaign. But though he may have lacked the more dominating traits of the typical pioneer, three virtues he possessed, inconspicuous but invaluable. He was cool-headed and calm; he understood the natives, and in their varied moods could exercise over them extraordinary power; and he had an amazing and contagious trust in Providence. And the Providence in which he trusted was not a general Providence but a most particular and personal Providence. The smallest incidents were signs of God's watchful intent. If it rained inopportunately, or if the bullocks were sick, such trials were sent to remind them of their entire dependence on Him; and when later three natives volunteered to help the caravan, Coillard remarks at once, "Just the number that I asked for in my prayers." However a newer theology may classify such faith, it had a marvellous pragmatic value.

At Pretoria, where the Dutch had arrested Dieterlen, the British (now in control) gave the warmest welcome to Coillard. His old friend from Natal, Sir Theophilus Shepstone, invited him to a banquet on the Queen's birthday, and went out of his way to bestow public favor upon the entire party. Six weeks later—after three months' trekking from Leribe—the travellers said good-bye to the last post of civilization and crossed the Limpopo River—known to every student of the "Just-So Stories" as "the great grey-green greasy Limpopo River." The crossing was complicated by hideous difficulties with the oxen teams, but these prolonged struggles with refractory and panic-stricken bullocks were to be a familiar hardship of the years of voyaging. No longer on the open veldt, the caravan now

plunged into the wilder borders of the Banyai country. Diversified by a hundred obstacles and not a few mishaps, the routine of travel continued day after day. "Our rule is to start before daybreak and to travel late into the night, resting for a few hours during the heat of the day to take a meal and graze the oxen, for whom we have to sacrifice our comforts, our habits, and our tastes. Besides family worship morning and evening, at our chief halts we have prayer meetings and regular services. Needless to say, the most perfect harmony reigns among us."

Night after night they drew up the wagons in a wide circle, pitched their three tents, and built a roaring bonfire. As the flames lit up the trunks and branches of the trees and flickered against the dark sky, the little company cooked supper in busy groups and sat about to rest and listened to the noises of the wilderness. Sometimes the negroes sang Gospel hymns or their own native songs or chattered volubly with shouts of laughter. But when they had gone to sleep and the camp grew quiet and the fire burned low long after midnight, Christina and Elise could hear the jackals barking, and more than once came a new and lonesome sound—a lion roaring far beyond them in the forest.

On August 16th, the leader notes in his journal, "Four months since we left Leribe and we have not arrived among the Banyais!" That same day, after viewing from a hill-top a wide stretch of wooded solitude, they discovered, in descending, the first human being they had seen in a month. A harmless creature, digging for roots, he fled at sight of them, but later recovered sufficiently to act as guide. His friendly aid led them to avoid a series of hidden pits, lying straight in their path—a clever trap for game into which they would have fatally blundered. There then ensued a fortnight of distressing heat. For nearly two days without water, suffering intense fatigue, they had to cross another river and to struggle forward through thick underbrush, hacking their way with axes. It was an immense relief to meet at last with envoys of the Banyai chief Masonda. Preceded by a group of savages armed with axes, knives, and bows, the chief's nephew arrived, bringing the "ox of welcome," which was duly killed. A repulsive creature was

this royal messenger. His name was Katsi, and according to Coillard, his appearance "was not that of an angel." A filthy little man, pock-marked and one-eyed, his hair plastered with grease, a few rags of fur about his loins, and bow in hand, he was a figure of sinister omen. But he bore a message of courtesy with an invitation to visit the chief at his mountain stronghold. They all knew the visit would be risky, yet even the ladies insisted on coming.

The following day guides led them up the sharp ascent of a rocky hillside, and before the mouth of a large cave they were kept waiting for hours in the broiling noonday sun. Around them swarmed the Banyai, restless with eager curiosity. At length, on pretext of showing them about the King's capital, the evil Katsi, with a smile that made her shiver, took Mme. Coillard's arm to lead her up the steeper slope beyond; Elise accompanied her in the clutch of another native, while Coillard followed, vaguely uneasy at what might happen. "We were slowly and painfully toiling up," his record runs, "when one of our evangelists, unable to contain himself any longer, said to me in terror-struck tones, 'Where are they leading our mother?' I started as out of a trance. In front of us rose the sharp peak; right and left, no sign of a habitation; beyond, nothing—an abyss! In less time than it takes to tell, I had sprung forward, seized my wife, and snatched her from the hands of the savages. Aaron did the same for my niece, and we promptly re-descended. The Banyai offered us no opposition, and without further parley we regained our camp." Later they discovered that the women were to have been the first victims of a general massacre.

The chief, though foiled, was still greedy. Next day he sent messengers to demand gunpowder. Refused at once by Coillard, he appeared in person and pressed his claim with threats. No other presents would satisfy him; and as no powder was forthcoming, he withdrew at length with his warriors, vowing to return on the morrow. Few of the travellers slept that night, for their camp in the gorge, dominated on both sides by the dark and wooded hills, might at any moment be menaced by the hidden warriors of Masonda. At dawn they yoked the oxen, and had just begun to draw

slowly forward, when one of the wagons stuck in the mud. At once the surrounding slopes began to swarm with savages, and armed warriors clamored about them, brandishing their hatchets and knives. In the midst of the sudden uproar Mme. Coillard and her niece sat quietly under a tree with their sewing. Of her husband, Christina wrote, "All this time Frank was perfectly calm, and moving about as if nothing particular were happening." Masonda emerged from the crowd and sat on a rock, frantic with rage, yelling "Powder and guns!" The tumult increased; the natives began to close in; and as the women fled to the wagons, the Basutos ran for their guns. Coillard's coolness alone prevented a violent struggle that could only have ended in an ugly massacre. He calmed his terrified followers, pleaded and argued with the chief, and ordered the wagons forward; but every effort seemed only to postpone a fatal end. The crowd ebbed and flowed; the chief withdrew and then returned with new demands; and the disabled wagon would not move. All through a hideous day, with safety more than once in sight and with death still oftener close at hand, François and his followers resisted their assailants peaceably, while their women-folk met in the leader's wagon and prayed for deliverance.

At last, toward sun-down, Coillard and the drivers launched a final despairing effort to move the crippled wagon. Roused by the savage yells of the Banyai, the weary bullocks plunged forward, the wagon groaned and stirred, and five minutes later the whole caravan was in motion. Meanwhile, Masonda's troops had carried off seventeen of the spare oxen and a messenger had arrived ordering Coillard to meet the chief in the forest. Refusing to leave his caravan, Coillard returned these words: "Understand that these seventeen oxen are not mine; they are the property of the God whom we serve and who has delivered us. Beware of slaughtering them; tend them well; and one day it will not be I who will send for them, but you who will bring them back to me yourself—*every one*." He had spoken boldly on a sudden impulse, but within three weeks those oxen were returned.

All night long stray bands of warriors followed them; and the travellers, still under the shadow of danger, could watch the flare of their camp fires and catch echoes of their menacing speech. Next day they passed beyond the borders of Masonda and found themselves in the territory of Maliankobe. More courteous than Masonda, he was no less suspicious. From him they learned that the Banyai were not an independent tribe. Lobengula, chief of the fighting Matabele, was their over-lord, and their lives were passed in craven fear of him and his warriors. He alone could sanction the mission of Coillard. So Asser and another black were dispatched to the Matabele capital, and the other pilgrims had to settle themselves to endure long weeks of hardship and of infinitely wearisome delay. There was little work to be done, for they were wholly ignorant of the Banyai language. They had no place to live but their wagons and no chance to enjoy the little privacy for which they longed. Day after day they were harassed by the nagging curiosity of the natives, with whom they had to bargain for their small supplies, and after Christina had nearly died of sunstroke and Coillard had been blinded for two weeks with ophthalmia, they must have been nearly ready to abandon hope. Many a time they thought with longing of "dear Leribe;" and in every spare moment Coillard devoted himself to the writing and translation that might bring help to the new Christians of that distant land.

Toward the end of November Lobengula sent a large band of warriors to escort the missionaries to his camp, and at his bidding the little caravan once more took the road. This time they were not their own masters. For three weeks they moved and halted, ate and slept, at the pleasure of their Matabele guides, who forced the pace without mercy. Nearly dead with fatigue and exhausted by unending effort in the intense heat, they were grateful to reach at last the chief's Kraal at Buluwayo. There the great Lobengula received them haughtily and refused to answer their petition. Delaying the decision on which their mission hung, he kept them for nearly three months as prisoner-guests condemned to endure the daily insolence of his tribesmen. It was a period of dreary discomfort and acute un-

easiness. The chief was wont to execute any subject who became a Christian, and he had a special distaste for Basutos. Yet his habit was to treat white men with favor. Which prejudice or motive would prompt him in the end was a subtle question, and for the answer they were held in long suspense. At last he sent for Coillard and gave him a flat refusal, bade him give up his mission and ordered him out of the country. At this dreaded news Coillard and his wife were heartbroken. How unyielding their courage and how consummate their missionary devotion we may infer from this one amazing fact. The privilege for which they had longed and which was now so rudely denied them, was not leave to go home to Leribe and be happy; it was rather the chance to return without hindrance to that life of danger and doubt and hardship which awaited them among the Banyai. The disaster that now brought them grief was an order to turn their backs on the hostility of a squalid African tribe.

"Return to Basuto-land!" wrote Coillard, "The very thought seems to us a treachery . . . It would be disastrous to the cause of the mission . . . I am full of courage and have good hope." Yet they needed rest amid friendly surroundings, and if they were not to trek toward the south, they could only turn westward to the country of the Christian King Khama. At his capital in Bechuanaland they enjoyed the rare relief of a warm and friendly welcome; and there, with Khama and his missionary leaders, they could relax in peace and draw upon long-lost treasures of sympathy and counsel and really live again.

VI

Deeply concerned over the fate of the storm-tossed expedition, King Khama advised Coillard to press on beyond the Zambezi and begin work among the Barotsi. Some of these tribesmen the party had met already at Buluwayo. From them they learned that the Barotsi had once been conquered by Basuto warriors and still spoke the language of their former masters. The chance to approach so powerful a tribe with the double advantage of a common speech and

a cordial introduction from Khama seemed plainly providential. One door at last stood open, and with little hesitation Coillard decided to enter.

Even less explored than the country they had left behind was Barotsiland, beyond the great river. For only one white man since Livingstone had crossed the upper Zambezi. There was all the greater need for an expedition more mobile than their present caravan. Leaving at Shoshong the Basuto women and children and two of the catechists, the three Coillards, with five of the blacks, set out on the evening of June 14, 1878. "Not without emotion we said our farewells. I was completely worn out. But the moon was full and we were able to travel until ten o'clock. That calmed us a good deal. The first stage of our journey was passed in a mournful silence—each heart filled with its own thoughts!"

Attended now by few perils, except the danger of getting lost, the little caravan trekked for six weeks across the bare sandy flats that lay to the north of Khama's domain. After a fortnight of voyaging Coillard notes, "What solitude! You do not even hear a bird or see the shadow of an animal. Silence possesses you." The wearing monotony of desert travel, the continual thirst which warm and brackish water did little to assuage, and the long nights too often sleepless, bore heavily upon Mme. Coillard. "No one is more tired than she," writes her husband, "of our wandering and homeless life, and no one so longs for rest. *Rest*—is it to be forever a mirage!" But with her characteristic combination of pluck and brains, Christina, on this very voyage, read the larger part of Carlyle's "Frederick the Great." It must indeed have been a life of fatigue in which that grim and formidable work could offer hours of repose.

By the end of August they had reached Leshoma near the south bank of the Zambezi. Before them at a little distance flowed the great river, and beyond it lay their promised land. "The beauty of the river and of the views which opened out at every step before our eyes surpasses everything that the imagination can conceive." So wrote Coillard at his journey's end. But the joy he felt most keenly was to find himself able to speak with the natives in

the old familiar Sesuto and to know that the opportunity so long sought was at last within view.

No sooner had they pitched camp at Leshoma than they forgot all about rest and decided on an excursion to the famous Victoria Falls. A sight-seeing tour was in itself a novelty, refreshing and rare. They set about it in true picnicking spirit, and looked back upon it ever after as "one of the brightest spots in their lives." Travelling in litters or on foot along the bank or on the river itself in the little native canoes, they followed the Zambezi to the point where it breaks in the stupendous cataracts known to the natives as "Thundering Smoke." Everywhere their spirits were revived not only by the beauty of the river but by the welcome that awaited them at every Barotsi village. To meet with courtesy and respect at the hands of strangers speaking their own adopted tongue was an experience that warmed their hearts. Wherever Coillard appeared as a *mo-iat* he was greeted with reverence, for by that title they had known Livingstone, and the name and fame of the Christian explorer were still held in honor. Of him they said, "Nyaka (the doctor) ah! he was not a man like any other. He was a god!" As for the Basuto evangelists who travelled with Coillard, the rare reward was theirs of being treated as kinsman of those who once conquered the Barotsi. After the contempt and derision they had known among the Matabele the deep respect accorded their new status came very near turning their heads.

But the charm of novel and more friendly surroundings soon began to fade; and there ensued a long and dismal period of delay. In their little camp at Leshoma the Coillards had now to wait for eight unhappy weeks. They had sent a message to the Barotsi king Lewanika and without his permission they could not stir.

Toward the middle of October, Coillard was writing his diary in Worcestershire sauce, because the ink had failed. "Our camp," he notes, "is becoming more and more silent and sad. . . Christina is constantly ill. . . Every evening at sunset we close the gate of the palisade on account of wild animals." For, like St. Paul in the desert, he too had

“Known the night-noise and thunder of the lion,
Silence and sounds of the prodigious plain.”

“The forest,” he adds, “which covers the sandy hills is infested with lions. . . They have killed and carried off all our dogs.” At dead of night, in that lonely clearing, their deep-toned roar was an unwholesome sound.

Fever was their real enemy. After a northward trip in hope of some word from the king, Coillard and Khosana came back to camp stricken with fever. For eight days, Mme. Coillard nursed her husband in an agony of suspense, and just as he began to recover, Khosana died. For the first time death had visited their small company, and though the friend they lost was only a young Basuto, he had been the faithful companion of a long year's adventures, and their sorrow was keen. “He leaves a blank among us,” wrote his leader, “but it is of his father's and mother's grief we are thinking.” Then he tells us that a year later he took the father's hand and said, “You see we have not brought him back.” “My father,” replied the old man, “do not grieve. I offered the Lord the best thing I had and He has accepted my sacrifice.”

In spite of a message from Lewanika denying them admittance to his country, they lingered on, determined to await a change of heart. Once more Mme. Coillard had to give herself to nursing. This time it was a Portuguese explorer, Serpa Pinto. Far gone in a raging fever, he was carried by his followers to the camp at Leshoma. Coillard himself was absent in search of news, and for many days and nights his lonely and anxious wife tended the stranger. “On Monday night,” she wrote him, “Major Pinto was delirious, and I had to sit with him for a long time. . . My heart is very full, and I feel that the cares and anxieties I have to bear are overwhelming. . . I tremble to ask how you are . . . The thermometer has been at 115 degrees these days. . . I send some white beads with this letter in the hope that you may be able to buy some corn or beans.”

Thanks to his devoted nurse, Pinto got well, and lived to write not only of his gratitude but also of “the superhuman courage” of Coillard. “Ever calm in gesture and in speech, he never to my knowledge lost his temper, and never did I

hear issue from his mouth other words than those of pardon for the faults he saw committed against him. François Coillard is the best, the kindest man I ever met. To a superior intelligence he unites an indomitable will."

That same tenacious will was soon to be rewarded, for early in November came a final message from the great chief Lewanika.—"If you wish to leave the country before the rainy season, go in peace, but return in winter—April, that is,—and for good."

Revived at last by the promise of a future welcome, eager for the counsel and support of their colleagues, and hungry at heart for the sight of home, the voyagers turned their faces toward Leribe, and slowly retraced their steps toward that long-lost mountain village. Yet it was hardly a happy journey, for more than once they feared they might never be able to return, and all the news that reached them from their French co-workers was only of doubt and disapproval.

When, eight months later, Coillard met his fellow-missionaries in Basutoland, they were ready to sanction his new enterprise only if he could win support for it at home. Believing, as he said, that "the spirit of conquest is the vital principle of the work of missions," he determined to appeal to France. So the furlough, long delayed, had now become a duty. In November 1879, the Coillards left Leribe, and by March they were in Paris.

Yet seven more years of travel, of exertion, and of adventure were still to pass before these unconquerable pioneers could plant their flag in the heart of Barotsiland—years of touring and preaching in Europe, of waiting and planning in Basutoland (now torn again by wars between white and black), of trekking in their wagon along the old trails, remembering as they went the hopes of earlier days, now grown brighter but still unfulfilled; years that ended with another long siege at Leshoma where for thirteen months in camp the Coillards had to wait till the end of civic strife among the Barotsi should open the last gate.

In the words of Mme. Coillard's niece, "The peace of the desert,' for such an expedition as this was, generally means the maximum of isolation with the minimum of

privacy, the combination of loneliness with never-alone-ness. No one who has never camped or who has only camped for a few days' amusement, can realize the utter misery to people no longer young of living month after month in a stuffy wagon and a tent open to all winds, scorched by day and frozen by night; or imprisoned by incessant rain; often feeling too ill to move, but obliged to rise, to attend to marketing and cooking and cleaning; to eat coarse and distasteful food and drink stagnant water, when the daintiest dishes could hardly tempt the appetite of a fever convalescent; overrun by rats, mice, lizards, frogs, snakes, and loathsome insects of every description; and with all that, exposed to daily peril from wild beasts and wilder men."

As we read in the summary of another biographer, "In 1882 they left Leribe; not until August 1885 did they cross the Zambezi; and not until January 1887 did Coillard bring his wife to their first home in Barotsiland. The expedition in its two stages lasted for ten years."

To spend ten years in preparing to open a mission station must indicate to the modern hustler a woeful waste of time; but the lack of any transportation faster than a bullock, the want of any telegraph, and the absence of any funds nearer than France and England account for most of the delay. Yet even the most sympathetic observer will note, in military terms, how defective were these expeditions in reconnaissance, in "intelligence", and in the careful planning of "operations". Perhaps more was left to Providence than Providence ever intended. In "morale," however, the explorers' record was gallant beyond belief; for their achievement they owed to their unshaken tenacity.

VII

The long chapter ended in January 1887 when Coillard brought his wife to Sefula and the Barotsi mission began. Their gypsy life, he said, had had "a wonderfully withering effect on heart and soul." Now each morning we say on waking: 'We are at Sefula!' If it rains we get into the shade and repeat with thankfulness, 'We are at Sefula.'" At length workers and work had come together. They had

found the task and the field that were to be theirs while they lived. "Around me, it is true, all is yet silence and darkness. But what will it be when these tribes of the Zambezi and the nations of the interior shall see the Great Light!"

After the clean upland vigor of Basuto scenery, the new country was dismal. Barotsiland was a denuded plain, the bed of a dried-up lake, in length perhaps a hundred and fifty miles, in width scarcely more than twenty-five. With an annual rainfall of three feet, nearly the whole area lay submerged for three months in the year, and for still longer was little better than a swamp. Above the marshy waste rose a line of low hills covered with sandy soil and scrubby woods. In such a setting we may picture the three settlements of which the Coillards were to see so much—Lealui, where the king lived, Nalolo, where the Queen lived, and Sefula, where now their work began.

Quite as different as the two countries were the tribes which peopled them. Among the Basutos it had been easy to find many virtues—intelligence, bravery, and a real solidity of character, but, as Coillard wrote, "I confess I am sometimes stupefied when I see the aspect under which the Barotsi display human nature. Hitherto I have witnessed nothing like it." In manner the Barotsi were smooth and polished, but most of them were destitute of courage or independence and almost wholly wanting in any sense of justice. Servile by nature and of scanty wit, they were marked by a frivolous levity, devoid alike of candour or dignity.

Their vices were promoted by their social system. The Barotsi proper, a single tribe, lorded it over the entire Barotsi "nation". They alone were free-born; all the others, by a kind of feudalism, were little better than slaves. Subservience in the slaves had bred cruelty in the masters. Torture or poisoning, strangling or burning, was the fate of all who thwarted the whims of rulers or incurred the suspicion of wizards. Far below the social level of the Basutos, the Barotsi had but two virtues—good manners and in handicraft a rare skill.

Their king Lewanika, a vigorous chieftain some forty years of age, had just won his way to power after several

years of civil war. The victory he owed to his shrewdness and ambition, and the price he had paid for it left him vindictive and suspicious. But there was a generous streak in him; and Coillard, while noting his great intelligence, records that he was "somewhat childlike in intimate intercourse." For seventeen years he was to be Coillard's most intimate friend and most baffling problem. To tame and win him was of central importance, for he was the soul of the tribe and dominated its entire life. He never confessed conversion, but long before his death in 1916 he had become a genuine reformer in full sympathy with the message and purpose of his friend and guide. Through all his career he remained a royal figure. When he was to visit King Edward in 1902 Coillard enquired, "Shall you not feel embarrassed at your interview?" "Oh, no," was the regal answer, "When we kings get together we always find plenty to talk about." On his triumphant return the Barotsi declared with pride, "There are only two men in the world: Lewanika and his brother Edward." Indeed, for those who had seen Lewanika in his frock coat and top hat there was no doubt as to which was the more impressive figure.

The other leading personage in the tribe was Lewanika's sister and fellow-ruler, the Queen Mokwae. With every intent to speak with respect of one who held her court in state, she can only be described as a grand old girl. She was an enormously stout and rather dirty negress, cheerful and genial by nature but jealous of her power and (quite like the Queen of Hearts) cruel at need. She had had nine husbands, none of whom had died a natural death. In dealing with the Coillards her chief concern was to obtain a white missionary for her own village and to provide herself with varied and incongruous clothing. She liked Coillard because, she said, "He has fine eyes; he looks people in the face; his eyes smile." But as he shrewdly observed, her yearning for a missionary was simply a question of dignity and she would use him only as "a good milch cow." Mme. Coillard was still more desirable, because Mokwae could call her "dear mother" and make her cut out new dresses. What she really wanted most of all was "a blue velvet dress with gold fringes"; but what she really *needed* most was a large pair

of English shoes, for as her old ones were three sizes too small, she moaned a good deal about her feet.

Dependent on the good will of such rulers and settled for life in the midst of their servile subjects, the Coillards began their mission. Since François was now fifty-three years old and Christina fifty-eight, they had reached the age when some measure of leisure might justly have been theirs, when they might fairly have looked for rewards and results after twenty years of toil. Instead, they had chosen to press on to "the regions beyond" and to give their remaining days to labor more exacting and less hopeful than ever.

Almost alone they took up the new task. The three Basuto catechists of course brought aid, but needed watching. A few years later they were joined by French helpers—the Adolph Jallas and Mlle. Kiener—who were thenceforth devoted lieutenants. For long, however, they could lean on one friend alone—Waddell the Scot. Waddell was a young cabinet-maker who had joined them before they reached Sefula. For ten years he gave to them and their cause a service faithful beyond praise. "Without him," wrote Coillard, "I should never have been able to undertake the establishment of this new station. . . . Our friend is one of the rare examples who glorify God by being an honor to their work." And for him there was work in plenty. When he was not building something he was mending something, and if ever there was a spare moment, he taught carpentry to the young Barotsi.

Preaching to the people was not as simple as at Leribe. There Coillard could live in the saddle for days and gallop from village to village. In the boggy plains around Sefula there was often too much water for travel afoot and too little for trips by canoe. The best the *moruti* could do was to ride along the edge of the plain and call together, here and there, the petty chiefs and their tribesmen. Facing an audience on one of these tours or in his own little hamlet on Sundays, he notes "How difficult it is in the open air to hold these restless spirits captive! It may be the wind, or the sun, or the rain. It may be a bird flying past, a fowl cackling, or dogs barking and fighting. They greet

each other too; they chat, laugh, take snuff, come and go. One must gently repress these liberties, and maintain order; but it is scarcely inspiring. . . . However, it sometimes happens that these poor people do listen." The Barotsi, he adds, were not only restless; they were past masters in the art of mockery. "Oh, if you only knew what a cruel trial mockery is, and how difficult it is to face it! Often it is with a terrible inward conflict that I prepare myself to meet such an audience."

Coillard, however, was too wise to depend wholly on the appeal of public speech. He knew that his only hope lay with the coming generation, and within a few weeks he had organized a school for the only class to which he could then appeal—the young chiefs and their slaves. Unable to equip the industrial school for which he longed, he used Waddell to teach them carpentry and the Basuto Aaron as instructor in reading. The little group of a score or two met in the shade of a great tree, the homely bearded Scot or the patient and puzzled negro struggling with their unruly charges "who believe that everything is permitted to them and who turn everything into ridicule." It would have been hard enough if they had come by the day; but these princely pupils and their servants lived on the premises, took what they needed from the villagers, and acquired any missionary property that attracted them. A year later, however, the school (housed at last under a roof) had tripled in size; and Litia, the king's son, had begun to lead the lesser lights in the ways of learning and obedience. He even agreed that there should be no distinctions of rank in school hours. Yet for many years the school remained a problem. More than once Lewanika lost his temper about some trifle, and withdrew all the boys; and weeks would pass before diplomacy secured their return. "Discipline," writes Coillard, "is always a delicate and difficult matter. But, on the whole, our school is always the one bright spot in the work of Sefula." Within six years the meagre staff of white and native workers were hard pressed to care for a lively group of two hundred scholars.

The natural energy of Mme. Coillard had always been a missionary asset to her admiring husband, but the past ten

years had left her weary. She was often ill, and able no longer to play her former part. All she could do now was to keep house for a more or less unruly establishment of fifty-three mouths. Perhaps she agreed with Coillard that 'in an isolation like ours, it is certainly a great blessing to be very busy.' At least she would have agreed with his little summary of what domestic science meant at Sefula: "To pass months without a drop of milk for the household, without a morsel of meat; and to depend entirely upon a rapidly disappearing web of calico for the obtaining of a stringy fowl which, but for its toughness, one could eat, feathers and all, at one mouthful; fish that will not keep and that one soon sickens of; and the vegetables of the country, millet or insipid manioc,—all this is not cheerful, it must be confessed. . ."

But worry about meat and drink was a mere nuisance; it could not touch their souls or abate their courage. What made them really suffer was the effort to keep at their best—lonely as they were, worn with physical toil, and breathing everywhere an atmosphere of degradation. "Here we are all alone, and I feel that solitude is stretching immensely, indefinitely far in every direction. Our isolation, without the faintest glimmer of social enjoyment, is a severe trial." "Material labors, with their incessant fatigues and their gnawing cares, crush us down." Yet worst of all was the moral poison in the air. "We are stifled in this atmosphere of corruption; and we run a terrible risk of settling into a groove. No intellectual or moral movements sustain or uplift us; all our surroundings drag us down; and, alas, when we are in the dust, even then we are still far above the level of the darkness and foulness that encircle us." If it is the test of a man to be able to dominate his environment; if it is the test of a Christian to let unseen values rule his life; if it is the test of a missionary to tend the flame of his torch that he may kindle a fire which shall never be put out, Coillard could meet every one.

Even more remarkable than his zealous devotion was the patience of Coillard's restraint. When his heart must have cried aloud for some visible token that the labor of years was not in vain, he never took refuge in sham results.

He would rather live in purgatory than in a fool's paradise. Again and again, by careless compromise or an appeal to the insincerity of passing emotion, he might have won many who could pass as "converts", but he never forced the pace. With an amazing caution and reserve, he gave little heed to those signs of "revival" to which the negro race is prone and which the cheap evangelist is all too ready to excite. "We have had spontaneous professions," he writes, "but I do not encourage them." For he felt that nothing shoddy or flashy was worthy of the cause. In the face of every temptation to work for quick returns, he maintained a sane realism that would accept nothing not wholly genuine.

Small wonder, then, that he should work for three years before he could win a Barotsi Christian strong enough to stand alone. By that time one or two of the household servants were ready to make the break, and before long the little company was fortified by the conversion of Litia, the king's son. For a youth of twenty to face a hostile environment and join a despised minority was surely a sign that he meant what he said. Yet more than once the strain was too much for him; for several years he was lost to the mission; and yet to-day he is the Christian king of the Barotsi—the king who began his reign with the message to his people, "It is the Gospel which has given us peace, it is the Gospel which made us live."

For Mme. Coillard these tokens of a brighter future came none too soon. Month by month she was growing weaker. As he watched and tended her, Coillard could note, with a great fear gathering at his heart, "how weary she was—she who had been so full of energy!" Long after her strength was gone the unconquered spirit within her kept alive the passion to serve at her post. The last week of her life she made the hard journey to Lealui to meet with the king's women and talk to them as friends about "the things of God." On her return home she gave up. "Now let me go to my bed," she said. For nine more days the tenderness of Mlle. Kiener and the quiet devotion of François brought her what comfort could still be hers. At length, the night before her death, as her husband sat close by her bedside, she took his hand in hers and said gently, "Dying is not as diffi-

cult as we thought, and as I feared; it is not painful; and then it is such a short passage when 'underneath are the everlasting arms.'" And he tells us in his memoir how "this beautiful passage, so wonderfully sweet in her mother tongue, had often upheld us in our distresses."

"Toward evening she asked me to draw aside the curtain of the open window. Gazing into the immensity of the sky through the foliage that was stirring in the wind, she remained a moment in mute contemplation. Then she cried out with a delight I shall never forget, 'Oh, *que c'est beau, que c'est donc beau!* Oh, how very beautiful!" These were her last words, for soon she fell asleep and "in the morning that beloved face already bore the print of death. . . Now, for her, it is all peace. But for me what an appalling solitude! O God, keep near me."

That very day, Coillard tells us, was the day of burial, and yet, he says, "I was able to read, pray, exhort, and even sing beside the grave which was taking from me the most precious thing I had on earth." With him stood Mlle. Kiener and the silent Waddell who could share his grief; and comfort even from the Barotsi was not wanting. Lewanika, too unwell to come himself, sent an ox saying, "These are my tears." And one poor slave, unknown to Coillard, came to give him a pair of fowls, presented "with a little speech of real sympathy."

A fortnight later Coillard wrote, "It is already fifteen days, fifteen long days, that I have been alone—days that have seemed like months. She has entered into that repose she so longed for. . . I would not, even if I could, call her back to this life of sufferings and of sin. But when I had followed her to the threshold of eternity. . . when the portals of the City of God closed upon her, and I found myself alone, quite alone in darkness and in tears, my heart was broken." Often he remembered the brave promise she had given him thirty years before. "I have come to Africa to do the work of God with you, whatever it may be and wherever it may be; and remember this—wherever God may call you, you shall never find me crossing your path of duty." Now that she had made her words true, he could write, "It was more than a beautiful saying, it was the principle of her

whole life. . . If God had clearly called me to the ends of the earth she would joyfully have followed me thither."

In the first sharpness of his sorrow he could hardly face the sombre outlook of life and work without her. But weeks that once seemed impossible stretched into months, and for twelve years more he maintained that career of unflagging effort which he knew she would have expected of him. Yet, all the while, "you can understand the great, great place is always empty."

VIII

Shaken for the moment but steadfast in heart, Coillard went back to work. For all that he had so far given with her aid there seemed little to show. Two or three Christian natives, a little school, and a royal chieftain well disposed—these were meagre returns for six years of effort without rest. Through all this time it had been a daily struggle to maintain the mission; the very lives of the workers had been in constant peril; and in that ever roving population there seemed no solid nucleus around which they might build. The people as a whole were quite untouched, for in their minds the *moruti* and his message were for the king alone. Yet "lamenting the shifting sands," Coillard declared, "Deeper down we shall find a solid stratum, and we are seeking that. We may have to begin again, but we will succeed."

Though in the narrower field of mission statistics there may well have been cause for despair, far more widely than he ever realized Coillard had wielded power in the Barotsi kingdom. Once he had faced the violence of an open assembly and won his plea for a man's life. Yet as an evangelist by nature and not a reformer, he had shown great restraint in dealing with the social life of the tribe. Amid all its dirty cruelty and beastly ignorance he had worked only by gentle means, but in his own way and in due time he had become the conscience of the king. Like many another conscience he was often ignored; but the quiet pressure of his presence made a difference; certain "good old customs" seemed possible no longer. So it happened that execution

for sorcery became at first unfashionable and then unknown; many tortures that had relieved the tedium of maintaining "justice" were gradually omitted; and with a firmness not always at the command of Christian monarchs, Lewanika actually abolished the slave trade.

With the same reluctance to play the reformer or to shine in secular affairs Coillard received the urgent call of Cecil Rhodes to take the post of British Resident in Barotsiland. Quite undazzled by the honor he sent a reply that must have puzzled that domineering servant of the Empire. He said simply, "I cannot serve two masters."

Soon after his wife's death Coillard decided to move to Lealui, for there he could work in closer touch with the life of the village capital. Whether the king and his chiefs would allow this invasion was a delicate problem that must be settled in open council. To his grateful surprise the Barotsi lords were at one in their cordial welcome. On a lonely spot where sorcerers had once been burned they built him a house. "Let him come," they said; "our father is a Morotsi and his home is here."

The capital Coillard describes as "a confused mass of round huts with pointed roofs like beehives, from which in the evening there arises a dull murmur, the stir of human life, and the roll of drums which frighten the evil spirits while the king slumbers." Here for four years he enjoyed a prestige unknown before and the reward, too long delayed, of results that could be seen. The mission was at last secure and permanent; a new school began to flourish; within two years the Barotsi had joined Waddell in building a church; and Coillard, with all his caution, could not fail to note a "spiritual awakening." "Nearly forty of our former pupils have made a profession of faith," he writes, and "the sky has cleared." By the end of 1896 he could report that the mission, once housed aboard a wandering wagon, had now grown to five flourishing stations; and of his new industrial school and his school for evangelists he was gratefully proud. "We can show the first-fruits of the harvest and . . . we look for great things."

The signs of a growing flock were heartening indeed; but that most interesting sheep Lewanika was not within

the fold. From the beginning he had been drawn to Coillard, and in close intimacy the two had continued. Several Basutos, once Christians, served Lewanika as secretaries, and through them he would write little notes to the missionary, to say that his horse was lame or that he wanted some medicine or that his army was gathering for a new foray. By and by he learned to read and hoped to acquire further merit by keeping Sunday. But always he was shifty and uncertain. Now he would load Coillard with favors and sit with him for hours, listening to the quiet voice that spoke of strange things and watching those dark eyes that seemed to probe him. Again he would veer away and scoff at what these French aliens had brought him. "What I want is carpenters, masons, and armorers," he would cry. "We laugh at all the rest." "He cannot believe," Coillard confessed, "in the purity of our motives. He suspects everything, even our kindnesses and attentions to him. . . He is always on the defensive." After seven years, however, he came as near as he could to leaving the gods of his fathers. Every Sunday, with his wives and slaves, he would attend service in the new church, but further he dared not move. Coillard, in terms that were strange indeed to Barotsi ears, could see in him no "conviction of sin," and it cannot be denied that he fitted but ill to the forms of evangelism. He was surely no prize penitent; yet as a Barotsi chief who had a perfect right to murder all missionaries and go to hell in his own way, he still left a record of which neither he nor his teacher need be wholly ashamed.

After four years at Lealui, followed by an exciting journey to the sources of the Zambezi, Coillard fell seriously ill. The pressing need for rest and change and the no less urgent call for funds led him to seek once more a long furlough in Europe. On his way to the coast he visited again the Matabele capital at Buluwayo, where eighteen years before he had suffered as a prisoner. Now from government authorities and missionaries alike he met with every attention and kindness; and doctors and nurses at the hospital lavished upon him such care that he was soon ready for the trip to Capetown.

Though he tried hard to secure passage on the *Drummond Castle*, he had to sail earlier on a less comfortable ship; and no sooner had he landed in England than he heard "the appalling news of the wreck of the *Drummond Castle* at midnight off the coast of Ushant. Only three lives were saved!" "After a career of forty years, so chequered and so full of adventures, dangers, and trials, but also of deliverances and blessings, brought back so recently from the brink of the grave. . . rescued as it were from shipwreck, and given back as by a miracle to the health which I no longer even hoped for, I ask myself if it be not that my Master still has something for me to do, whether in Europe or in Africa."

There was indeed plenty to do in Europe. Coillard was everywhere received with affectionate admiration and overwhelmed with invitations to lecture and to preach. The outburst of welcome was enough to turn the head of a smaller man, but in the face of it all the veteran could write, "I think I might have been intoxicated by all the adulation lavished upon me, had not God in His mercy given me such a revelation of my own heart as humbles me to the dust and renders me perfectly indifferent to anything that can be said of me." Even those to whom his mission meant nothing were ready to applaud him as an explorer. That title, however, had no relish for him; and to one who organized a lecture with the warning that the speaker should mention "no religion" Coillard replied, "What do you mean, monsieur? Do you expect me to put my flag in my pocket?"

In Protestant Churches of France and Switzerland he campaigned for more than two years, and at the end of that strenuous "vacation," with the income for his mission tripled and with fifteen new workers as his companions, he sailed again for the Cape. By January 1899, he was revisiting the familiar stations in Basutoland, full of wonder and delight at every token of the Church's growth in numbers and in power. Ten of his happiest days he spent at Leribe, preaching to seven hundred communicants in his old church and gathering new courage from the hope of what even Barotsiland might one day grow to be.

In September he returned to Lealui ready for what were to be his last five years, years clouded with trouble and full of sadness unforeseen. The baptism of Litia and his infant son and a warm welcome from Lewanika to the new missionaries seemed to open a happy era, but in the ranks of new workers and old one sorrow succeeded another. At intervals before Coillard's own death eight of the younger missionaries died and eleven more were sent home ill or widowed. For an old man in failing health, eager for the support he had so long awaited, these blows were hard to bear. "I feel like an old tree," he wrote, "dry and isolated, whom the axe has forgotten in the midst of the clearing. Oh, why does not God spare the young?" As a matter of fact, God was perfectly willing that the young should be spared; and after 1902, when the first mosquito-proof house was erected, malarial fever became a thing of the past.

Gravely as the loss of workers hurt the mission, an injury still sharper was the schism of the "Ethiopian Church." In Christian Africa a kind of insurgent racial movement had begun which aimed to win for the natives freedom from white control. New leaders in this wave of secession were two of Coillard's most trusted Basuto teachers, who now entered Barotsiland with the full intent to supersede their pastor and to discredit all that he had labored to achieve. With a crude insolence which a little brief authority can so readily breed in conceited negroes, this precious pair assured Lewanika, "These white missionaries do not love you. Do not trust them. It is only we who love you." By the time they had written insulting letters to Coillard, slandered him to his old friends, and almost extinguished his schools, it is not surprising that he felt his whole life work falling to pieces before his eyes. To the work of open enemies he had long been inured, but to know the disloyalty of his own familiar friends left a wound that never healed. Yet to the worse of the two renegades he wrote, "I have said enough to show how firmly my affection remains fixed on you. . . . If you are fully resolved to come and teach in Barotsiland independently of us, then let it be so; but I entreat you, my brother, do not let it be in a spirit of hostility." And of the whole movement, even while it was darkening his days, he

could write, "It is the ferment of adolescence. Do we not see the same thing in our own sons when they are not quite men? It is not a reason for leaving them alone, but for watching over them more than ever." Within a few years the tide slowly turned; but it was only the first signs of a mission restored that Coillard lived to see.

Once more before the end he revisited the scenes of earlier days. Increasing blindness and recurrent fever led him to consult physicians at the Cape, and on his tour homeward, in company with Miss Mackintosh, his wife's niece, he stopped at Leribe, where he preached to more than a thousand Basutos; and later he journeyed to view again the splendors of Victoria Falls. "There it was possible," writes Miss Mackintosh, "to see him in characteristic surroundings, careless of food and creature comforts, ever watchful for those of others."

Six months later, in May 1904, after a trying tour along the upper river, Coillard was stricken with haematuric fever. For two or three days he would not give in. He wrote to several friends and made the last entries in his journal. "I have a little fever, but nothing serious." Within a week, however, he grew rapidly worse, and was soon too weak to converse with the devoted friends who surrounded him with care. "He sent no farewells, uttered no last words," and on Friday, May 27, 1904 he died. Always he had longed to die in harness. "Not for peace did he pray, but to go out of the fight with his sword unsheathed; and to rest with his bright beloved." And he had his wish.

At the end of his seventieth year, looking back upon nearly fifty years of service sustained "without haste and without rest," François Coillard might well have seen less of triumph than of failure. For all that he had spent there was no proportionate reward to gladden him at the end. But on that he had never counted. Once he had written, "In the service of Jesus success is certain, whatever men may think, if only our obedience be implicit; for the fulfilment of His will *is* success." In that faith he lived with ardor and died in peace.

What he could never have known was the victory he had won not by doing what he did but by being what he was. Were his record written in terms of deeds alone they would fill a brave chapter in the story of the cause he served. Yet that record would tell us little of why men loved him. It is when fellow-ministers, English travellers, and negro boatmen unite in yielding him their admiring devotion that we begin to know why he is numbered to-day among the saints of God. We learn that "children adored him" and that friends told of his simplicity and humility, and yet there were very tough cow-boys who said, "We were just like wax in M. Coillard's hands. We always knew we should have to do what he wanted in the end, though he seemed to be giving in all the time." We hear of his tenderness and his "charming playfulness," and yet a British engineer could testify to "the immovable and fearless rectitude" of "this single-hearted and indomitable Frenchman." We read in the letter of a well-known English explorer that in Coillard he had "never seen a human fault or weakness," and yet a brother missionary can say, "It is one of the supremest joys of my life to have lived and labored with such a great and good man—a man so intensely human." And when another finds in him "the presence, spirit, and manner of an accomplished gentleman," we remember likewise what his wrinkled old Barotsi paddler said,—“Oh, I *loved* him. . . . whenever I think I shall not see him again, it is just as if I had been wounded.”

The End.

NOTE

*The Missionary Society which sent Coillard as a lone pioneer into Barotsiland (the Société des Missions Evangéliques de Paris) now has in Northern Rhodesia (which includes Barotsiland) seven residence stations with thirty foreign missionaries and a native staff of eighty-four. There are five dispensaries, thirty-six hundred children in schools, and at least five hundred baptized Christians. The annual expenditure is over \$27,000. Those who wish further information may address Madame Coillard's niece,

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