



The Story of

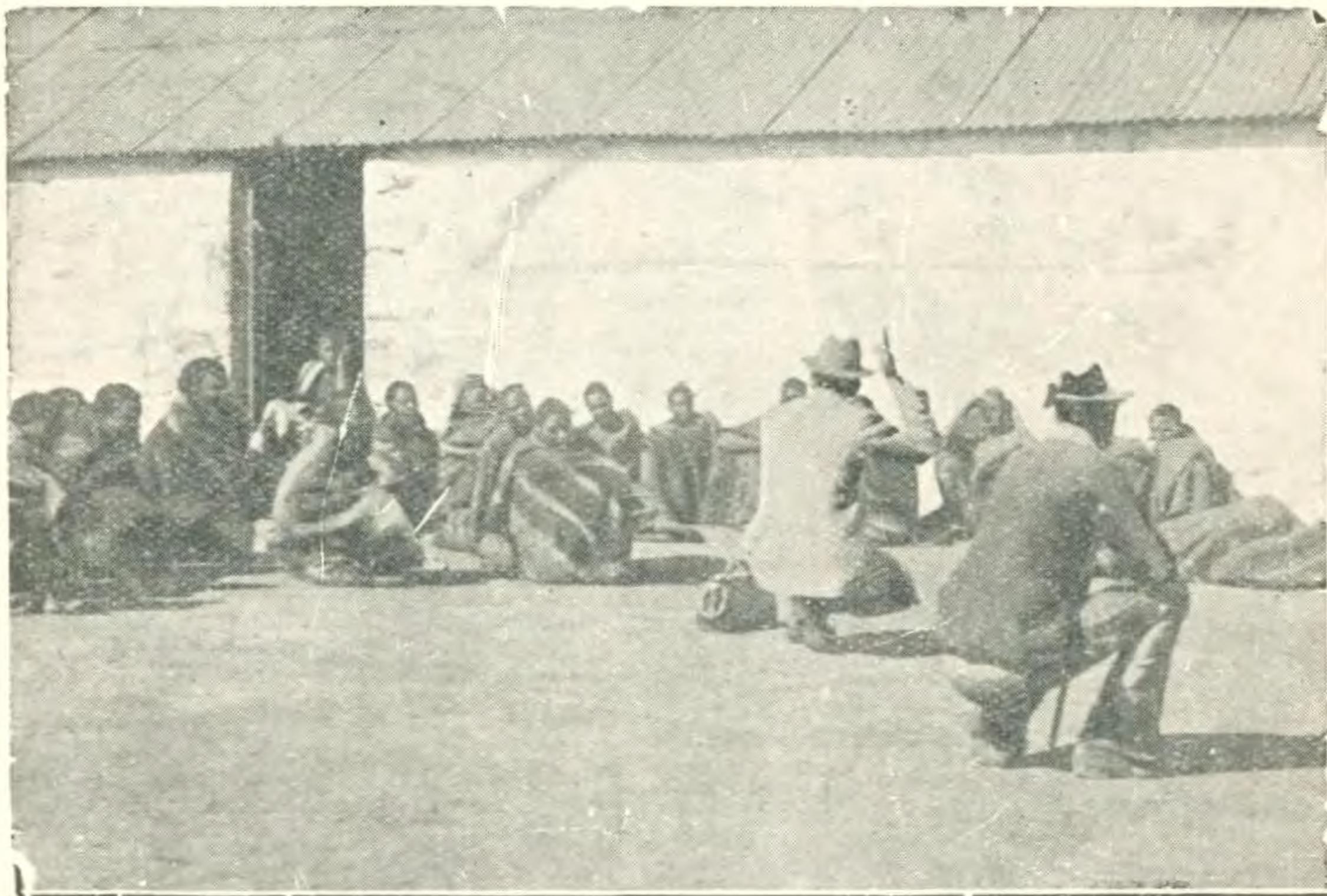
Robert Moffat.



H. Bullen

The Story of Robert Moffat.

FRONTISPIECE.



PREACHING THE GOSPEL TO KAFFIR PRISONERS IN SOUTH AFRICA.

The Story of
Robert Moffat

AND HIS

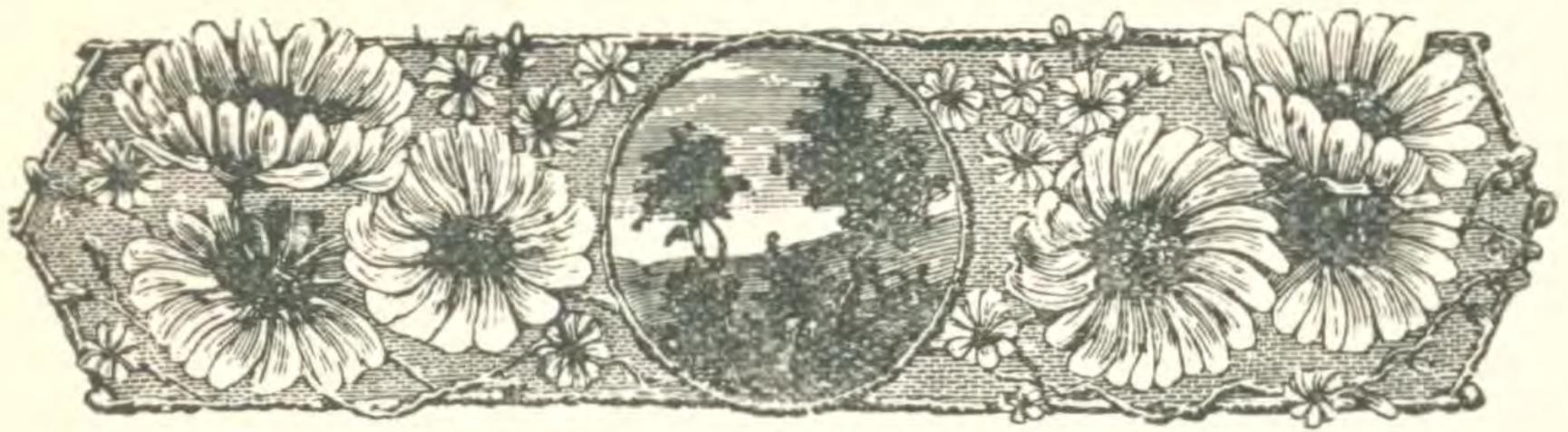
Noble Work among the Natives of South Africa.



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The Story of Robert Moffat.

THE GARDENER BOY WHO BECAME A MISSIONARY.

Early Years in Scotland.

CARRONSHORE is a straggling village near the Firth of Forth. Over a hundred years ago it was little more than a hamlet, consisting chiefly of low, red-tiled cottages in which outdoor workers and farm labourers lived.

We will take a peep inside one of these humble dwellings, where a happy circle of children sit around the fireside. There are seven of them; five boys and two girls, all busy knitting, while the mother sits under the old-fashioned oil lamp, reading aloud to them a thrilling story of the devotion and suffering of the Moravian missionaries in Greenland. That godly mother has a yearning desire to see one at least of her "boys" in the service of the Lord,

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bearing the glad tidings of salvation to the heathen, which in these days, alas! received but little attention from those who bore the Christian name.

“Robbie,” a bright-eyed boy of six, sat eagerly listening to the strange, but true story, and in his heart he wished that his life might be spent in such a noble service. But Robbie Moffat had yet to learn that he needed Christ as a personal Saviour ere he could serve Him. It must have been about this time that he went to the parish school, where “Willy Mitchell,” the old schoolmaster, made him so familiar with the cane that he “plunked,” and, when found out, although only ten years old, ran off to sea. There, he had several narrow escapes from drowning, and was glad to get back to the humble home at Carronshore. At the age of eleven he went with his brother to school, in Falkirk, where he was more anxious to learn, and picked up a little geography and astronomy. At fourteen Robert was apprenticed to a gardener at Polmont, named John Robertson, in whose employment he tasted the first experiences of a hard life. The apprentice lads had to rise at four o’clock in the cold winter mornings and go out to dig. So intense was the cold sometimes that they had to knock their knuckles against the handles of their spades to inspire some feeling into them. Yet in these days Robert managed to attend an evening class, where he learned Latin and mensuration, and on other evenings he picked up some useful knowledge in the country smithy, and also acquired the

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art of playing the violin, which in after years was a cheer to himself, and an attraction to the natives, amid the deserts and kraals of South Africa. Although he was yet a stranger to grace and to salvation, these early years were watched over by a God who loved him, and was preparing him even then, although he knew it not, for the path and the service to which in after years he was called. After his apprenticeship was finished, Robert moved across the Forth into Fife, where he served the Earl of Moray at Donibristle, near Aberdour. Here he had a narrow escape from drowning in seeking to rescue a companion who had gone beyond his depth while bathing. By these, and other means, God was beginning to turn the gardener lad's thoughts to the world beyond, and to show him his need of a Saviour.





Leaving Home.

ON a fine Spring morning a tall, dark-haired youth of eighteen, carrying a bundle, walked by the side of a middle-aged woman—whose striking resemblance to the youth by her side, clearly marked her as his mother—along the banks of the winding River Forth.

This was Robert Moffat, now a journeyman gardener, on his way to a situation at High Leigh, in Cheshire. It is always a sore pang to a fond mother's heart to part with her sons, especially if they are going out into the cold world without Christ, exposed to all the dangers and allurements of earth, with no personal faith in a Divine arm to protect, or hand to guide them safely through. It was the thought of this that pressed hard on the godly

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mother's heart as she walked by Robert's side that morning, loath to part with him. But the corner of the road had been reached where they must say "Good-bye," it might be never to meet again on earth.

"Let us stand here for a few moments," said Mrs. Moffat, "for I have one special favour to ask of you, Robert, before we part. I know you will not refuse to do what your mother asks."

"What is that, mother?" Robert tenderly inquired.

"Promise me that you will do what I am going to ask you, my son, and I will tell you."

"But I cannot do that, mother, until you tell me what your request is."

"Ah, laddie, how could your mother, who loves you, ever ask you to do anything but what is for your highest good," said she, as the tears ran down her cheeks.

And Robert stood silently looking to the ground, striving hard to suppress the rising emotion in his breast. The sight of her tears fairly conquered him, and when able to speak he said, "Yes, mother, ask what you will and I will do it."

"I only ask you to read a chapter in the Word of God every morning and every evening."

"You know that I read my Bible, mother," interrupted Robert.

"I know you do, my boy, but you do not read it regularly. Now that I have your promise I will go home with a light heart, for I know you will keep

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your promise and read it daily. And, oh, Robert, my boy, read much in the New Testament. Read much in the New Testament. Read the Gospels, the blessed Gospels, then you cannot well go astray, and the Lord Himself will teach you. I have given you over into the hands of Christ, and I am sure you will be found at the right hand of the Lamb."

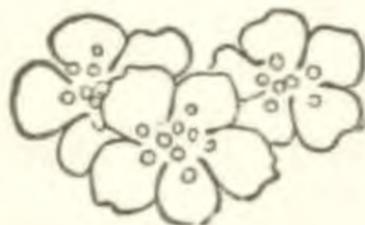
Then the fond mother and her son parted; he to begin life among strangers, and she, ere long, to reach her happy home above, where partings and tears are all no more.

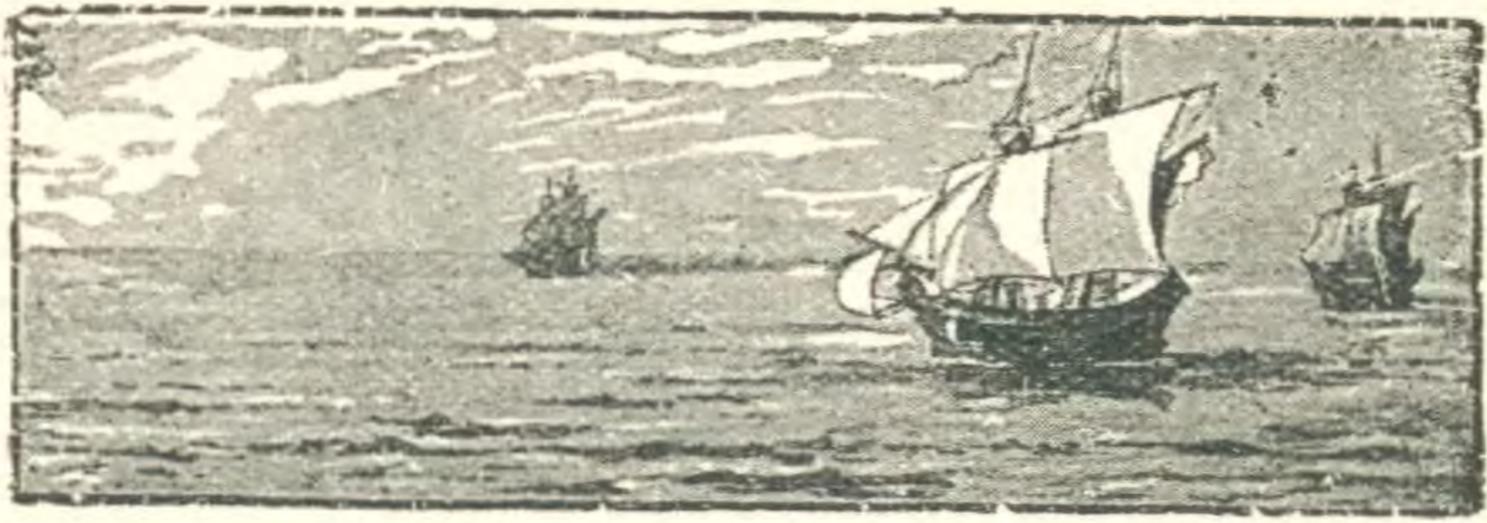
But that last promise was never forgotten, for many, many years after, when the aged missionary returned from scenes of danger and marvellous preservation among the heathen, and was telling of the Lord's goodness to him, he was able to say, "I never forgot my promise to my mother." Even although still unconverted, and often mingling with the gay and godless throng in their amusements, he continued to read the Word of God morning and night, as his mother had desired him. Would to God all our boys and girls, and young men and maidens would do the same. The Word of God read and treasured in the memory; the "old, old story of Jesus" and His love learned in the golden years of youth has been known to yield its fruit in conversion in most unlikely places, and in most unlooked-for hours. Therefore let the habit of reading it daily be encouraged, for there is no more likely way of becoming acquainted with its Author, and thus becoming a possessor of life eternal. "And this is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent" (John xvii. 3).

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On the 18th November, 1813, Robert went on board a ship at Greenock, bound for Liverpool. A storm compelled the sailors to seek shelter in Rothesay Bay, where a man belonging to a warship was drowned the same night while attempting to reach the shore. A press gang boarded Robert's ship, and finally carried off a young man to serve in the dead man's place. The ship reached Liverpool a week later, and the following evening the young gardener was settled in a tiny lodge in a corner of the beautiful gardens of Mr. Leigh, his new employer. Here he soon found friends. His mistress was kind to the young stranger, and lent him books to read, and the head-gardener, finding him trustworthy, left a good deal in his hands.

And as was soon to be manifested, God was working deep conviction of sin in the young gardener's heart, and showing him his state before Him, and his need of a Saviour.





A Great Event.

WARRINGTON is about six miles by road from High Leigh, and as Robert Moffat walked along the high road one day on an errand he noticed a bill pasted on a brick wall. Curiosity caused him to stand and read it. It was an announcement of a missionary meeting to be held in the town, at which a Mr. William Roby, of Manchester, was to preside. It was impossible to attend that meeting, for the date was past, but the very mention of mission work awoke in Robert's mind the stories of the Moravians in Greenland and Labrador, which his mother used to read to them around the fireside at Carronshore. As he walked along the road on his homeward journey, the old desire, awakened in his heart as a boy to become a missionary, returned with greater force than ever, but now it was coupled with the stern conviction that there was something else that must first take place, ere he could go and tell others of the Saviour. This was his own conversion, his

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own personal acquaintance with Christ, apart from which no service could be acceptable to God, or a blessing to men.

There were a few earnest Christians in High Leigh, known as "Methodists" at this time, who were much despised and evil spoken of. Robert became acquainted with some of them, attended their meetings, and was further convinced of his need of a Saviour. But he does not seem to have been really converted, or at least to have had the full knowledge and joy of salvation, until on a visit to Manchester to attend some meetings there, where he became so deeply convinced of sin while conversing with a young man named Clarke, that he decided to call at the house of Mr. Roby—whose name he had seen on the placard—to ask guidance and help. Summoning courage, he knocked at the door, was kindly received by Mr. Roby, and was greatly helped to a clearer knowledge of God's way of salvation.

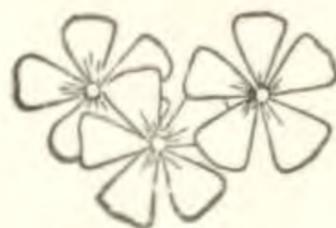
In answer to the question, "Are you really trusting in Christ, Robert?" the young gardener said, "I am a guilty, hell-deserving sinner, yet God loves me, and laid my sins upon Jesus Christ, who died in my place."

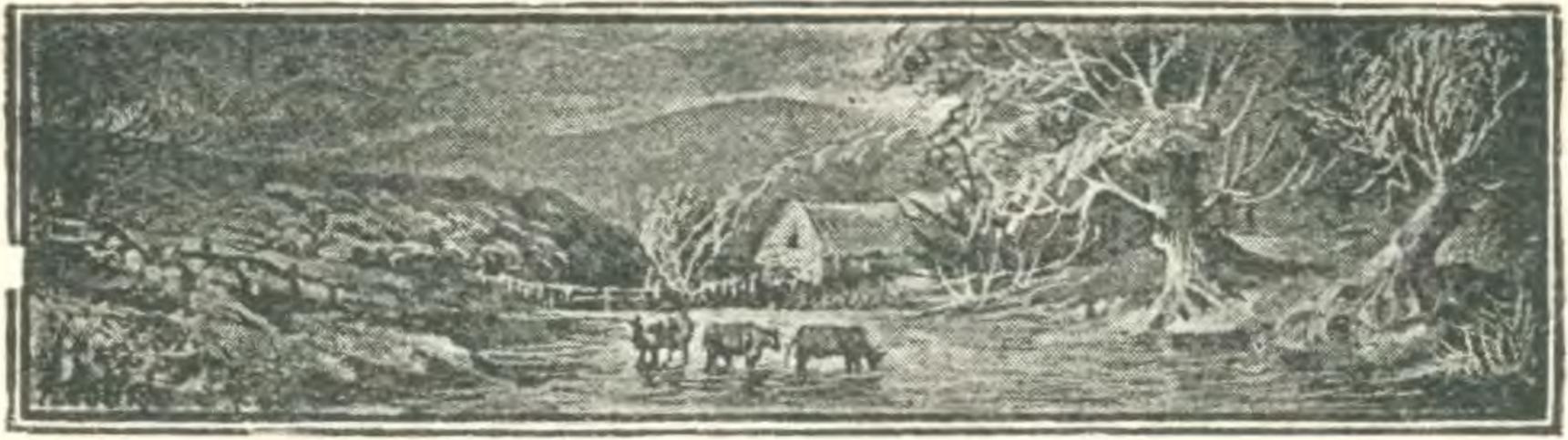
This was the first full confession of his faith, and it was possibly at this time that he was born again. At any rate, from that day onward he took his stand clear on the Lord's side, and feared not to confess Jesus Christ as his Saviour before men.

Then the desire to go with the Gospel to the heathen came back with increased power, from new motives now, for the love of Christ constrained him, and on mentioning

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his desire to the man who had led him to the Saviour, he encouraged him to wait upon the Lord, and seek to know His will. He also suggested to Robert that if a situation could be got nearer to his home he would seek to help him in preparation for such a path. It was only a few weeks later that Robert removed from High Leigh to Dukinfield, where he was employed in the nursery of a Mr. Smith, who was a pious man, and who, with his wife, was greatly interested in the missionary cause. This godly couple became true friends to Robert, and while here he formed an acquaintance with their beautiful and devoted daughter, named Mary—a young woman of fervent piety and genuine enthusiasm in the missionary cause—who afterwards became his wife, and shared his many years of privations, toils, and dangers among the kraals and dark-skinned dwellers of South Africa.





Off to Africa.

ON the last day of September, 1816, nine young missionaries were commended to the Lord, and sailed from London a few days later, four for the South Seas and five for South Africa. Among the former was John Williams, the martyr of Erromanga, the first to suffer death for the Gospel's sake; and among the latter, the Scotch gardener lad, Robert Moffat. His party reached Cape Town early the following year, and Moffat, with a companion named Kitchingman, proceeded to Namaqualand. While waiting for the Government's permission to enter, they lived with a Boer farmer, and acquired the Dutch language, preaching as they had opportunity. An incident may here be related which shows the treatment that the Boers were in the habit of giving to the natives, whom they regarded as their

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slaves. Being asked by the farmer to conduct a "service" in the house, Moffat said, "Call in the servants."

"Do you mean the Hottentots?" replied the Boer with a sneer. "Why, we may as well call in the dogs."

Moffat made no answer, but, after prayer, opened the Bible and read the story of the Syro-Phœnician woman,



GROUP OF AFRICAN BOYS.

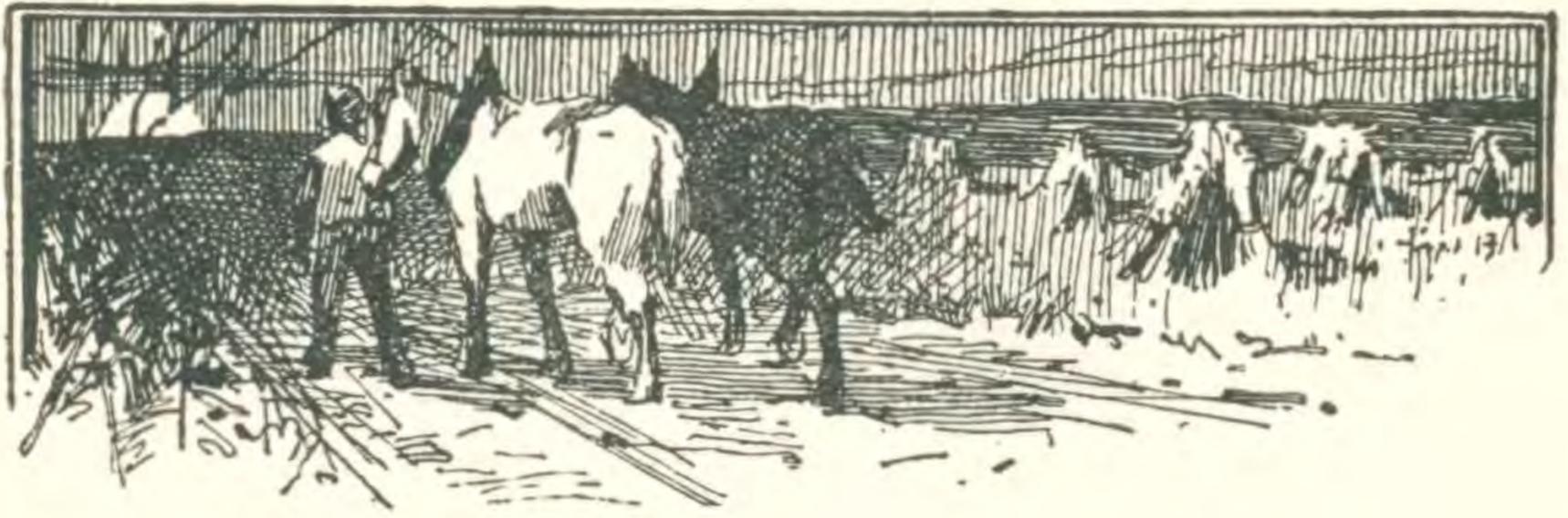
taking as his text her words to the Saviour, "Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table" (Matt. xv. 27). Before he had proceeded far with his address, the farmer gave orders to bring in the Hottentots to hear the Word, and admitted that the reproof had gone home, and that he would not again object to the blacks hearing the Gospel.

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Here Moffat left his companion, and, starting with an ox-waggon, a guide and drivers, began the long journey across the desert, where hardships from lack of water and food were endured. He had to swim the Orange River, which in these days was only crossed by a raft, a feat which greatly astonished the natives who accompanied him.

On the 26th of January, 1818, Moffat arrived at Africaner's Kraal, which was afterwards called Vreede Berg, and then Jerusalem. About one hundred miles west of here, at Warm Baths, Abraham Albrecht had served the Lord and died, and the work was carried on by Mr. Ebner, who gave the young missionary a warm welcome, but left soon after for Germany, leaving Moffat alone amid the heathen. What happened here I must next briefly tell you.





In Africaner's Kraal.

AFRICANER was a Hottentot outlaw, a robber chieftain, whose name was a terror through the whole of South Africa. He, with his brother Titus, had attacked and killed a Dutch farmer and his family, waged continuous war with the natives, and fled across the Orange River. He plundered and burnt huts and mission houses wherever he found them, and was regarded by the farmers and natives as a bloodthirsty monster. Yet such is the power of the Gospel of God, that this man of blood was converted, and became a humble follower of the Prince of Peace. It happened in this way. One of the missionaries wrote a conciliatory letter to Africaner, asking liberty to settle near his Kraal, to which, much to their amazement, he sent a favourable reply, and very soon after, Africaner, and his brothers David and Jacobus, became constant listeners to the Word. Gradually the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ shone

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into the dark mind of the chieftain and very deep was his conviction of sin. As he thought of his past life, he would often weep, and wonder at the mercy of God toward such a sinner as he had been. Some time before Moffat arrived at Warm Baths, Africaner and his brother had openly confessed their faith in Christ and been baptized, the chief taking the name of Christian Africaner. He welcomed Moffat, gave instructions to the women to build him a hut, which they did in half an hour, into which he dragged his weary frame and lay down to rest. But he could not sleep: his thoughts were across the seas with those he had left and might never see again. Around him on every side were the heathen, and he was there alone. Yet in musing on the goodness of God, His faithfulness and love, he could not help singing aloud—

“Here I raise my Ebenezer.

Hither by Thy help I’ve come.”

Moffat began at once to have morning and evening services, with school for three or four hours during the day. Africaner was a constant attender, and soon learned to read the New Testament. This was a great joy to him, and Moffat often saw the chief withdraw from his hut to the shadow of a great rock, where he would sit for hours alone reading the Word of God. Need we wonder that he grew in grace, for he was desiring the milk of the Word, by which the new life is fed. Many a long evening he would sit on a stone by Moffat’s side, asking questions and conversing about the things of God, until unable to take in more he would rise, rub his hands on his head, and

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say, "I have heard enough. I feel as if my head would swell with these great subjects." If ever his past life was referred to, he burst into tears, and whenever he could he went seeking to heal quarrels among his people.

Speaking with the chief one day, Moffat proposed that he should accompany him on a visit to Cape Town.

Looking up with astonishment, Africaner said, "I had thought you loved me, and yet you advise me to go where the Government will hang me up as a spectacle to justice? Do you know that I am an outlaw, and that one thousand rix-dollars have been offered for my head?" After deliberating on the proposal, he consented to accompany Moffat, saying, in the words of the Psalm, "I shall roll my way (as the Dutch Bible has it) upon the Lord, I know He will not leave me." Dressed in an old jacket and a pair of leather trousers of Moffat's, Africaner started for the Cape. The journey through the country where he had committed so many crimes was not without its dangers from the Boers, who threatened to be avenged on him. Africaner passed as one of Moffat's servants, and none who saw him suspected that the gentle Hottentot was the fire-brand of a few years ago. At Pella some met him who had not seen his face since they joined in deadly conflict; now they, as well as he, were followers of the Prince of Peace. At one farm at which they passed the Dutch farmer, at whose house Moffat had spent a night on his way to Namaqualand, when he heard it was Moffat, stepped back in amazement, saying, "It must be Moffat's ghost, for Africaner killed him." "I'm not dead yet, nor a ghost either, feel my hands," said Moffat. The

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astonished Dutchman, who was a believer in Christ, held up his hands in amazement, and said, "Thank God, you have escaped Africaner." "But Africaner is a Christian, now," said Moffat.

More astonished than ever, the farmer replied, "I can believe almost anything you say, but that seems impossible. He killed my uncle. If *he* has become a



AFRICANER.

Christian, I have only one desire, that is to see him ere I die."

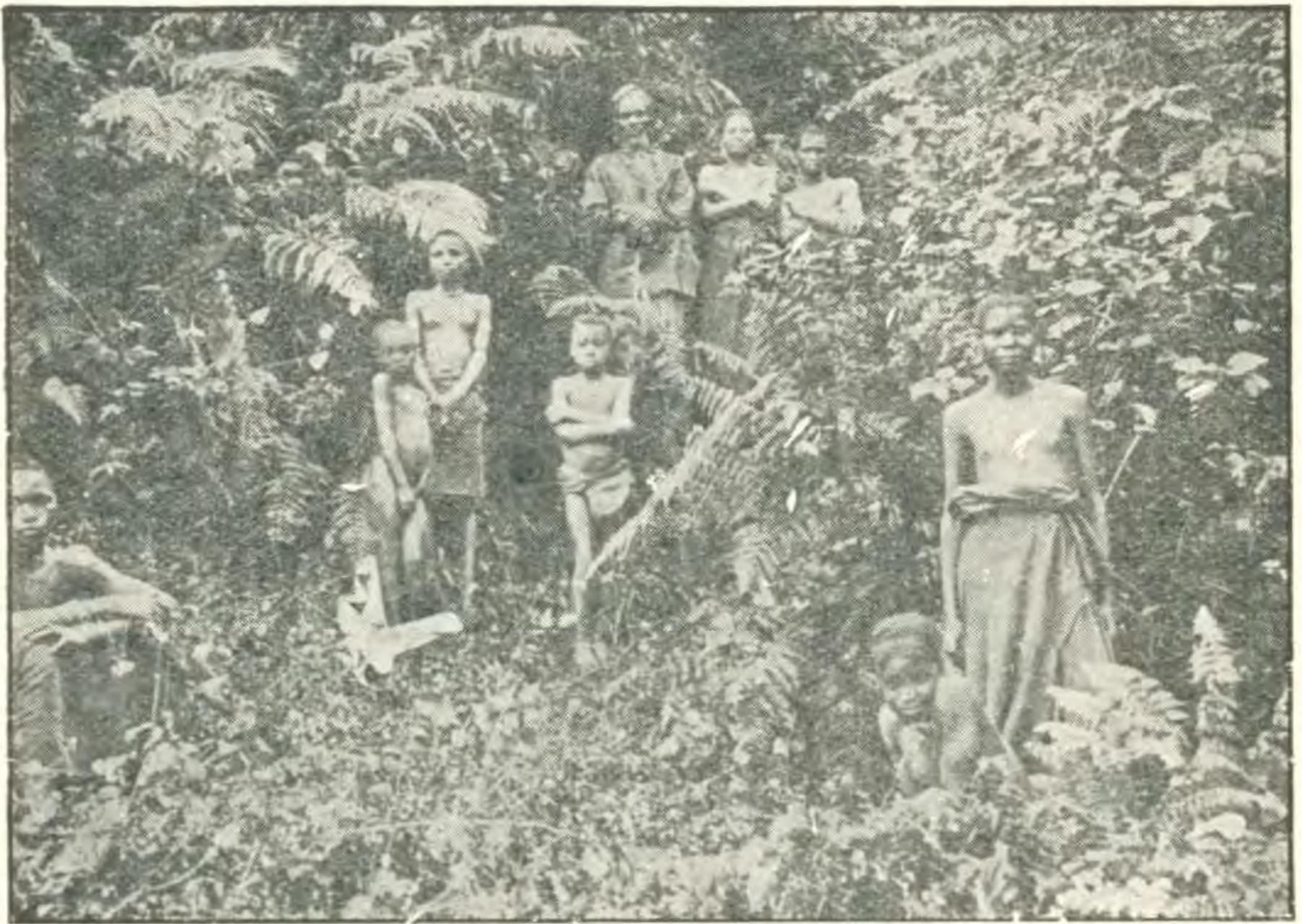
Pointing to the spot where his "servant" sat, Moffat said, "That is Africaner."

The farmer started back in great surprise. The chief rose and bowed. Lifting his eyes heavenward, the farmer clasped his hands, and exclaimed, "Almighty God, what

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a miracle of Thy power! What cannot Thy grace accomplish?" At Cape Town the Governor received Africaner kindly, heard the story of his conversion and loyalty, and presented him with an ox-waggon, valued at eighty pounds.

After visiting various mission stations, Moffat arranged



BUSH KAFFIRS.

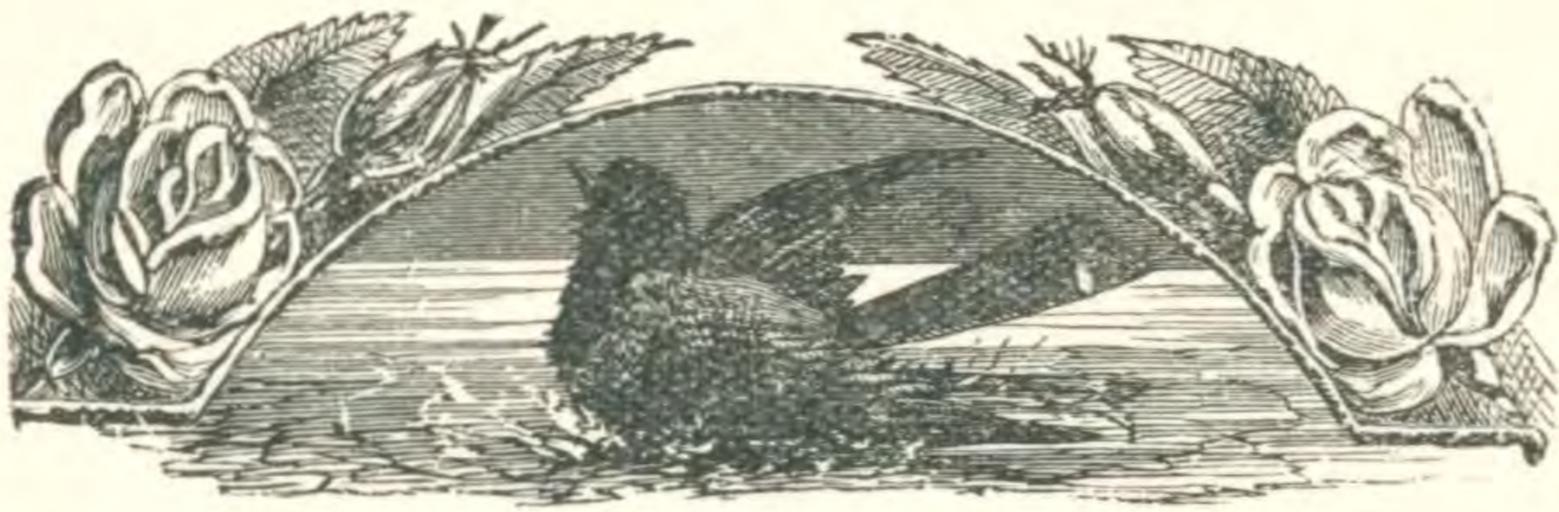
to move to Lattakoo—among the Bechuanas—to which place Africaner generously removed his books and personal effects. His intention was to remove his tribe there, so that they might receive the teaching of Mr. Moffat, but before this could be done, Africaner was called to his heavenly home. As his end drew near, he said, "My

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former life is stained with blood, but Christ has pardoned me, and I am going to heaven.” And thus Africaner, a trophy of God’s wondrous saving grace, transformed from a bloodthirsty outlaw to a true Christian, passed on to join the ransomed throng, whose title to the presence of God they joyfully own to be “The Blood of the Lamb.” Happy, thrice happy, are all who can truthfully, honestly sing—

The Cross of Christ is all my boast,
His blood my only plea ;
My password to the realms of bliss
Is, “Jesus died for me.”





In Perils Among the Heathen.

ON the 27th of December, 1819, Robert Moffat and Mary Smith were married in Cape Town, and proceeded from there to their new home in Lattakoo. For over fifty years (in storm and sunshine) they were truly one in heart and mind, and together served the Lord who had saved them and called them to be His witnesses in Africa. What a blessing it is for a servant of Christ to get a true helpmeet, and what a hindrance to be yoked for life to one who has little heart for the Master's service.

Several attempts had been made to reach the Bechuanas with the Gospel, but little progress had been made before Moffat and his wife went there. Mottubi, the chief, only favoured the missionaries so far as they taught the people to handle tools or cultivate the land, but he had no desire for the Gospel. The tribe was known as the Batlapis, and was very degraded—robbery, plunder, and murder

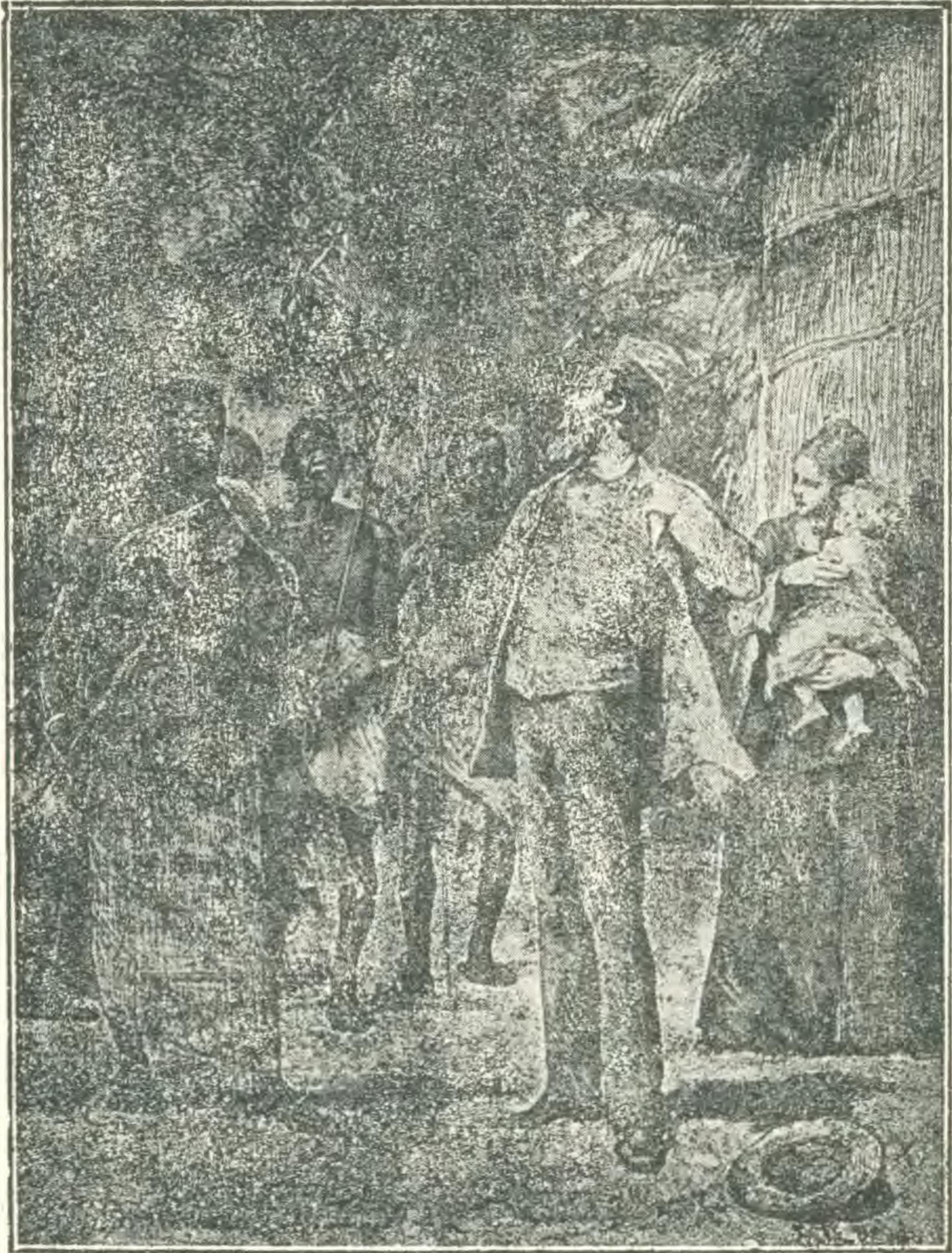
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being every day occurrences among the people. Their lives were in daily peril. A long drought was blamed upon them, and the rainmakers advised the chief to send them out of the country. One day, while Mrs. Moffat was standing at the door with her baby girl in her arms, the chief appeared with a long spear in his hand, accompanied by a number of warriors, and ordered them to leave the country at once. Moffat calmly replied, "We have suffered much from you, but we are resolved to stay, as He whose servants we are has directed us. If you are resolved to get rid of us you must shed our blood or burn us out, for our hearts are with you." Then throwing open his waistcoat, Moffat stood erect and fearless, and said, "If you will thrust your spear to my heart, then my companions will know that the hour has come for them to depart." The chief was astonished, and with a significant shake of the head said to his followers, "These men must have ten lives when they are so fearless of death," and walked away.

About two hundred miles farther north-east Moffat heard of a Bechuana tribe named the Bangwaketsi, whose chief was named Makaba, to whom he desired to pay a visit. Starting with a few men, he travelled across a dry, trackless country, where he learned that a cannibal tribe, called the Mantatees, had attacked the Baralongs, and were marching on Lattakoo. They hastily retraced their steps and informed the chief. The warriors of the tribe were assembled, and, accompanied by about a hundred armed Griquas, they started off to meet the Mantatees, who were now only some thirty-six miles off. Moffat

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accompanied them, hoping to prevent bloodshed, if possible. But all his efforts failed to effect a peaceful meeting. The Mantatees rushed at the Bechuanas with



MOFFAT AND THE ANGRY CHIEF.

a howl like a wild beast, throwing their war clubs and javelins, and for hours a desperate struggle took place,

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during which many were killed on both sides. Moffat nearly lost his life by a wounded man throwing his weapon at him as he passed. The Mantatees were defeated, and had to retreat, leaving many of their women and children, who were taken to the mission station and cared for. Some time after this, the chief gave permission to remove to a more healthy spot about three miles below the fountain, where the Kuruman River has its source, and there they built a new station, which was named Kuruman. What the Lord did there I must now briefly tell you.





Revival Days at Kuruman.

AFTER ten long years of labour, the good seed of the Word began to grow at Kuruman. The Bechuanas, who had been so indifferent, began to listen to the preaching of the Gospel very earnestly, and great crowds came to the meeting-place. Mr. Moffat translated three Gospel hymns into the Sechuana language, which gave great joy to the natives. Many of them could by this time read, so that they were able to sing the words of Gospel truth which these hymns contained. The Spirit of God began to use the Word and many were awakened. Tears streamed down the natives' cheeks as they heard the story of the cross; young men, who had been warriors and robbers, were melted and sobbed while the Word was spoken.

Mrs. Moffat was often engaged pointing anxious women to the Saviour, and had the joy of seeing many saved. From their huts the sounds of prayer and praise

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came forth. A wonderful change was soon manifest in the village. Many, instead of rubbing their skins with grease and red ochre, were washed and clothed, and the women came daily to Mrs. Moffat to have her help in making garments for themselves and their husbands. Mr. Moffat was busy translating the Gospel into the Sechuana language, so that those who had been saved might read in their own tongue the precious Word of God, by which the new life must be sustained.

Mr. Moffat went to Cape Town to arrange about the printing of it, but being unable to get it done there, a printing press was sent out from England, and he set to work on it himself. Then he translated the whole Bible into the Sechuana tongue, and in 1857 it was printed. What a boon the Word of God was, and will be to the tribes of South Africa. Eternity alone will tell what God has wrought thereby.





Among the Matabele.

ONE morning two messengers arrived at Kuruman, from the great king Moselekatse. They were much astonished to see the great change in the Bechuanas, and asked what it all meant. This gave Moffat a good opportunity of setting the Gospel before them. They would have him to accompany them part of the way back to their country, to save them from attacks which they feared from Bechuana tribes on the way. After he had conducted them safely to the borders of their own country he wanted to return home, but they insisted he should accompany them to Moselekatse's capital, which he did. A great welcome was given him at the *Khotla* or fold at which the king received his guests amid a great company of naked warriors, who broke out in a loud war-song as they entered. Then the king appeared, shook hands with Moffat, and said, "Moshete, the land is before you, camp where you will, you are come to your son."

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During his stay at Moselekatse's capital, Moffat had many talks with the king, and sought to set before his dark mind the realities of God, sin, heaven, and hell. Soon after his return to Kuruman, Moffat was visited by a chief whose name was Mosheu. This man was so pleased with what he saw and heard, that he soon returned, bringing his wives and relatives with him. It appears that after he returned to his kraal he talked about the words he had heard Moffat



GROUP OF MATABELE.

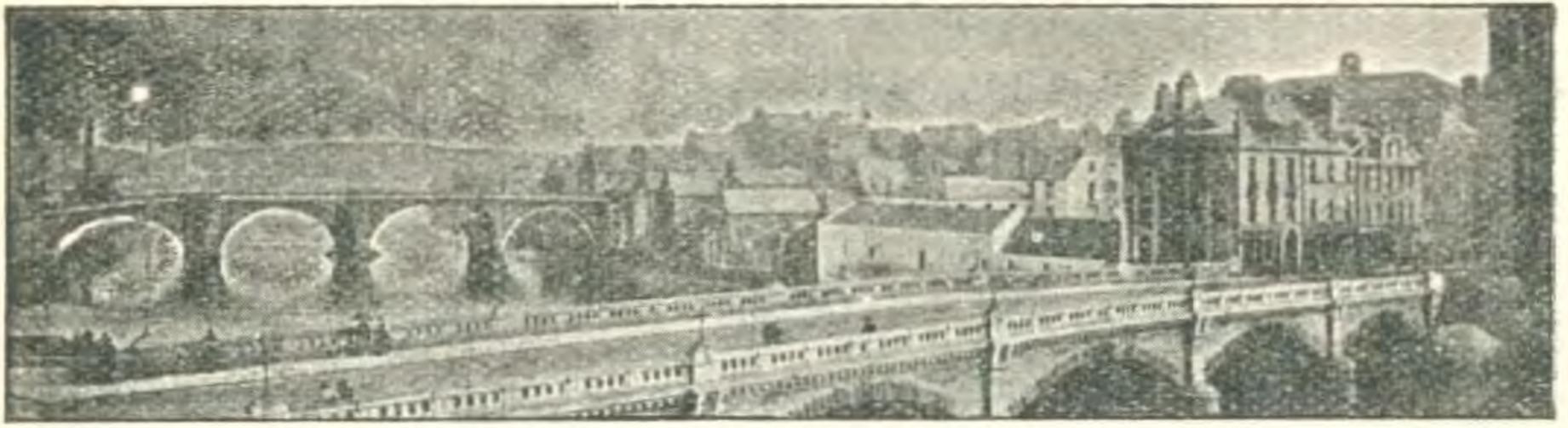
speak, and now he had come to ask, "What must I do to be saved?" And to this great question—by far the most important a true Gopeller ever hears—he was glad to be able to say, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts xvi. 31). Mosheu and his people stayed some time and listened very attentively to the Gospel, and when he left he begged Moffat to visit his village. That visit was a memorable one. Over five

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hundred natives came out to meet the waggon, and not till midnight would they desist from pressing forward to shake his hand. Early next morning, before the wearied missionary had risen, he heard their voices, and such was the eagerness of Mosheu and his people to hear of Jesus, that for a full hour before he had breakfast he spoke from that grand old text, John iii. 16, "For God so loved the world," etc., which for the very first time echoed through the village from the lips of the tall Scotchman, whose face beamed with the joy that filled his own heart.

A brief visit to England, then back to Kuruman, where he was joined by David Livingstone, who married his eldest daughter, and soon after left to settle in Sechele's country. We cannot pursue the course of this great explorer at present, further than to say, he pushed his way into places where no white man had ever dared to go, and was used to break the chains of slavery from thousands. Although a younger man than Moffat, he was called home from Africa to heaven before him.



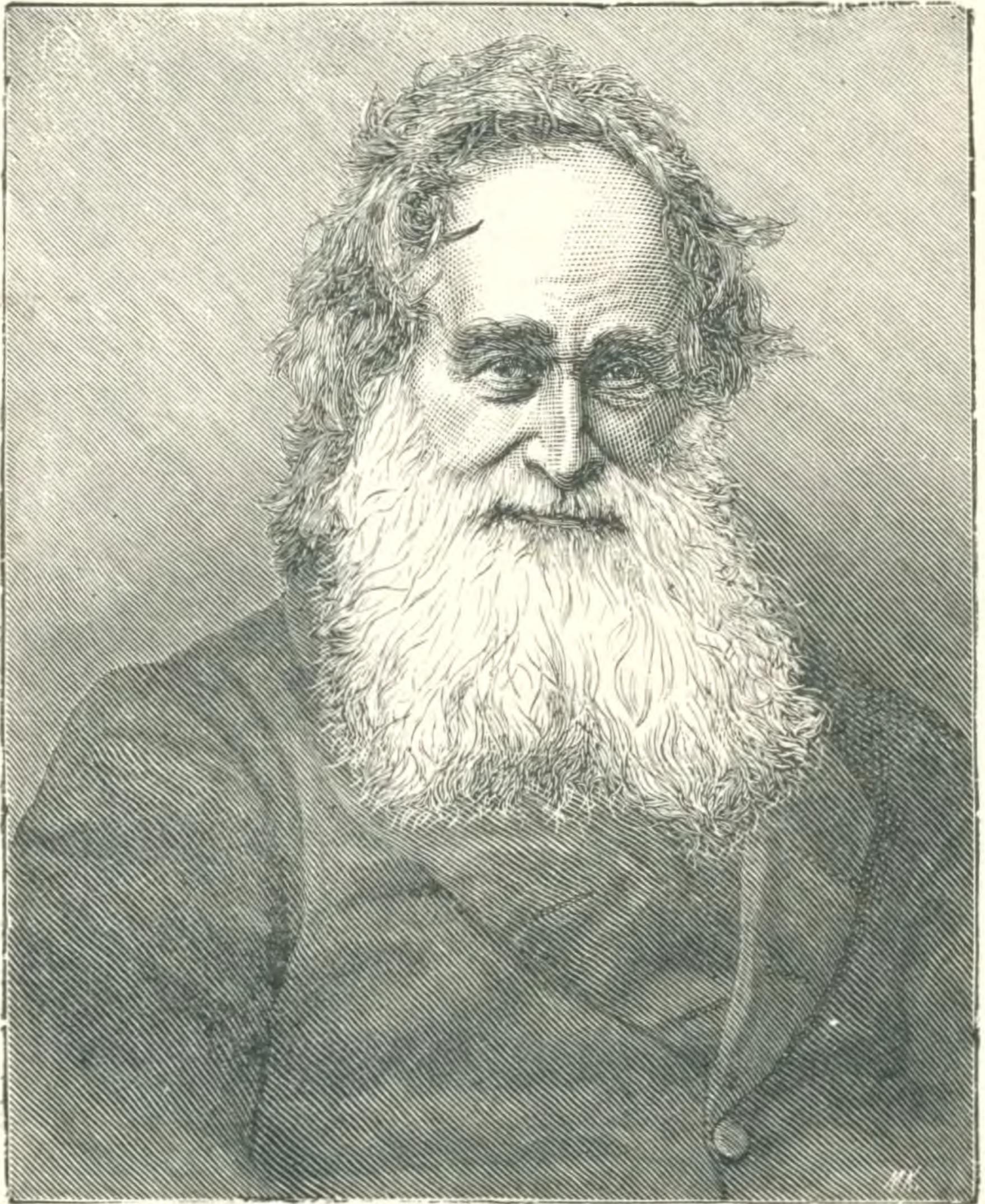


“Life’s Evening and Rest with Christ.”

ROBERT and MARY MOFFAT were no longer young and active. Over fifty years of hard work began to tell on the brave missionary. Family sorrows, too, weighed heavily upon the aged couple. Their eldest son Robert had died, and Mary, the wife of Dr. Livingstone, had also passed to her rest above. Bessie and Ann were both married, Jane alone was left with them. On Sunday, 20th March, 1870, Robert Moffat preached for the last time at Kuruman, then bade farewell to the old spot where so many years had been spent, and to the people for whom his life had been given. They flocked around the waggon with the tears streaming down their cheeks, and as the wheels began to move, a long, loud cry went up from the weeping crowd, which the aged couple answered with their tears. They reached England on 24th July, 1870, and ere the year had closed, Mrs.

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Moffat was with Christ in heaven. The aged missionary visited many parts of the country, seeking to stir up interest



ROBERT MOFFAT.

among God's people in Africa. He visited Carronshore

The Story of Robert Moffat.

sixty-three years after leaving it, and found the red-tiled cottage in which his boyhood was spent. Some of the old people still lived who knew him, and one who had been a schoolmate would not be satisfied till he heard the aged missionary speak to the crowd which had gathered round



MARY MOFFAT.

the door. Visits to the Queen at Osborne, to Cetewayo the Zulu king who was then in England, and to Muller's Orphan Homes at Bristol closed the public life of the veteran missionary. With his daughter Jeanie seated by

Peeps at South Africa.

his side, on a quiet Sunday evening, they sang his favourite hymn, one verse especially of which was dear to him—

“ I’ve wrestled on towards heaven
’Gainst storm, and wind, and tide :
Now like a weary traveller,
That leaneth on his guide :
Amid the shades of evening,
While sinks life’s lingering sand,
I hail the glory dawning
From Immanuel’s land.”

On the following Tuesday evening, the 10th of August, 1883, the home-call came, and the ransomed spirit of Robert Moffat passed into the presence of Christ, who saved him when a youth, and whom he had loved and served even unto old age. Happy, thrice happy is such a life: *in* Christ at conversion, *for* Christ all the years of service, and *with* Christ for ever and ever.

