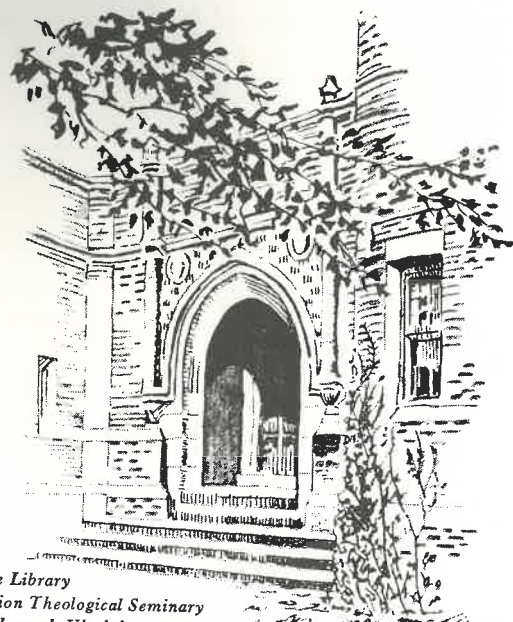


The Great Ngee

The Story of a
Jungle Doctor



by Lois Johnson McNeill

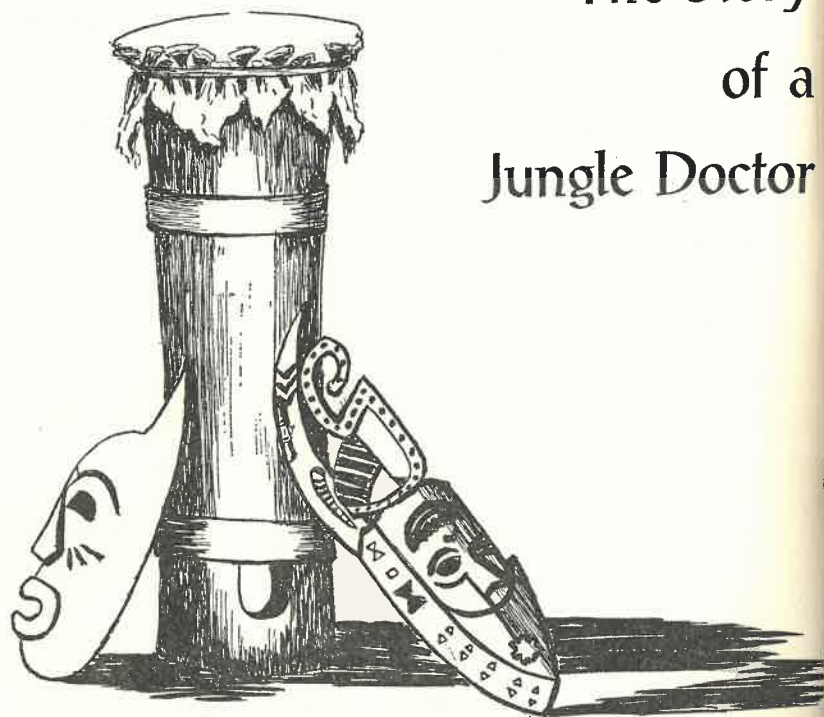


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The Great Ngee

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The Story
of a
Jungle Doctor



by Lois Johnson McNeill

With Original Illustrations by the Author

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Dedicated to
THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CAMEROUN

and to the memory of my parents
SILAS AND MARY JOHNSON
and my sister
MARY JOHNSON NEWHOUSE

*In Cameroun they planted and watered
"but God gave the increase."*

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Gift of Mrs. Hest. Soc., Philadelphia

The author wishes to express to friends, family, and fellow-missionaries her deep appreciation of their help and encouragement in the preparation of the material for this book, and to acknowledge her great debt of gratitude to Miss Neeta Marquis for her counsel and guidance without which the book would never have reached completion.

Foreword

Large modern cities with their busy commerce, skyscrapers and worldly wise people are not Africa; they are simply copies of what exists everywhere in today's world. To find the real Africa one must continue along the paved road until the macadam turns to dirt, until the jungle says thus far and no further. Then he must start to walk in the coolness of the moist forest shadows to the nearest man made clearing. He will find village life on the surface not too different from what it was when Dr. Silas Johnson knew it: three stones holding a pot and two logs of dry wood placed end to end still make a kitchen; the same low raffia palm beds are there and the rack of smoked meat and dried fish over the fire. The great change is in the minds of the people. Spirits no longer haunt the forest gloom. Fetishes and the witch-doctor have lost their power. When disease strikes a child or a man the villagers are no longer paralyzed by resigned acquiescence to evil and sickness. They know about microbes and rush to the nearest doctor for injections and life giving drugs.

Dr. Silas and the other pioneers like him created an insatiable hunger in Africa for a new day; but even in their most wildly optimistic dreams about the future they could never have foreseen what has already taken place. Some of the very youngsters that Dr. Silas loved to wrestle with, in whose lives he planted the seeds of independence, self-government and democracy, are now wrestling with the problems of government as mayors and

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city council members. This year a new church was dedicated on the very spot where a villager was eaten by enemy tribesmen in what was then a mission outpost planted deep in the jungle by Dr. Silas. A man spoke at the dedication service who had been a delegate to the first All Africa Christian Conference, held in Nigeria in January, 1958. He represented the independent Presbyterian Church in Cameroun, a Church of 100 pastors and 200,000 adherents. In December, 1957 the West Africa Mission, which Dr. Silas helped to establish, was merged into the Church and no longer exists as a separate entity. The Presbyterian Church in Cameroun has taken upon itself the responsibilities borne for so long by the Mission, and hand in hand with Christian brothers of other races, including 123 United Presbyterian U.S.A. missionaries, carries the Good News of Jesus Christ to those who are still waiting.

No one living today is better able to tell the story of Dr. Silas Johnson than his daughter, Lois Johnson McNeill. She herself has given her life and talents to this same part of Africa in selfless service. She too has seen the soul of Africa emerge from darkness into the uncertain light of dawn and into the fullness of the noonday sun, as Truth has been revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Rev. L. K. Anderson.

The Rev. L. K. Anderson, Ph.D. was a missionary in Cameroun from 1926 to 1939 when he was appointed Secretary for Africa and Latin America of the Board of Foreign Missions of the former Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. In 1950 he returned to Cameroun as the Board's field representative for Africa. He is in the U.S.A. now on a special assignment. In 1952 he wrote "Bridge to Africa," a popular mission study book.

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Prelude

Deep in the African jungle that sprawls along the continent's western shore some three degrees north of the equator, a weary caravan of four Americans and twenty-five carriers had set up camp and was resting in a small, rain-soaked native village. The day was Sunday, the eleventh of November, 1894.

Through a blue rent in the heavy clouds, a shaft of sunlight streamed down on the wet thatched roofs, and daubed with bronze the glistening bodies of a score of curious villagers who were crowding around the central hut, into which the white men had betaken themselves. Pushing, shoving, and craning their brass-collared necks, the villagers peered through the diminutive opening that served as a doorway in the low bark wall which hid the strangers.

"What are they doing now?" queried a brawny youth, trying in vain to squeeze his shell-coifed head in at the door.

The woman beside him shook her twenty pounds of beads in exasperation. "How do I know?" she screamed in his ear. "Can I see through your big head?"

A bright-eyed boy squatting on the ground, where he could look out between many bare knees, squealed in sudden ecstasy.

"O my mother! He is combing his hair! He is. . . ."

The boy stopped transfixed, and the crowd scattered as one of the white men carefully lowered his head through the door that was scarcely four feet high, bent one knee double like a jackknife until it touched his chin, and slowly manoeuvred his

long legs over the high sill into the street. He was followed in like manner by another, and another, until all four men were standing in full view, to the unrestrained delight of their beholders.

"Might as well give them a treat," said the tall, gaunt one laconically. "We're much too beautiful to be kept under cover."

"Personally, I can stand being looked at by humans after two days of sloshing through muggy swamps and swollen streams without meeting a mortal soul," remarked the blond one.

Then a sudden flurry swept over the gaping villagers. All the feminine bustles began swishing and disappearing into a dozen doorways, which were hastily barred behind them with stiff hides and strips of bark.

"Now what are they up to?" speculated the ruddy-faced one with the incredibly blue eyes.

He and his companions were still puzzling over the exodus when the hushed air was split by a blood-chilling yell—a roar, the like of which none had ever heard before from throat of man or beast. Frozen momentarily, they stared into the forest in the direction of the sound. What—who—had made it?

Instantly the village chief and several other men came toward them on the run. "Into the house—quick!" they shouted, their black eyes bulging. "All of you—hurry! Get inside—hide before he gets here! Nnôm Ngee (the witch doctor) is coming—oh, you will surely die!"

One of the four understood the Bulu words.

"Then why don't *you* run?" he asked reasonably.

"No! No!" shouted the chief. "Only the women and children must go—and you white men, too. Quick! Oh, don't look! You will bring calamity on us all!"

But the stubborn strangers, rooted to the spot by their curiosity, remained unmoving till the chief fairly exploded with frustration. "Go! Go!" he screamed.

At that moment a silence filled with evil omen fell on the

scene. Before all eyes the leafy curtain of the jungle was ripped apart, and a terrifying creature burst forth—a grotesque figure of jerking feathers, thin flapping tails, and hideously painted body topped by an oversized mask of carved wood. Whirling and prancing in a frenzy of motion, the figure advanced into the muddy clearing, still roaring and brandishing two murderous-looking knives. On either side of him ran an escort of demons apparently split in two from top to toe, one half of their bodies being caked with white clay, the other left in its natural mahogany hue. Clutching human skulls and shin bones in their outstretched hands, these two gyrated through the street toward one of the wide-eaved huts beside which the white men saw the form of an emaciated boy lying, with large sores visible on his swollen legs.

Whizz! A stick flew out and hit the sick boy on the ankle. Then Nnôm Ngee threw his knives and howled. A knife grazed the foot of one of the dancers, drawing blood. His partner stooped and rubbed the wound vigorously with one of the dirty bones. More sticks flew toward the boy, who moaned and tried to crawl away.

The witch doctor continued his antic performance, yelling and contorting every section of his anatomy, until satisfied that the evil spell had been broken; then he left his victim moaning on the ground and came close to the white men, who had taken in every phase of the exhibition. Halting in front of the ruddy one, who looked the most stubbornly unimpressed, he brandished the barbarous blades ferociously in his face, but still failed to make him flinch. With a final roar he then shook his head feathers violently, swirled his leopard tails, and disappeared again into the jungle, with his retinue trailing after him.

The ruddy young American, who happened to be a graduate physician, stood thoughtfully listening, as the unearthly din grew fainter with distance. A twinkle came into the bright blue

The Great Ngee

eyes that indicated trouble ahead for the magic-maker, for Dr. Silas F. Johnson was a born mimic.

"Some day," he promised himself inwardly, "I'll let out a roar like that myself."

And that is exactly what he did. This is the story of how he did it: how he tracked innumerable Ngees to their lairs, uncovering their deceit and trickery; how he brought help to women trembling in their ignorance and fear; and how he healed lame children lying helpless in pain. In short, it covers the forty years during which this Christian physician loved and healed, taught and served the people of the Cameroun who were just emerging from pagan darkness and who to this day account him a superlative doctor, preacher, linguist, translator, teacher, explorer, and pioneer: the man whose practical medium of service was medicine, but for whom preaching the good news of God was the supreme passion, and who is still referred to affectionately by the inhabitants of the vast tropical forests of French Equatorial Africa as the *Great Ngee*.



DR. SILAS



1. Through Years of Preparation

Silas Franklin Johnson was born on a farm near Deep River, Iowa, on December 22, 1865. Calvinism was in his blood. His father, Ithiel Johnson, was for forty years a church elder, and the uncle for whom Silas was named was pastor of the Presbyterian church of Indianola, Iowa.

When Silas was six years old his mother died of tuberculosis, after a lingering illness that slowly consumed the family's scant savings of many years. She left three young sons. The father lived for two years with his three sisters, then he married his wife's cousin and re-established his home on the farm, where four more children were born; two of whom died within a single year.

In 1878 the family joined teams with a neighbor and drove to Axtell, Kansas. Failing to find a house in this little town, which boasted only a few buildings, they lived first in a tent, then in a new barn. Later, by dint of much hard labor they made a down payment on forty acres of land, and there built a diminutive house measuring fourteen by sixteen feet.

"It was a log house," Silas Johnson wrote later in a brief sketch of his early life, "with two rooms and a kitchen, and an attic where we four boys slept. We were very poor, but we never really suffered. As we had cows, we lived largely on milk,

The Great Ngee

mush, cornbread, hominy, and vegetables from our garden he was twenty-four, he took a most important step. He left buying as little outside as possible. Father had a horror of debt home and went west to Denver, where he found a job in the and instilled it into us boys. To this day I have never bought grocery business. anything and charged it."

Nearly all the land west of Axtell was prairie, and there the boys worked hard from spring until fall, herding cattle. "During his sister-in-law upon his graduation from medical college: "I hot days we used to go swimming in the buffalo wallows as presume George has forgotten the day in Axtell when he told many times a day as we wished," Silas recorded. "Rattlesnake me he thought it would be a good thing for me to go as a medi- were very plentiful. Sometimes I would kill several a day with cal missionary to some foreign field. Well, I have never forgot- my cattle whip."

In the years that followed, the boys rented land to farm God spoke to me through George, and then opened the way for me." Silas learned carpentry from his father and helped him with building, though for a few months each winter he and his brother George went to the little country school. All the experience of those rugged years was to contribute to the later success of his life in Africa. The strong physique built up on the farm proved able to withstand repeated attacks of malaria in the jungle and in the dank lowlands along the Gaboon and the Nlong Rivers. Wherever he was stationed he would make a garden and plant fruit trees which are still bearing. He was the first to encourage the planting of cocoa, of which there are thousands of plantations today. His interest in livestock, poultry, and agriculture led him to many experiments, which resulted in improved living for the Africans as well as for the missionaries, while his experience in bookkeeping served to lighten what was for him a heavy burden, the task of serving as station treasurer.

This asset was one he acquired at a business college in St. Joseph, Missouri, when he was twenty-one years of age.

"I finished the course—all but the banking—in six weeks," Silas wrote, "but could not afford to stay in the city several more weeks in order to graduate."

This brief training opened up several successive jobs as cashier, bookkeeper, and general office man, until, in 1889, when

Through Years of Preparation

he was twenty-four, he took a most important step. He left home and went west to Denver, where he found a job in the grocery business.

At just what point the young grocery clerk made his decision to study medicine, we can only surmise from a letter written to his sister-in-law upon his graduation from medical college: "I presume George has forgotten the day in Axtell when he told me he thought it would be a good thing for me to go as a medical missionary to some foreign field. Well, I have never forgotten it, but sometimes it seemed as though I could never do it. God spoke to me through George, and then opened the way for me."

So it was that seed sown in his boy-heart came to fruition in 1891. His diary is terse. It reads: "Left Denver at 7:45 P.M. on the Midland Railway for Los Angeles. Arrived at 7:30 A.M. on April 18th. I did not know a person in all California, but I went to the YMCA and got a list of boarding houses and found lodging."

The boy from a Kansas farm was on his way at last to a career. Three months later he entered the College of Medicine of what later became the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. During his entire course he remained in the offices of the established medical firm of Drs. Bicknell and Moore, who were two of the finest physicians in Los Angeles. They shared their large practice with him and let him assist in their operations, which, of course, gave him priceless opportunities to advance his skill.

At last came the time for the final testing of his medical knowledge, and he pridefully recorded the result: "I have finished my exams and am glad to lay aside my books for a little while. I led the class during the three years with ease, and the examinations were a picnic for me. I am feeling tip-top."

At the end of his medical course Silas Johnson summed up his financial status as follows: "I had but fifteen dollars when I

started, and paid ten dollars of it for my matriculation fee. When I graduated I had two hundred dollars after having paid all my expenses. God has certainly guided me to this place and put me through college, and I am convinced that He did it for a purpose. I hope to prove myself worthy of His discipline."

Just what he conceived that "purpose" to be was soon evident. On June 1, his graduation day, he stood with his class in the Grand Opera House. Dr. Bicknell presented him with an ornate stetrical instrument case, and asked him to remain with the firm, but to his amazement, and even chagrin, Dr. Silas declined.

"I had already decided to go to Africa," the diary states simply.

Just when God had made clear His call to Silas is not known. But in March he had written to the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions asking for information regarding the need of medical men on the mission field, saying he had had the desire "off and on for twelve years."

Throughout the time that he was studying at the University of Los Angeles. Silas loved youth, and youth loved Silas. He had gathered a group of boys around him for a Sunday school class in Denver, and he did this again in the West Coast city. Here also he dedicated his Sunday afternoons to the Junior Christian Endeavor Society of the church.

Also interested in the latter organization and sharing in the directing of its activities was a quiet young schoolteacher with soft brown eyes and prepossessing smile, who was destined to go far in shaping the future life of the young medical student. She was Mary Louise Hays, the only daughter in a family which had begun to move westward in 1870 from Macomb, Illinois, where Mary was born in 1869, and which had finally settled in Los Angeles in 1883.

2. Appointment to Kamerun

The Board of Foreign Missions had replied to Silas Johnson's inquiry, presenting the needs of Turkey and of Africa, and enclosing a letter from the Rev. Adolphus C. Good of the Gaboon Mission in West Africa. Dr. Good was the intrepid pioneer who, in the years 1892 and 1893 penetrated the jungles of Southern Kamerun and undertook exhaustive journeys of exploration hundreds of miles into the interior. Since the scenes of this story are to be laid in Kamerun, a brief outline of the history of West Equatorial Africa will help clarify the situation in that territory as it was at the beginning of this new missionary venture.

The coastline of Kamerun was first visited in the year 1472 by Portuguese navigators who gave it the name "*Camaroes*" meaning Prawns, which were found in abundance at the river mouth. The Portuguese explorer, Fernando Poo, discovered also the island off the coast which he named "*Formoso*," or Beautiful.

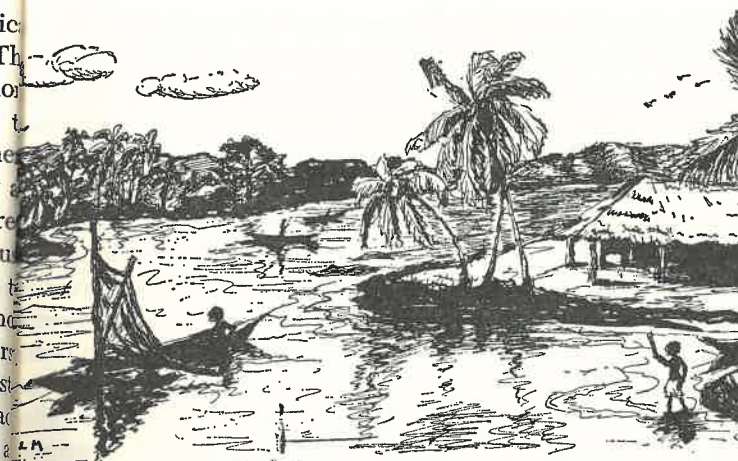
For nearly four hundred years scant attention was paid to this coast by European powers, aside from occasional voyages of explorers and trading companies—notably the British, Dutch, French, Portuguese, Spanish, and German. Small trading posts—lone sentries on the fringe of the shore—appeared here and there, but one by one the lonely traders sickened and died. In the eighteenth century the slave trade made the coast the scene of great and revolting activity. The sight of the cruel faces of the slaves was for many thousands of Africans their first glimpse of a white man.

In 1710 the Portuguese, in the treaty of *El Pardo*, gave to the

Spaniards in exchange for Santa Catalina, in South America the Island of Formoso (later renamed Fernando Poo). The Spaniards made one attempt to colonize the new possession but it ended in disaster so great that they were happy to abandon the island to the British, who made it their commercial headquarters. A British consul who was allowed to act as temporary governor permitted a Baptist missionary, Mr. Alfred Saker, to establish a mission station on Fernando Poo. Just when this work was well under way, the Spanish decided to take over the administration of their territories. Governor Chacon was sent in 1858 to replace the British consul. The first act of the new governor was to import Roman Catholic priests and to expel all Protestants from the island. Alfred Saker accordingly withdrew to the mainland and settled his mission at the foot of beautiful Mount Kamerun on the shores of Amba Bay. The site was given the name of Victoria, and remains to this day one of the most beautiful on the West Coast.

Meanwhile, the Presbyterians also had begun a Mission in West Africa. They started their work in Liberia, the settlement for freed slaves established by the United States in 1820. The losses in personnel sustained by the Mission were terrific. Since the Methodists and the Episcopalians were also at work in the area, the Presbyterians, in 1850, began searching for a more suitable place for their efforts. A party of three landed in the year on the picturesque shores of a small Spanish island called Corisco, just north of the equator and fifteen miles off the mouth of the Muni River. In spite of continued loss of personnel through the ravages of malaria, black water fever, and dysentery, the work spread to the mainland. In 1864 the first mission station was established on the coast, and the Benito church was organized in 1865.

The activity of the Benito and Corisco churches quickly spread northward, reaching and crossing the Campo River which was the boundary of Southern Kamerun. At Batanga



seventy-five miles north of Benito, a young man sent by the Benito church began a work among the Bano'o tribe. A church was organized there in 1879, with missionaries assigned to the new station in 1889.

It was at this juncture that Adolphus C. Good was sent to investigate the possibility of entering the high hills behind Batanga and establishing a work in the interior. The Kamerun was at that time a German protectorate. It had come about in this way: German and British traders and merchants had for years been operating along the banks of the eight-fingered estuary of the Wuri River, and explorations had been made into the mountainous country behind the coast. In 1882 the natives of the Douala tribe at the coast petitioned the British government to establish a protectorate over them. Simultaneously a German explorer, Dr. Nachtigal, was sent out from Germany, ostensibly to protect the German trade in the territory. Upon his arrival he hoisted the German flag and proclaimed Kamerun a German protectorate. The British arrived just too late,

The Great Ngee

their consul being even then on his way to confer with the chiefs and to comply with their request.

So it was that in 1885 the Germans established their claim to all of Kamerun except Victoria and Ambas Bay, which the ceded to the British.

At the time that the Presbyterian Mission made its first move toward the interior of Kamerun, its personnel was operating in three territories: the Gaboon Mission in French Congo, the Corisco Mission in Spanish Guinea—and now this new venture inland from Batanga in the newly proclaimed German protectorate. For forty years the West Africa Mission had been trying to penetrate the interior in order to reach the many tribes living in the dense forests that covered the mountain ranges called the Sierra del Crystal, paralleling the west coast of Equatorial Africa. In Spanish Guinea, as early as 1860, attempts had been made to follow the waterways of Rio Muni and Rio Benite, the missionaries being among the first to explore these rivers. No feasible way was found, however, to enter the forest by way of these unnavigable rivers. Nor had the attempts up the Gaboon River been rewarding except along the river banks. Furthermore, the Mission was hampered in both of these territories by the regulations and language requirements of the foreign governments in control. It was thought that better success might be met with in the territory to the north of Spanish Guinea, where the opposition stemming from Roman Catholic governments might not exist.

Dr. Good's journeys into this new and unknown region were therefore, of vast significance. The extensive region he explored was peopled by the Bulu tribe, and one language only was spoken—an important advantage in the founding of a Mission. The people seemed more curious than hostile, and Dr. Good went unarmed and unharmed through their midst.

The site he had decided upon for the first inland station was on a high hill seventy miles from the sea, at the foot of which

Appointment to Kamerun

there was a large village. Upon Dr. Good's recommendation, the Mission assigned three men to open the station and on July 22, 1893, the trio reached the site. A small clearing, large enough for a tent, had been made and the men began a most primitive life, which resulted almost at once in one of the party contracting typhoid fever. Dr. Good realized the project was doomed unless provision was made for the medical care of the personnel engaged in it.

"The work cannot go on without a doctor," he wrote to the Board, and as Dr. Silas read the plea he felt the finger of God laid on him. Years later he wrote of this call and his decision to a group of California young people: "Some of you are fighting this battle. . . . I went through it all, and I thank God He did not let me have peace until late one night, after a long struggle in prayer, I dropped my application papers to the Board of Foreign Missions into the mailbox."

One week later Dr. Silas took another momentous step: he unfolded his heart to Mary Hays and asked her to share with him the challenge of adventuring for God in Africa. Whether or not his decision to become a medical missionary came as a surprise to Mary we cannot know, but on her application blank she wrote: "I have long had an interest in missions through a friend in Brazil, but had no real desire to go until a week ago." In answer to the question, "Do you sleep well?" she wrote, "Have had some difficulty—with reason—the last few days!"

It is recorded in Silas' diary that Mary took two days to think it over and to await her parents' consent. Indeed there was much to consider. In New York City, wiser heads than Mary's had already conferred on the matter and had arrived at a negative conclusion. Dr. Silas had sent to the Board the following telegram: "Letter of appointment just received. I shall take a wife. Telegraph whether satisfactory." The Board had replied, "Accommodations for a wife in Africa very doubtful."

The area which the Mission was entering was marked on

their map "unexplored." Dr. Good's journeys had been a plunge into the jungle where there were no paths—only a tangled trail that led through river beds and swamps. Furthermore, Dr. Good's plea to the Board had been for *men*.

"Men, not women," he wrote. "Only strong, practical, resolute, devoted men are equal to this bold enterprise. In this advance guard a woman would be simply an encumbrance." So ran his argument, and the Board was convinced.

Dr. Silas was not convinced, however. Since three men had already gone in and chosen the site, it was time now, he said, for a woman to follow. At his insistence the Board finally gave in. Perhaps some Board member smilingly referred to the doctor's application paper where, in answer to the question, "Are you able to abide by the decision of the majority?" he had written honestly, "I believe I am inclined to be hard to move from my purposes, but under ordinary conditions, yes."

Obviously this matter of a wife was not an "ordinary condition." Mary was appointed August 13, 1894. The sailing date was set for September 19.

For three weeks the appointment of the two remained a secret, but an announcement appearing in *Women's Work for Women* heralded the news abroad. Mary announced her engagement to her friends, while Silas saw another young doctor take his place in Dr. Bicknell's office. One by one their ties were cut, and there was no looking back. The door swung shut on the promising career of Silas Johnson as Dr. Bicknell's young associate, while another door opened for his service as the *Great Ngee* among the primitive tribes of the Kamerun jungle.

3. Fool's Choice

To appreciate just what this step in the dark must have meant to Mary, one must realize neither she nor Dr. Silas had ever so much as seen a member of the Corisco and Gaboon Mission. There was nothing to be read on that part of Africa, Dr. Good's account of his explorations being the only article available to give any idea of what lay before them. The terrible uncertainty of the future made all the more keen for Mary the pain of separation from her parents. Between her and her mother existed that close bond of love peculiar between mothers and only daughters. And yet, on that third day after the doctor's declaration of his love, when Mary put her slender hand in Silas' strong one and consented to take the step into the dark with him, they were both thrillingly aware that the hand of the Master was upon them for good.

Days of strenuous preparation followed, with the strain of impending separation from friends and loved ones increased by the vehement opposition of those who frankly called the doctor a fool to give up such a brilliant local opportunity as he had been offered. How could a man of his sense be so blind? They did not know he had also declined an internship in the Women's Hospital in San Francisco. Dr. Bicknell himself was undisguisedly disappointed and "put out."

But brother George took it sensibly. To him Silas had written: "I presume you have heard before this time that I am going as a medical missionary. It is hard to leave all of you, especially father at this time of his life, but you remember our Christian Endeavor pledge 'I will strive to do whatever He would like to have me do.' I believe it is His call; and I must go. I know you will be glad."

The Great Ngee

In a letter to George's wife he unburdened his heart more fully of the grief he felt in leaving his father, "the best, bravest, and truest man under all circumstances that I have ever met." To this he added, "I could never look into his face without a blush of shame if I hesitated for a moment in answering the call of my Master to go to one of His outposts. You speak of it as a noble sacrifice. It is only honesty on my part to correct the statement. It would be a sacrifice to be unable to go and to have to give it up. But nothing could keep me when the Master calls."

How true these words were to be through all of Dr. Silas' later life his family and fellow missionaries can testify.

Dr. Silas, however, was not unaware of the great pain of impending separation that burdened the hearts of Mary's parents. Regarding this he wrote of "the great probability of her not seeing them again this side of heaven, but we will see them there, and it may not be long."

Today this sounds rather lugubrious, but in that day the truth of it was appallingly apparent. Africa was far, far away before the advent of planes and radios, and what little was known of it was mostly bad. Deaths on the mission field averaged one every few months. Of the four missionaries first assigned to the Corisco Mission, one, Mrs. James Mackey, died before reaching the island, and two, the Rev. G. W. Simpson and Mrs. Simpson, were drowned in a little vessel during a tornado within the year. The Rev. George Paull, the first to be assigned to live on the mainland, died three months after establishing himself in a little native hut near the mouth of the Benito River. When the Mission moved northward to Batanga on the seacoast, and established a beachhead there in 1883, Mr. B. B. Brier quickly succumbed to the dread malignant fever. Little wonder, indeed, that Dr. Good called for *men*!

On August 24 a gay reception, tinged with the sadness of farewell, was held in the old First Church. Letters were read

Fool's Choice

which must have been hard to listen to. This one was inscribed on a large scroll and read by the pastor:

Dear friends: It is no easy task to voice, in any words that will adequately express them, our appreciation of your work among us, our warm affection, and our sense of personal loss in your departure. Your devotion to our Lord and to the humanity for whose redemption He offered His own life, is no new revelation to us. We have felt it all along, as you have laid hold with willing and consecrated hands on the service that was set before you; the quiet earnestness and deep spiritual purpose of your life. And as you pass out into the great field to gather the Master's sheaves in far-off Africa, you leave with us seeds of precious sowing, whose harvest shall be blessed indeed.

And now, with a great yearning cry to the God and Father of us all, that He may be mindful of His own and hide you in the secret of His presence, we bid you, with all that the sweet old word signifies, Good-bye! Good-bye!

And as you go, we would have you take with you not only this word of farewell, but also the more tangible expression of sincere friendship "In His name," and we would request that this money be used on the field in the way that seems wisest to you after acquaintance with its needs.

The gift was a purse of \$275.

These public good-byes were a strain on both Dr. Silas and Mary. When similar tributes were spoken from the pulpit on one of the last Sundays, the doctor, well screened in the choir loft from view, could not restrain his emotion. What Mary felt can be well imagined. Of her parents the doctor wrote:

This is an awful trial for them, but they have faith in God, and a little in me as His servant. We expect to be married the day we are to leave, and it will be at home, with only the family present. We do not want a church wedding, even though the church would be crowded with warm friends. Mrs. Hays has about all she can stand in giving up her only daughter to go to Africa, without the ordeal of a church wedding.

And so, with brother Edwin home from seminary for the occasion (Mary's brother Will had joined the gold rush in Alaska), they were quietly married at nine-thirty on the morning of August 28, 1894. The Rev. Burt Estes Howard, then pastor of the First Church, in which these two remained members, performed the ceremony, the brown-eyed bride looking very sweet in a going-away suit with ruffled satin revers and a touch of lace at the throat. At nine o'clock that evening the bride and groom boarded the train for the first lap of their long journey eastward. About seventy of their best friends assembled at the depot, where they had decorated the bridal compartment with armloads of flowers. As the conductor shouted, "All aboard" and the train started on its way, the group sang Dr. Silas' favorite hymn, "I'll go where you want me to go, dear Lord." There were tears in the eyes of many as they through the noise of the engine and the grinding of wheels sounded the strains of "God Be With You Till We Meet Again."

It was a leave-taking none would ever forget. More than fifty-five years later one of the friends wrote of it: "As the train pulled out we had an all-gone feeling, as if the ground had opened and swallowed them up."

An hour later, while the train hurtled through the darkness, the passengers who had witnessed the good-byes heard suppressed laughter issuing from behind the buttoned-up green curtains of the bridal compartment. In the flurry of packing Dr. Silas had failed to put in his pajamas. The bride stifled her giggles while the groom struggled to thrust his curly head through the ruffles of a long-sleeved nightgown.

4. Death at the Threshold

Sight-seeing in bustling New York was an exciting adventure for the two Westerners. In the Presbyterian Board rooms they met three other new recruits—among them another bride—who bride and groom boarded the train for the first lap of their long journey eastward. About seventy of their best friends assembled at the depot, where they had decorated the bridal compartment with armloads of flowers. As the conductor shouted, "All aboard" and the train started on its way, the group sang Dr. Silas' favorite hymn, "I'll go where you want me to go, dear Lord." There were tears in the eyes of many as they through the noise of the engine and the grinding of wheels sounded the strains of "God Be With You Till We Meet Again."

The *SS New York* pulled away from the docks in a torrential downpour that blotted out "The Lady of the Harbor" and all the shore. Before sailing, the doctor had ordered two wide leather belts made for himself and Mary, to be fastened as tightly as they could stand. Then, if they felt "squeamish," they were to hitch them up another notch. These belts proved ineffectual, but were dutifully kept on day and night, even when both Mary and Dr. Silas became violently ill, and "crawled out of their clothes much as a snake crawls out of its skin—that is, lying down." The doctor continued to believe in the belt principle. It proved more effective years later. Riding the rocky trails of Africa on a motorcycle, he almost always wore an eight-inch wide leather belt holding his stomach taut against the joltings of the path.

By the fourth day out all the party felt better and were able to dash up on deck to see a wrecked vessel from which the captain failed to receive a signal. As he ran up close, he found her

drifting, the crew having abandoned her. She looked desolate indeed, and doubtless gave the voyagers pause as they considered the long way yet before them. On Sunday the party held a service among the steerage passengers, of which the doctor made note: "They seemed glad to hear (our message) and looked as if they had not heard it very often."

Seven days after leaving New York the ship arrived at Southampton, and the missionary party went straightway to London. Here they had their first contact with a missionary from Africa, in the person of a little white-haired lady, Mrs. Thomas Ogden, who was now on her way back to America. In 1858 she and her husband had gone to Corisco Island, off the Rio Muni coast, but after three years Mr. Ogden had died breathing a prayer for "someone to go to the mainland." His wife went home then, but after twenty years returned to the field. She now declared she could not be hired to leave her work in Africa, except for a short vacation. The sight of her cheerily waving good-bye as the new missionaries' steamer, the *Gaboon*, pulled away from Liverpool, gave them hope that they too might some day sail for America again.

Ten other passengers had embarked on the small flat-bottomed boat. Two days out a terrific storm struck the little *Gaboon*, making it toss about like a chip. The doctor and Mary succumbed simultaneously. Mary, lying still in the lower bunk, grew violently ill, while Dr. Silas tried to get down from the upper bunk and into the passage for help. His account reads

Screwing up my courage, I bounced out and grabbed my pants, but could not keep my balance with the *Gaboon* pitching so. After several attempts I got one leg of my pants on, and suddenly made for the basin. After communing with it for a season, during which it seemed to be trying to say "Europe" and not succeeding very well, I took one last look and sank back onto the sofa. I managed to get one leg clear, with the other badly tangled up, when I floundered back to the basin again.

This agony kept up till at length the stewardess, herself sick for the second time in seventeen years at sea, came to their rescue.

The humorous tenor of the doctor's account was characteristic of him. No matter how dismal or disastrous the predicament in which he found himself, he could always see a spark of the amusing and fan it into a joke. But although he crossed the Atlantic some eighteen times, he never became immune to seasickness and his dread of it.

The voyage lasted four weeks. No one grieved when it drew to its close. The little party gathered on the deck for their first glimpse of Victoria, and thrilled with the sight, gazing out over shining green water to majestic Mt. Kamerun, whose lofty peak pierced a froth of foamy cloud. Suddenly someone spotted a cutter making for their ship. As it drew nearer, all saw with excitement that it flew an American flag.

"We Americans fairly yelled!" runs Dr. Silas' note. "It was the first American flag we had seen since New York, and we would have yelled or burst!"

The vessel was the mission cutter, *Nassau*, whose commander, Captain Peter Menkel, came aboard with letters and news from Batanga, far to the south. He, too, looked well, even after twenty-one years on the coast. "But, of course," Dr. Silas makes haste to add, lest optimism get the upper hand, "it is much healthier being on the sea half the time."

Peter Menkel's diary, written in the form of a log, and water-stained from many stormy voyages in the Bight of Biafra on mission business, inclines the reader to a different view. The log reeks of rhubarb and calomel, taken repeatedly after chills and fever and dysentery brought on from long exposure and heavy drenchings in tropical storms, or during torpid hours lying at anchor, becalmed beneath the equatorial sun.

Three days later, on October 30, 1894, the American voyagers were one hundred miles farther down the coast and anchored

off the forest-fringed shore of Batanga, which was the goal of their long journey. In the pale gold light of dawn they could see a few white rambling houses beyond the long strip of yellow, and the white spray of breakers dashing against the rocks. Someone pointed out to them the shining break in the shoreline where the Lobe River rushes madly in headlong escape from the forest, and plunges foaming into the sea.

A little boat put out from shore, and soon the party welcomed aboard the *Gaboon* a very lovely lady, Mrs. Lafflin. Her husband, Dr. Lafflin, was with her, and Miss Babe, who was destined to become the bride of Captain Peter Menkel.

The surf boat, piled with passengers and baggage, plowed through the waves to the rhythmic paddling and singing of the native crew, whose strong brown arms soon lifted the party through the breakers and carried them ashore. The two incoming young brides shook the salt spray from their hair, smoothed their crumpled skirts, and breathed grateful sighs. At



last, after weeks of water travel, their feet were safely on the shore, and Africa, from Batanga's lovely beach, looked lush and alluring.

Within twelve hours after their arrival the new recruits were introduced to the mission institution known as station meeting, where local problems are resolved by majority vote of station members. The question discussed at the Batanga meeting was that of personnel to occupy the Nkonemekak site seventy miles inland that had been designated as the location for a station. The higher court of the mission organization called annual meeting was due to convene in January, two months ahead, when assignments would be officially made. Meanwhile it was felt that a committee of four should go to Nkonemekak to confer with Dr. Good and to make preparation in case the Mission should assign women to the new station.

A few months earlier a Site Committee had been sent to survey the area. Mary Lafflin had accompanied her doctor husband, thus becoming the first white woman to travel that long and tortuous trail into the jungle. Her account of the journey tells of streams splashed merrily through with rubber boots and short skirts and much laughter, and of one time she did not laugh. That was when she had to lie like a log on the heads of six men while they waded the swift deep waters of a river.

"Instead," she recorded, "I quietly asked Jesus to help me to lie so still that if a foot should slip I would not add to the difficulty by wiggling. I shut my eyes tight and heard nothing above the rushing water but the strong voice by my side saying, 'All right, Mary, you are nearly over.'"

The party then slept in an uninhabited forest where elephant tracks crossed the trails, their shelter a rubber sheet thrown over poles. . . . "The front opened to the great friendly fire which burned all night. I slept splendidly, only waking once to see lovely stars shining down on us who rested in the Father's love, and on thousands who never heard of that love."

Taking the rigors of the trail in stride, proving herself far from being an "encumbrance," Mary Lafflin had called the trip delightful, and merrily kept pace with the men. Arriving at the little cabin after a last breathless climb up the steep ascent, she described the place and the welcome that went up from the three men occupying "the little palace" on top:

"Looking from its tiny porch, the eye is rested and delighted by magnificent forest-covered hills. In the valleys between are villages, some of whose tiny thatched roofs can be seen through the clearing. I never expected to enjoy in Africa such scenery as is on every side of Nkonemekak. Out past the house is the garden. After seeing no fresh vegetables for over two years, you will not wonder that I watched with keen pleasure for the ripe tomatoes, beans, and lettuce. . . . The advent of a white woman increased the number of visitors. At first, curiosity and fear prevailed concerning me, the women being rather skeptical as to my sex. So the test was made by bringing me a baby to hold. The result was very satisfactory, though one woman looked at her hand to see if the sickly white had rubbed off. After a few days their attitude changed to that of real friendliness, so that when we came down to the beach five weeks later there was scarcely a trace of their first wild, shouting curiosity, and women and girls came out urging me to return to them. Personally . . . if Dr. Lafflin could be spared from this part of the field (the beach) I would gladly go to the Bulu people."

The final decision of the Batanga meeting, a decision made by the men—women missionaries according to the manual being associate missionaries only, with a voice but not a vote—was that Dr. Lafflin should accompany Messrs. Frank, Roberts and Johnson to Nkonemekak, recently renamed *Efulan* (A mingling), while the women should wait at the beach until their return.

Disappointed at this decision, and eager for their first introduction to African life, the two brides went the very next afternoon to visit one of the nearby villages. Mrs. Lafflin introduced

the newcomers to the smoky huts where, through teary eyes, they squinted at the women who were grinding on flat stones, pounding in wooden mortars, or tying yard-long plantain leaves over the huge blackened pots perched on hot stones in the blazing fires.

Suddenly, Mrs. Lafflin felt a chill creep over her, a dreaded symptom she knew all too well. She looked at her companions, who were now absorbed in pantomime conversation with the housewives. The girls had not yet seen the falls, which she had promised to show them; she was loath to disappoint them. So, ignoring the fateful warning, she walked with her guests along the shady trail to where the river and the breakers join in their thundering roar. From the bank she watched her companions as they were carried by sturdy boatmen to a canoe in order that they might ride in front of the falls and feel the spray on their faces. The wind blew the mist back over her. . . .

Three days later the mission flag hung limply at half mast, while the still form of a courageous wife and friend was laid to rest beside the grave of her infant daughter, in the cool green of a shady grove. Mary Johnson wrote about that in her diary on November 4, 1894:

Dear Mrs. Lafflin passed away as she wished—in her husband's arms—and now she is resting in the arms of her Savior. God alone knows how much she accomplished here in His name. Oh, that I may have more of her spirit in His work, going forward without fear! Heaven is as near to Africa as to America, and dying is but going home. At the grave Mr. Fraser repeated these words:

All that He blesses is our good,
And unblest good is ill.
And all is right that seems most wrong,
If it be His sweet will.

The bereaved husband, lonely and already broken in health, but with a fortitude that humbled and inspired his fellows, insisted that the scheduled expedition to Efulan must not be de-

layed. Four days later the caravan set forth according to plan—that inscrutable plan of God.

Silas Johnson then wrote home: "Do not feel that this, God's own act, has frightened us. We feel that we are in God's hands and are ready to live or die for His cause as He may see fit."

And to God he prayed: "O Lord, if it be Thy will—wilt Thou grant me twenty years to labor here for Thee." His prayer was granted in double measure.

5. The Everlasting Arms

On the morning of November 12, one lone sentry waited on Efulan's hilltop—Matthew Henry Kerr, the valiant pioneer, carpenter, and member of the "advance guard" that had, in July of the previous year, occupied this site seventy miles inland selected by Dr. Good. It was he who, with the help of workers from the beach, had hewed down timber from the virgin forest and built on the crest of the hill a tiny cabin with walls of bark. Here Mr. Kerr and his two companions lived a Spartan life, sleeping on rude cots, sitting on three-legged stools, cooking without stove or oven, and eating from a circular dining table. Their table, they jokingly remarked, had been in preparation for them before the Board of Foreign Missions was incorporated, consisting as it did of a crude cross-cut slab from a giant tree. Occasionally Mrs. Laffin, at Batanga, had sent them bread, but, unless first cut and toasted, this invariably mouldered before reaching its destination. In spite of all this, the men had

written enthusiastically, "Our hill, like Mount Zion, is beautiful for situation."

Mr. Kerr, when not at the carpenter's bench or in the forest saw-pits getting lumber for the second dwelling, which was to be built in the faith that reinforcements would eventually be forthcoming, taught the alphabet to about thirty little boys, using sawed blocks of wood with the letters stencilled on them. No literature existed for them to read, however, as Dr. Good's translation of the Gospels, though completed, was not yet prepared for printing. Not one believer had yet come forth in that vast stretch of forest, yet the mission clearing boasted a chapel, a clubhouse, and a "city hall"—all under the one thatched roof of the carpenter shop, with a huge squared log for bench, pew, and pulpit.

At the time the Silas Johnson story opens, one of this advance guard of three, Mr. Milligan, had just gone home on health leave. Dr. Good, with unquenchable vision, despite two dangerous attacks of blackwater fever, had made a third trip four hundred miles farther inland to determine a site for another station, and had earned for himself the appropriate Bulu name of "Walking, Walking, Always Walking! What are you looking for?" He had met with no hostility, and was delighted to find that a common language—Bulu—was understood by all the many tribes he encountered. Now, with reinforcements at hand, he hoped after one more journey inland to join his wife and young son, Albert, who had already preceded him to the healthful Canary Islands, Mrs. Good being ill and unable to wait for him longer at Batanga.

On this twelfth day of November, 1894, the tireless traveler had just started out on his fourth journey to the interior when a runner sent by Mr. Kerr overtook him with news of the new mission recruits then approaching Efulan from the beach. With a glad heart he retraced his steps to the station and started down the hill to meet them. Dr. Silas was leading the caravan.

When he came face to face with the intrepid pioneer whose plea for men had clinched his own determination to go to Africa, the moment held much of the same dramatic quality as the historic meeting between Stanley and Livingstone in Africa twenty-seven years earlier.

That evening the two tiny rooms of what Mary Lafflin had called "the palace" bulged with the bulk of six men. The four from the coast were weary from their four days' tramp through the dripping jungle. Since the rainy season was then at its peak, they had remained continuously soaked as they splashed through swamps, plowed through muck, and with their watches in their hats, waded in muddy water up to their armpits. At one point the current had been so swift that one of the carriers was very nearly swept away, load and all. At night they had slung their sheets between two trees for beds, and with no shelter overhead but the heavy boughs, had "slept splendidly."

"I shall never forget that march if I live to be an old man," wrote Dr. Silas.

But tired as the new recruits were, the men talked till midnight, Dr. Good imparting to them much valuable advice from his rich store of experience. They did not suspect that it was the last counsel he was to give them. Before dawn he had slipped off onto the forest trail again.

A week later Dr. Silas had his first chill and high fever. Scarcely had his temperature dropped when Mr. Roberts fell ill, his fever reaching 105.5 degrees. With a mustard plaster on his stomach to control nausea, the doctor left his bed to care for the new patient. Immediately his own fever returned, and both men were then dangerously ill.

Messengers were sent to the beach with an urgent plea for help. Two days later Mary Johnson was standing on the porch of the cottage at Batanga when Dr. Lafflin opened the letters containing the disturbing news. Mr. E. A. Ford, a veteran of three years' experience and a practical knowledge of African

But Mary Johnson's diary knew better. She wrote, "An irresistible feeling of loneliness came over me and I had a cry. Word came to me that both my dear one and Mr. Roberts are seriously sick with fever. Oh, what should we do in these hours of waiting and anxiety if underneath were not the everlasting arms?"

The following day, when Mr. Ford had started to Efulan, she walked the trail with him in her thoughts and prayers. "God grant he may find our dear ones out of danger!" she now wrote. "What a day of waiting—lest another messenger come bearing sad news! But none came and we felt encouraged.

'Fear thou not,' seemed breathed upon me by the Father . . . Oh, how near He has been through these hours that have seemed like weeks!"

By the following Sunday Dr. Silas had recovered, but Mr. Roberts was blinded temporarily by the heroic quantities of quinine administered, and Mr. Fraser was taking his turn in bed. Thanksgiving Day gave the group one cause for gratitude—they were all still alive.

On December 10, Dr. Good returned to the "little palace" after a solid month of travel, having penetrated trails never before seen by a white man. But, ill and exhausted, he could only fall onto his bed.

For days his fever raged, while all the group prayed, and the new doctor grappled with the insidious fire that was consuming the very lifeblood in the wasted form. On Thursday night, December 14, when the fever reached 108.2 degrees, the brave spirit of the valiant pioneer went to its rest. Dr. Silas wrote:

So ended the life of a man of God who had done a great work for

His Master which few men could have done as well. His help was in this work in the interior. I believe, if he can, he will wait with intense interest from where God has called him.

The burial took place the next morning in the shade of a mango tree Dr. Good had planted. The homemade coffin was carried by pallbearers representing the three tribes among whom Dr. Good had labored. Many saddened tribesmen stood by, but no women, as custom forbade their presence at a burial. The mission men who watched "The General," as they called him, being lowered into the grave, were themselves scarcely able to stand, weakened as they were by their first attacks of the scourge of fever.

Before returning to the beach Dr. Silas treated his African patient, a schoolboy who had fallen and run a stick through the fleshy part of his leg, where it had broken off out of reach. A crowd gathered around and watched closely to see what he would do. Probing, and finding that he would have to cut in from the other side and take the stick through, Silas asked Mr. Kerr to help him give some chloroform; he then succeeded in extracting a piece of wood as large as a man's finger. The boy neither cried nor moved, and when he came to, the awed crowd pelted him with questions. "Didn't it hurt? How could you endure in silence? You didn't feel it? You were asleep?" The miracle left them paralyzed with astonishment, and this, their first encounter with a white doctor, gave them food for talk in the shade of their palavar houses for many a day to come.

Meanwhile the missionary wives, waiting impatiently at Batanga, hoped their men might arrive by New Year's Day. "But on December 29," Mary writes, "a man came running, saying, 'look four white men and they tell him come quickly and tell us.' I caught up my helmet and started for the beach. Mr. Ford and Mrs. Roberts following me. Halfway to the river we shouted and were answered by an almost deafening

reply. I ran on ahead and soon met Mr. Fraser, and back of him, looking very white and thin, Mr. Roberts in the hammock, and behind him. . . ." But let us not pry into that glad reunion . . . "the procession started on its way again with several hearts lighter and happier than they had been for weeks."

The doctor's diary for the year 1894 closes with these words:

I wish here to record that God has this past year blessed me above all that I could ask or even think. That He should give me such a precious wife as Mary, and place me here as a medical missionary in His special service to carry out His great purposes concerning this people is a blessing beyond my power to thank Him for in any proper degree. He has comforted me and kept my precious wife through her trials which have not been small. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits. These are only a few of the thousands of His blessings. Surely I can trust Him always under every trial. He may see fit to bring me.

Mary and I have promised Him to live nearer to Him than in the past, and to commune with Him oftener. My prayer is that we may be used of Him every moment in His way.

6. Just Like an Egg

In the year 1895 the Corisco and Gaboon Mission numbered some twenty persons scattered along the coast of Rio Muni, Gaboon, and Kamerun. The Mission convened in January, according to schedule, and at this auspicious time Mary Johnson,

helping prepare the meals in the stifling kitchen, came down with malaria, only grateful that her personal physician was on her side to attend her. Mrs. Roberts likewise collapsed, while Mr. Melvin Fraser had his second attack.

By the time all had recovered, a decision had been reached that Mr. Fraser, Mr. Kerr, Dr. Silas and Mary, who was now to become known in America to readers of *Womens' Work Missions* as "our brave little Lady of Efulan," were to occupy the hilltop station. Well again, and in high spirits, the Californians prepared for the inland journey.

Mary, warned of the obstacles in the trail ahead, packed up her long skirts, and with them her dignity. When she descended the stairs of Batanga's Sunnyside Cottage in the early dawn of January 28, the men let out a delighted whoop. She was dressed ready to travel—in her bathing suit! To be sure, this was far from the modern Jantzen version, being altogether ample and sedate. However, it gave her freedom of action in climbing over fallen logs, which the sweeping styles then in vogue did not.

The rains were over, and they found the path comparatively dry. Mary's notes on this journey are full of ferns and lilies, palms and small bright flowers, the screeching of parrots, the tracks of elephants, and the shining coils of a snake the doctor shot down from a tree. The hammock, swung on a pole borne on the shoulders of two stalwart carriers, afforded her repose when the trail grew hilly and hot. Mary walked with a slight limp, due to a knee injury sustained in her girlhood, and the party slowed their pace somewhat on her account, taking five days for the trip.

When they emerged from the long uninhabited stretch of forest and began walking through the huddled towns strung along the trail like brown beads on a green cord, pandemonium broke loose. "Such shouting I have never heard except during the heat of a political campaign at home," Mary wrote. She

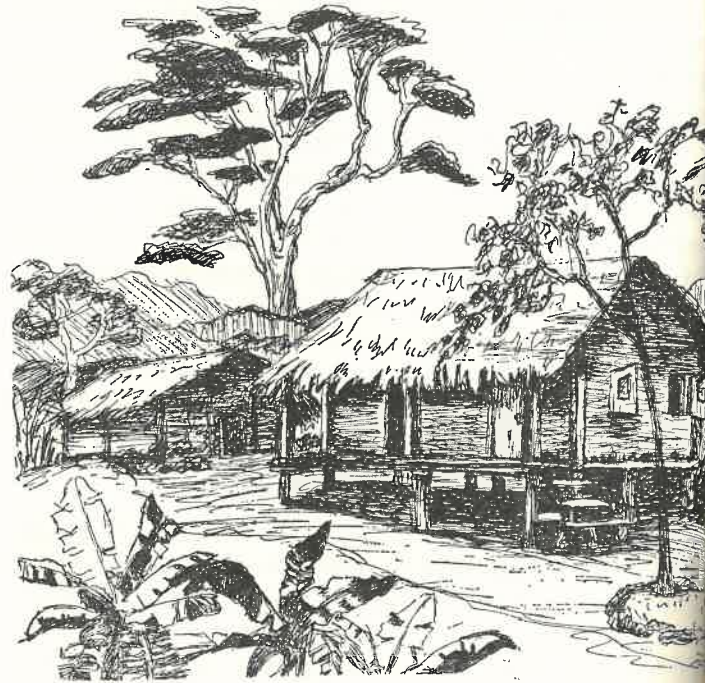
found herself surrounded by naked children, wrinkled crones, boisterous men and women scantily clad, who ran after her laughing and yelling. They jumped on logs and climbed tree stumps in order to peer into her hammock. Mr. Kerr explained that they were crying out at this strange reversal of custom whereby a woman, the habitual burden-bearer, became a burden, carried while her lord and master walked!

One late afternoon, when the caravan was within a mile of Efulan Hill, a company of schoolboys came trooping down the hill and an excited crowd escorted the party all the way up the steep long incline that led to the mountain top. As they neared the summit, the wooded hills that had towered above them on the trail from the beach receded into a panorama of breathtaking beauty, as distant blue ranges reared themselves above the surrounding green and faded into the milk white of the sky.

"As the mountains are round about Jerusalem," thought Mary, and she turned tired eyes toward the welcome sight of two little bark cottages perched on poles in the middle of the tiny clearing, their shaggy roofs of thatch looking for all the world like birds' nests fallen from the giant trees that towered above them. The "little brown wren," as Mary had often been called by her friends, felt right at home.

When Mr. Kerr led the way to the bachelors' house, Mary sank gratefully on the steps of the miniature veranda and "endured to be stared at" while the wee cabin, empty since the departure of the men several weeks previously, was being swept and cleaned. Then she stepped over the threshold. The little bark walls enfolded her. The noisy tumult of the curious onlookers was shut out, and in the words of those among whom her life was now cast, "her heart sat down" and was at rest.

Among those who had come to meet her that first day of February was a young girl about eleven years of age, her



head shaved in fantastic streaks, a string of beads and a bun of grass her sole attire. This was Mezene, whom the doctor had arranged on his previous visit to be a helper for his work. Surprisingly she was not yet married. Her name, meaning "Paths," was symbolic of the new and better ways into which she and countless African girls after her were to be led. She was the first "bush" girl to have contact with a Christian home. Mezene was to cause many a heartache and trial of patience. She was sullen and rebellious, lazy, awkward and slow. After enduring repeated thefts and acts of disobedience, Mary wrote prayerfully, "Lord, what can I do for this poor girl? Show me

The first thing Mary had told Mezene to do was to go back to her village and take off the heavy brass anklets from her feet and the cumbersome strings of large beads from around her waist. In about two hours she returned dressed in a loose armband of twine about her waist, with a handful of ferns tucked under it in front and another behind. Mary's next step was to send her to the river with a cake of soap and instructions given in pantomime. When the girl returned, scrubbed to a shiny brown, she was presented with a two-yard square cloth which Mary had contrived from a four-yard length of bright calico. After days of practice, Mezene learned to wrap the cloth around her just under the armpits, and secure it with one tight twist over the left breast and another deft twist at the waist. With all the subsequent changes noted in African styles and modes, it is my opinion that no costume has yet been devised that compares for grace, comfort, and utility, with the simple flowing lines of an artfully draped cloth. When Mezene appeared in church in this garb, with her hair evenly cut and her skin shiningly clean, the new style quickly became a fashion favorite with the women of the village, whose demand for cloth soon out-shouted the desire for beads. Bales of calico were henceforth added to the list of articles used for barter at the new bush station, as it had been for years at the coast.

For Mary and Dr. Silas, the first Sunday in the carpenter-shop church was an unforgettable experience. The small structure of bark and thatch, with half walls to provide ventilation, was fairly bulging with a huddle of some three hundred men, women with babies, and children, standing, sitting, lying in every position imaginable. It was necessary for the new missionaries to step over prostrate bodies to get to the rough log seat that had been reserved for them. Young women, their firm brown bodies polished to a high sheen with yellow palm oil, suckled naked, contented babies at their breasts, cradling

them in arms that were wound from slender wrists to the elbow with copper wire. Each wore a thick bushy bustle, either of raffia dyed red or black, or of ferns and leaves tucked in a loose belt of beads.

Both men and women were weighted down with heavy ornaments, string upon string of shells, buttons, or blue beads the size of peas. Ponderous bracelets and anklets of brass or ivory contributed to the overall weight, while many wore additional decoration in the form of twined wire wrapping legs and arms, leaving only elbows and knees free.

Nearly every woman wore a high collar of brass weighing from five to fifteen pounds, the mere sight of which moved Mary to pity. These heavy circlets had been pounded shut about the neck when the young bride went to her marriage. A wife wore her weighty collar until a newer bride was added to the harem, when it might be put off to be used as partial payment on the new wife, or it might be given the new bride as a gift. Thus no woman could call her ornaments her own; all were the possession of her husband and could be taken away whenever he chose to do so. The purpose of the heavy collars and anklets was to discourage wives from running away; so much weight was a deterrent. It was not a preventive, however, for on one occasion Mary wrote: "A running-off craze has struck the gentle sex about here and a number of men's hearts are wrenched with grief because they have only a few wives left. One man had four wives leave him at one time, and now he is no better than a bachelor, having only one wife left!"

The men were even more vain than the women, judged from their ornate headdresses. The men parted their well-oiled hair in intricate designs and combed it over a framework of bamboo pith to stand in high ridges, which were then draped with beads or studded with white buttons or cowrie shells.

Some even had this elaborate coiffure reproduced in a permanent wig that could be donned or removed at will, like the powdered wigs of colonial gentlemen. The male attire consisted of a narrow strip of cloth made of beaten bark. A strip of leopard skin slung across the shoulder carried a large double-edged knife and a powder flask. Nearly all the men carried flintlock guns, as well as long spears and murderous-looking weapons designed by the village blacksmith and fashioned from native ore. Despite these menacing instruments the Bulu braves laughed good-naturedly at the newcomers and stared in openmouthed astonishment at the strange wife the white man had brought.



The ingenious costumes of the women were often highly amusing. There were at the church service several polka-dot outfits, the satiny skin of the village beauties being spotted with bright dots of powdered blueing, applied with the tip of an artistic finger. On other fashion models the pattern was reversed, blue being the background color and brown dots appearing wherever an oily finger had removed the powder. A young mother with a newborn babe at her breast was arrayed in scarlet from tip to toe, the thin covering consisting of a talcum of ground redwood. This bright red hue, Mary learned, belonged almost exclusively to the mothers of newborn infants and is the accepted birth announcement in Bulu-land.

The little bark house on the hill was almost as public as the church, for the people followed the missionaries everywhere. Mary, however, was the prize attraction. Standing on tiptoe to peer in through the windows, the women took turns inspecting her every move. From far and wide they came, for news of the arrival of a white woman had spread to distant towns. Stares, stares, and more stares; only the darkness of the night brought respite. Patiently during the day Mary would receive pompous, curious chiefs and their retinue of wives and

children, and show them through her primitive abode that was a marvel to them because it had a raised floor and was built on posts to guard against dampness and snakes. It was the first house they had ever seen without a floor of clay. It was filled with wonders beyond all imagining! One visitor picked up a broom, examined it carefully, and finally asked incredulously, "Why does the white woman's bustle have a long handle attached to it?" An old woman sat looking at a photograph hung against the bark wall of the sitting room, and after long speculation asked pityingly, "When does that poor woman eat?"

Dr. Silas, too, had to answer endless questions. How could one woman alone keep a man from hunger? Why had he brought only one woman with him? Were women scarce across the sea? Was this wife really of any value? Why did she not carry water from the spring and hoe in his garden? They never saw her carrying firewood. Was she lazy? Would she not obey him? How much dowry had he paid for her? How many goats did he give his mother-in-law? Did he never beat her? Would he be going back across the sea soon to fetch more wives so he could be a big chief like themselves?

Although the Bulu men admired the white woman's long hair and clever ways, still they viewed her with alarm and warned their wives not to imitate her apparent laziness. It was better to have no dealings with her at all. Needless to say, the little brown women continued to gaze in wide-eyed interest at the novelty of an only wife who was tenderly treated by her husband.

Sitting around the fire in the palaver house at the end of the village street, the men smoked their pipes morosely while they pondered on the strange ways of the white man from over the sea. What must it be like in that distant country? They knew nothing beyond their own forest walls. Silence reigned while they mused upon their ignorance. Then one old man

spat out in disgust, "We are just like a hen's egg; we know nothing outside our shell!"

7. Monkey Hands in the Soup

When station duties became irksome and the monotony of tinned meat unbearable, Dr. Silas would take his rifle and his shotgun and go off into the forest in search of game. Sometimes Mary would note that "he came back with nothing but scratches, perspiration, and an enormous appetite." Again, he would triumphantly return to lay at her feet an antelope, squirrels, guinea fowl, or a wild boar, and then there would be a welcome change in the menu.

Frequently the doctor would organize a hunting party with the schoolboys. The boys brought to the station hunting nets and their dogs, wearing small iron bells that tinkled when they walked. When the party arrived at a predetermined spot in the forest, the nets were spread. Then with a tumult of shouting and yelling, the animals in the area were driven toward the nets, which were slowly drawn closer and closer together, until at length the prey was ensnared. Dr. Silas was always in the thick of the hunt, joining his voice with the others. On one such occasion twenty antelopes were brought in. Such a pile of meat to be divided amicably among the hunters! But the doctor "cut the palaver" to everyone's satisfaction, and they all enjoyed the meat at a big open-air dance

that night. It was a late hour when the weary schoolboys, ragged and tired, went to their pole beds for sleep. They had brought back musks and leopard skins as gifts to his family and friends.

Monkey meat was always welcomed by the schoolboys, but the doctor, to his knowledge, never indulged. Once, however, it occurred when he was eating in a hut, the dish passed to him contained a portion of monkey meat—a hand that looked very much like his own. Dr. Silas, quite suddenly and, to his host, unexpectedly, decided he was not very hungry.

On one of his hunting trips the doctor went in the direction of Chimpanzee Hill, so named because it abounded with "chimps" whose hoarse barking could be heard from Efulu in the still of the night. While he was in the densest part of the forest, the trail he suddenly heard a bellowing close by. He supposed it to be a chimpanzee and cautiously parted the tangle of brush and vine in an attempt to catch a glimpse of it, but saw nothing. Upon returning to the station he imitated the grunting sound to the Bulus. "That was not a chimpanzee," they told him. "That sounds like the bark of a gorilla." Acting on their belief, the Bulu hunters followed the doctor's lead, trailed a huge gorilla, killed it and carried it, slung between them on a hefty pole, back to the station hill. When the doctor saw the giant beast weighing two hundred and twenty pounds, the most hideous thing he had ever seen, he concluded it was just as well he had not encountered it, alone and armed only with the small shotgun he had carried that day.

On another occasion, Mr. Kerr, Dr. Silas, and Mary took a week's vacation. They pitched their canvas tent by the green banks of a wide river and made camp in the verdant space. Mary rested quietly close by the camp, revelling in the beauty of forest and fern and flower, while the men bagged a total of twenty-eight animals, among them a giant lizard five feet four inches long. One of the guides saw a leopard, and the doctor lamented that he had not been so fortunate. Through the years, however, he acquired many a trophy of his hunt.

One of the Bulu pastors told years later of an incident that occurred when he once went hunting with Dr. Silas. They were in the heart of the jungle, when suddenly they heard a rustling in the undergrowth and a growling in the thicket. The prowling beast slunk away before the doctor could aim his gun, but the close proximity left him with a cold chill tingling down his spine. Turning to his companion, he held up his shaking arm in front of him and asked, "Oh, my friend, what kind of sickness is this that causes such a tremor of the hand?" The Bulu man replied, "That sickness has a name, and the name is 'fear!'" Then they both went into gales of laughter that restored them to normal.

One of Dr. Silas' early duties, and one that he greatly enjoyed, was that of recruiting little boys for the boarding school. It was not easy to persuade the boys to come, and it was even more difficult to get the town fathers to consent. The value of sitting in a classroom several hours a day was very doubtful in the minds of men whose chief aims in life were women, wealth, and game. To enhance the attractiveness of school, the Mission offered four yards of bright calico to every father who would agree to the loan of his son, this payment to be repeated every month of the school term. The two-yard square piece of cloth, made from the long length of goods, provided a resplendent garment for gentlemen of leisure, as it nearly touched the ground when draped about the loins. The women, of course, if fortunate enough to acquire a cloth, wore it knee-length so it would not hinder their labor in the fields.

This custom of hiring boys for the duration of the term continued for some time, but as the prestige of the school grew, the length of the cloth diminished. The story is told that when the first attempt to shorten the length of calico

was made, the town fathers went on a strike and forbade the sons to attend classes. But they reckoned without their son. The day of the strike coincided with the day the boys finished the last page of the primer. The first edition of the four Gospels in the Bulu language had just arrived from the United States and was to be used as a textbook in the school. The fathers, grumbling, accepted the knee-length cloth. Eventually the deal was reversed and the fathers were required to pay tuition for the privilege of sending their boys to school.

A notable example of early skirmishes with the town elders over a schoolboy was the one that ended in the acquisition of Obam Mvé, who is now one of the oldest pastors in the African Church. Dr. Silas wrote the story of Obam in the following words:

For some days I had been searching for recruits for the school but without success. Finally I came to Ekowoñ, the village of Fearing. The palaver house was filled with men having a big argument, but they fell silent as I approached. Summoning my best arguments I told them I had come in the hopes of finding a boy for their town to place in our school. They seemed quite unable to see any advantage in my proposal, but I persisted. Presently I noticed one of the men whispering to the others. One after another the conspirators grinned broadly and chuckled with delight. Finally our young fellow burst forth with, "Give him Obam!"

Loud guffaws greeted the proposal and several men yelled, "Yes, give him Obam!"

"Where is Obam?" I asked.

"Show him Obam!" they shouted.

One of the group disappeared in a doorway and came back half-dragging a pitiful little fellow about seven years old. Why he was so generously offered was self-evident. His naked body was thin and scrawny. He walked gingerly on his heels, his feet being thoroughly infested with jiggers. The lad was blacker than average and his unwashed skin was ashy from neglect and badly infected with

the itch. The crown of his unkempt head was a matted scab. In short, a more unpromising looking lad I had never seen.

Silence reigned in the palaver house, while the town elders waited to see my reaction to what they considered a very good joke on me. To their utter amazement I thanked them and walked off with Obam.

A few weeks later, on a Sunday morning, their amazement was even greater. They were scarcely able to recognize their son where he sat in church among his fellow students, healed, clean, clothed in a white singlet and blue cloth, and obviously very happy indeed. His shining appearance was a living full-page advertisement of the value of the mission school.

Forty years later, after hearing Pastor Obam preach an excellent sermon, Dr. Silas remarked, "There stands one of our strongest and most highly honored pastors, who has done more for Christ than most of us have; I am happy to have had a part in winning him to the service of the Lord."

Treating and caring for the thirty schoolboys now living on the compound gave the doctor many opportunities to demonstrate to observers the efficacy of his medicine kit. Soon the medical work was growing so rapidly that he feared he would presently be working faster with his hands than with his tongue, so he rigorously set aside a time for language study, determined to master the idiom in order to present the gospel intelligibly. He and Mary spent hours sitting in the little bark room surrounded by bright-eyed schoolboys, from whose lips they took down words and phrases in their notebooks. First, using the then unprinted manuscript of Dr. Adolphus Good's translation of the Gospels, they began making long lists of words, arranging them alphabetically with their English equivalents, which they ferreted out with painstaking care.

This list slowly grew into a vocabulary of 3,500 words and a simple grammar. The original booklet they prepared and

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typed was later to be enlarged and revised in cooperation with others, notably Mr. George L. Bates and Dr. A. I. Goddard. Eventually it was incorporated into the formidable volume now known as Bates' *Handbook of Bulu*, at once the current despair and lifesaver of all new missionaries to Cameroun.

But it was not at his desk that Dr. Silas so speedily acquired his remarkable fluency in Bulu. From the first, the task of buying native produce to feed the schoolboys, the workmen, and the large caravans of carriers that brought supplies from the beach, fell to him. Each morning after breakfast found him on the tiny porch in the middle of a bedlam of bartering. Women from the towns at the foot of the hills toiled up the steep path carrying heavy baskets of food on their backs, supported by bands of leather over their shoulders or suspended from a strap that passed around the head at the level of the forehead. Green plantain, corn, cassava, sweet potatoes, papaya, peanuts, greens, wild honey, scrawny chickens and ducks—these and more were emptied out from the depths of the large baskets and laid before the white man. Laughing, jostling, pushing, gesticulating, the women showed their wares, the doctor striking hard bargains with fishhooks, beads, shells, safety pins, salt, matches, mirrors, red caps, brass wire, cloth, knives, or whatever might take the individual seller's fancy.

Always ready with a joke and a jest, joining in the native laughter, the bargainer enjoyed the game keenly, and his quick ears often picked up a chance remark, noting the turn of a phrase, or catching a new word which he would pause to repeat and tuck away in his memory. His gift of mimicry achieved for him an accuracy of tonal reproduction which, perfected through the years, eventually resulted in his being acclaimed as the best linguist the Mission ever produced. In any crowd of Africans his voice was indistinguishable from the rest. Unseen, he could not be identified by

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trace of white man's accent. This zest for accuracy and for new words did not slacken with the years. To the last he was ever on the alert to increase his vocabulary and perfect his use of Bulu.

Not only in the morning market did he pursue this study, but also on moonlit walks in the villages. Often he and Mary would stroll along the dappled path, while the Bulus danced to the throb of tom-toms, and naked children sang to the clapping of many hands. Then they would stop to listen and to chat. Sometimes they would make a day of it, taking a picnic lunch along, or stopping in the shade of a giant tree to build a fire and roast fresh ears of corn while passers-by looked on amazed. The old women and mothers took Mary to their hearts with a maternal tenderness that was touching, and when

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they put their brown arms around her and held her slim hands in theirs, it made her feel comforted and cherished. The thought would come back from these excursions into the life of the people with new understanding and with new Bulu expressions on their lips.

Dr. Silas once told about his experience in trying to officiate at a prayer in a village house full of Africans who had never heard a prayer before. The half-naked men who crouched around the fire with their long spears and flintlock guns stacked beside them, admitted, when he asked them, that they had never heard of a God creator, but who was this Jesus he kept talking about? He spent half an hour in simple explanation of the love of God and then stood up, saying, "Now I will pray to God."



He shut his eyes. Instantly he felt a commotion rising about him. Several men bolted for the door. Others paused in their flight to stare and to cry, "He's closed his eyes! What is he doing? Who is he talking to? Does he see somebody we don't see?" The few women present, thinking there was something evil afoot that might be taboo for children, clamped their hands over the eyes of their babies, who straightway began screaming in protest. In the midst of the shouting and

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confusion, all words left the doctor's mind, so that the prayer ended very abruptly indeed.

Soon he began reading portions of Scripture in the church service, adding a few remarks, which his wife thought were readily understood, though she realized she might be prejudiced. Sometimes Dr. Silas and Mary sang duets for the church service, and throughout the week they took turns in the classroom, learning the language by teaching. Before long they began inviting the boys to come to the house. One evening they entertained them with lantern slides, but one lad, thinking the illuminated figures were ghosts, cried out in fright, "Take them away, Dokita (doctor). Take them away!"

On another occasion they gave a feast for the schoolboys in honor of Mr. Kerr's birthday. They spread a long table with a white cloth, setting an assortment of dishes on it; and this marked the first time in the lives of their young guests that they had not reached their hands into a common pot and squatted on the ground to eat.

The Sunday school class of boys that grew out of this little group included a bright-faced lad named Nti. One Sunday, after a lesson on Jacob's dream of a ladder leading up to heaven, little Nti, much intrigued by the angels' participation, asked hopefully, "Does God want any more help up there? Could I get a job?"

He was much disappointed when told that he would have to wait to be called up yonder.

Although there were as yet no girls in school, the Sunday school class of boys soon attracted a few girls whom Mary took over into a separate class. This was the first concerted effort to do something in their behalf, and it proved discouraging work, as they were all too often absent in distant towns on Sunday, working for their husbands. Even when they were present, it took ingenuity to hold their attention, for their eyes

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strayed curiously to the mirror, a photograph, a lamp, to the other strange objects in the room, and particularly Mary's hair and every detail of her attire.

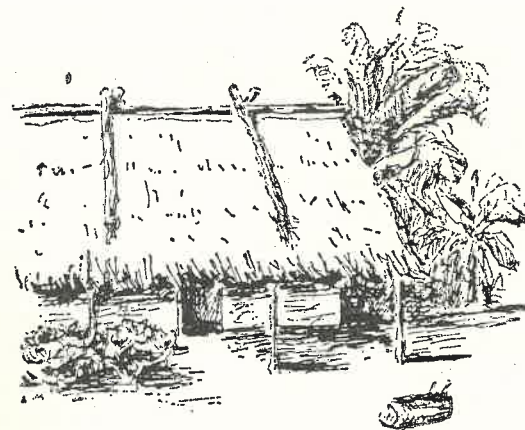
After the class had grown a bit, Mary invited the girls her house for a party. They were to come in the afternoon, but at ten-thirty in the morning they were at the door, and of course by noon were all hungry. Mary set the table and placed on it a large plate of bananas and another one of kank, which is the African bread, consisting of a roll of prepared cassava. With much giggling, the girls seated themselves. Then with both hands, each grabbed half a dozen bananas apiece, peeled them, and threw the skins on the table and the floor. When the hostess tactfully suggested that they eat one fruit at a time, they did so, making two bites of a single banana. Mary's wistful remark on this was, "If only they could take the gospel in like doses!"

Dr. Silas recorded the following description of a wedding in a native village:

There is a great drumming and howling tonight, as they are having a dance to celebrate a wedding. The bride is a little girl, fifteen years old. The old husband, who already has fifteen wives, paid about fifty dollars in goods for her, the dowry consisting of: seven flintlock muskets, five goats, two dogs, one knife, six brass anklets, twenty yards of calico, three iron pots, ten strings of beads, ten pieces of brass wire three feet long, three large plates of thin sheet brass, and 6,000 little balls of rubber about the size of a marble.

It was a constant marvel to both Silas and Mary that from this degrading environment could come so many kindly women. The men they found hopelessly lazy and conceited, the women ranking as far superior to them in every respect. One virtue, however, they all had in common—good nature. The inference to be drawn, Silas suggested once, was that if the white man could only learn not to be in such a great hurry about getting things done, everybody would be in perpetual good humor.

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Mary's household now included several helpers, an arrangement that had inspired envy on the part of her sister-in-law, to whom Mary wrote as follows:

I had to smile when Minnie said that she would be glad to have even one servant. I wondered, if she had her choice, which of ours she would choose, and how long she would keep him. A servant in Africa and a servant at home are two quite different people. In the first place, these people have never had anything of their own to care for, and so cannot know the value of anything, or how to care for it. Our dishes, all but a very few, are unbreakable, otherwise we would have none left by this time. It is often harder to watch the boys do things than it would be to do it one's self. But we have to get used to these things and it doesn't pay to worry. As Silas says, we can get new *things*, but we can't get new *bodies*, so we have the boys do as well as they can and try to save our strength for the work that they cannot possibly do. God knows that there is enough of that to keep us more than busy!

8. Shingle in the Jungle

Naturally Dr. Silas was impatient to get a small hospital built as he very soon began turning away patients for lack of facilities. But the need for a larger meeting house was more imperative. The growing congregation could not continue to squeeze into the makeshift chapel, so new bark walls were erected and the structure was roofed with long mats of palm leaves. Within a few months the observers (they could not yet be called a congregation of worshippers) were meeting in what looked to them like an overgrown palaver house. There Sunday after Sunday they sat on rough-hewn logs and sang lustily if not melodiously, to Mary's accompaniment on the baby organ—a never-ending source of wonderment to them all.

Next came the hospital, the first in the Bulu bush, built with part of the gift that had been presented at the farewell reception at the First Church in Los Angeles. It consisted of three rooms: one for examining the women, one for the men, and one for the doctor's laboratory. Shelves were installed for drugs, instruments were polished and put in place, and presto the jungle shingle was out!

The first patient to be treated at the new facility was a baby with an abdomen as large as an adult's, due to that commonest of African complaints, the ubiquitous round worm. The second patient was a woman with a badly infected finger which required amputation. Accordingly, Dr. Silas administered chloroform and carefully performed the operation. The astonishment and admiration of the Africans now knew no bounds. From that day on, every one who came to the hospital wanted to be "killed" first so he would feel no pain. They scoffed disdainfully at the sight of the various kinds of little white pills

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offered for their aches and pains. How could so small a remedy as that relieve their sufferings?

Finally, weary of arguing, the doctor determined to demonstrate his point beyond all dispute. A big, burly fellow appeared in the doorway one day complaining loudly of an acute pain under his belt. Dr. Johnson diagnosed it as a simple case of indigestion resulting from overeating, and when the man objected to the smallness of the customary dose, the doctor complied with a much more ample quantity. According to the record, there was no doubt left in the minds of any in the vicinity during the next twenty-four hours that so generous a prescription was unnecessary.

Not all the tropical diseases now known were then to be found in textbooks. The young medic began experimenting with various treatments by trial and error. A loathsome disease of the skin was very prevalent, and one of his early patients was a man covered from head to foot with open sores. Dr. Silas experimented with potassium iodide, hoping it might prove effective. Apparently it was, for two months later the patient returned with a goat in payment for the medicine that had cured him. Thereafter potassium iodide was used extensively for yaws and is still one of the approved treatments, although injections of Neosalvarsan superseded it and modern drugs are proving even more effective.

With the opening of medical work in the interior, the Mission adopted the policy of insisting on payment for medicines rather than dispensing them freely. Though this was hard on the new doctor just introducing medicine to an ignorant and reluctant people, he faithfully adhered to the rule, except of course in emergencies. Patients who required a series of treatments to insure a cure often came with one inadequate chicken, wanting to buy a small quantity only. The doctor was adamant, insisting that the full course be bought and paid for. Anything less was a waste of precious drugs.

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Ulcers are another prevalent scourge in the tropics, often very stubbornly resist treatment. The largest one Silas had ever seen had eaten halfway through the ankle of a patient who came to the hospital. Painstakingly trying various remedies, he himself having to do all the nauseating work of the odoriferous sore, he finally sent the man away whose wife was pregnant; the child would surely be born healed. His good success with countless similar sufferers won him fame to distant parts, and ulcers became one of his "for years to come."

Not all the needy could be persuaded to submit to the doctor's prescription or to the knife. One such was a man whose leg had been shot to fragments in a tribal skirmish. Dr. Jones found him in the village lying on his hard bamboo bed, his leg past all hope of saving. He urged the town elders to let him take the man to the Hill where he could amputate the leg and save his life. He promised to make crutches so he could walk again. The suggestion roused the man's father to fury. Angrily he shouted at his men to drive the doctor out of town before there was any further talk of killing his son. In vain Dr. Silas reasoned with him, saying there was no other hope, that death would surely come, and soon. A few days later he again visited the scene and found the injured man in a terrible state. Unwashed and filthy, he lay on the bare ground tormented by flies and insects. A ditch had been dug around him and into this the pus drained with sickening stench. Needless to say, the end came soon.

The doctor's first obstetrical case was a tough one. When he came to the hospital that a woman had been three days in labor in the town at the foot of the hill, and that she was "full up of enduring." Dr. Silas went down, taking Mr. K with him to administer the chloroform. After a strenuous tussle he succeeded in extracting the dead child, to the relief and admiration of all concerned. It was then he learned of the superstition regarding the placenta, for the patient,

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exhausted as she was, herself took it out behind the house and buried it. For another woman to see it was taboo. A few days later he visited the woman again, and sitting down on a low stool, he unconsciously crossed his knees. Instantly the woman cried out that he must not do so, as it was taboo for a man whose wife was pregnant; the child would surely be born with crooked legs.

The taboos, the doctor learned, were beyond all reckoning. He met them on every hand, and battled against the blind superstitious fears engendered by implicit belief in the power of the witch over life, death, and disaster. He learned that no one ever died a natural death; a witch was held responsible. To prove this, an autopsy was always held. When the body was cut open, the witch was invariably found, either in the corpse or in some terrified person of the community, in which case the protection of the witch doctor must be purchased with a goat or duck or whatever fee he saw fit to impose.

Even in the face of obvious reasons for death, the belief in a witch persisted. A party of men from a nearby town went on a journey. Deep in the forest they encountered a band of elephants and one of the party was gored to death. When the body was carried back to the town, even with the clear evidence of the wounds inflicted by elephant tusks and the story of witnesses, an autopsy was held and the witch solemnly discovered.

Another instance was that of a man who was carried to the Hill with a strangulated hernia. This was before the hospital was built. After giving chloroform, the doctor tried to reduce the hernia, but failed. Feeling it would be unwise to try to operate without facilities, he realized the case was hopeless and told the man so. They carried him down the hill to his town to die. Three days later the doctor visited him and talked about the Savior. He asked the man if he could pray, and he did. It was the first prayer the doctor ever heard from

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Bulu lips and it moved him profoundly. The faltering words were very simple, "Oh God, take me to your town." Just simply prayed another long ago, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom."

Three days later the man was buried, but not before his body had been cut open and the verdict pronounced "Bitten by a witch." The doctor keenly regretted not being on hand for the autopsy. "I would have told them first what condition I should find," he said, "and then done the cutting myself, they had let me." This might have helped, but it is doubtful. Belief in witches dies hard.

Taboos, taboos, taboos! Women must not eat wild boar. Children must not eat meat. Sick babies must not be given the breast. A woman must not nurse a motherless babe lest it kill her own child. A mother brought her sick child to Dr. Silas in a very weakened condition. It first needed nourishment. The doctor prepared a glass of milk to give it, but the mother protested violently, her eyes dilated with fear. Milk was taboo! Mary wrote that for the next few minutes the doctor used some forcible Bulu and the child took the milk.

Antelope meat was taboo for the young schoolboys. Dr. Silas challenged them to a trial, offering to cure anyone made sick by it and to take full responsibility for any harm resulting. The meat was fresh and tempting. It won. No dire effects ensued and the dormitory diet could be improved.

Thus, skirmish by skirmish, the doctor pitted his knowledge and skill against his adversary Nnôm Ngee, the witch doctor. At length he felt the time had come for an open challenge, a duel to the death.

9. Christened "Nnôm Ngee"

In the depth of the forest, a few miles from the foot of Efulan Hill, the greatest witch doctor of the vicinity had his secret camp. In a small place cleared of jungle, a high wall of woven poles inclosed his hidden headquarters. There, away from human eyes, he gathered his neophytes about him—young men of the town bent on a share in the profitable scheme—and taught them the rites of witchcraft. Concealed in clay vessels and baskets of reeds were the potent charms and fetishes, human bones and skulls, desiccated skin ground to powder, scrapings of teeth and toenails, pulverized bark and leaves, twine packets to tie about the neck or to suspend from the belt or hide under the bed or conceal under the eaves; antelope horns filled with fantastic potions; leopards' teeth and claws, tails and whiskers; fragments of wood or stone, each mysterious object reputedly capable of performing miracles and worth a jungle fortune in chickens, goats, and goods. There was the long vine, one end of which the victim of a witch held in his hand while the medicine man, unseen, held the other. Over this telegraph vine came the horrendous growls that drove out the evil spirit from the patient. This frightful sound was the trade-mark of the medicine man and gave him his name, *Ngee* (Gorilla). There, too, was kept the frightening paraphernalia that transformed men into awesome creatures to strike terror to the trembling hearts of the sick, the bereaved, the innocent and the guilty. For a woman or child to look on the *Ngee* or any of the rites of the Secret Society of *Ngee* meant certain sickness or even death. None

but the initiated could approach with impunity the august presence of the Nnôm Ngee. Needless to say, Silas Johnson had not joined the Society.

The festivities of the Ngee were in full swing on the day Dr. Silas threw down the gauntlet. In the center of the town the initiated, in full regalia, danced and screamed and cavorted about like madmen, their masked leader roaring and beating his chest the while. The door of every house in the village was shut and barred. The terrified women within kept their eyes averted from the very cracks in the walls; little children trembled and cried out in fear.

Suddenly one of the neophytes caught sight of the white man coming down the path. Terrified, the dancers froze in their tracks while the masked Ngee shouted angrily, "Get back!" Dr. Silas did not falter for even a moment; he continued loping along in his habitual gait, head and shoulders thrust forward as if impatient of the pace set by his feet. Furious at this affront, the Nnôm Ngee darted toward him, menacing him with his whirling knives, bellowing like a great gorilla. The doctor, his blue eyes blazing, strode past him and made straight for the little trail leading into the forest. While the witch doctors, too stunned to move, peered through the foliage beside the path, Dr. Silas made for the hut of the Ngee, crashed through the wall of poles, kicked over the pots full of charms, scattered the witch's brew and trampled on the feathered headgear, the carved masks, the human bones and leaf packets of potent "medicines." And then, summoning all the breath in his lungs, he let out a mighty bellow for all the world like the thundering voice of the Ngee.

Returning to the astonished town, he lashed the witch doctor with his tongue.

"Get out!" he barked. "Take your stupid paraphernalia and clear out!" So saying, he stamped down the path, leaving a terror-stricken crowd gaping behind him.

What would happen now? they wondered. Such audacity was utterly without precedent. Dire predictions of an awful calamity to fall upon the preposterous white man were shouted on every hand. His day of doom would dawn, and soon!

But the days passed, peacefully, one by one. The doctor went about his accustomed tasks as hale and hearty as ever. Not only so, but he began practicing the antics of the awesome Ngee, and tuning his vocal chords to his unearthly cry. In the midst of Ngee celebrations he would send a schoolboy ahead to drum out the warning of his coming, as did his rival Ngee:

A yeme ne se se sé,
Kili li ki ki ki ki
Beta mfene Zel anyu si;
Elañe b'abo nlam é ne me nne nyôlé
Kula kulan. Tyama tyaman.
E nye a tôô e nye a ngane.

.
He stands firm and strong.
Calling, calling, calling.
A knotted beard beneath his chin;
The fiercest, he, in all the town.
Let it be known. Tell it abroad.
He blocks the way and none surpasses.

Then suddenly he would appear in the village, mimicking the songs, dances, and fantastic contortions of the initiated, letting out a blood-curdling whoop and pounding his chest with a ludicrous likeness that was too much for the fun-loving Bulu. In spite of themselves, they howled with glee at the white man's antics. Even the women began timidly to join in the fun.

After one such exhibition the doctor cried, "The Ngee is dead! Long live the Ngee!" Only his version in Bulu was, "Your Ngee is nothing. If there is a real Ngee, then I am he! Ngee the Great!"

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The crowd, roaring with laughter, delightfully took up the cry, "Nnôm Ngee! Dokita Nnôm Ngee!" And so the doctor was christened that day.

The name stuck. Through four decades to come, the name was to be written in imperishable letters on the hearts of many tribesmen; and superimposed upon them, in letters of shining gold, the name that is above every name—Christ Jesus, The Great Physician.

10. Waiting

By November of 1894 a new four-room residence had been built about one hundred yards east of the Johnson house, in anticipation of hoped-for reinforcements. After a whole year of seeing no other white woman, Mary received the news of mission recruits with joy. A hope and a prayer stirred in her heart that one of the men might come out married and be assigned to Efulan. This she knew would be a great relief to her mother at home. There was another reason, too, which she did not confide to her mother. Instead, she wrote to George Johnson's wife and asked her to send out the layette she would soon be needing.

During the long months of his wife's pregnancy, the doctor's heart was often anxious. He fretted because of delayed mails and the scant contact they had with home. Once he wrote quite sharply, "Now see here, why don't you people write? We have had no letters for two months, and now we must wait another month for another steamer. Please try not to miss

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the mails." Eighteen letters from friends and family arrived on the next steamer.

Mary was more patient than the doctor. In spite of her intense longing for her mother and her natural regret at not being able to share her new hope and joy with friends and loved ones, she nevertheless kept cheerful and occupied. She had rich resources within herself upon which to draw during those months of waiting. During the evenings she read aloud to Dr. Silas, introducing him to the classics which she loved. Her sketchbook and paints were a continual satisfaction to her artistic nature. Ferns with their delicate traceries delighted her; she pressed them and made a beautiful book for her mother. From her father she had inherited a keen love of flowers, and the little bare clearing in front of her cottage blazed with a bright jewel in its center, a garden tended by her loving hands. She rejoiced over every fragrant rose, counted the pinks and the pansies, morning-glories and forget-me-nots, for she contrived to bring about a variety of bloom that is rare to this day in Africa.

The beauty of the dawn from the Efulan hilltop filled her with ecstasy, the sun scattering the mists in the valley and the clouds bright with gold resting on the crests of the mountains, while to watch a storm approaching held a fascination that never waned. Through a gap in the northern range she



could see the rain beginning its march through the defile, blotting out the horizon as it came, advancing to the violet hills, climbing down their slopes, annihilating the distant peaks, leaving the blue ranges behind one by one, till, with a rush of wind that tore through the giant trees and shredded the broad leaves of the plantains, it scaled the last height and engulfed the mission hill. Its deafening roar drowned out all sound and the torrential downpour curtained the little cabin like an impenetrable shroud.

Much of the time, however, Mary was confined to her bed, and it was then that the doctor displayed some unexpected skills, for he was no mean cook himself. On the days when she was unable to be up, he baked the bread, cooked the meat, and supervised the meals. Also he used the sewing machine to keep the schoolboys clothed. Thus, though alone and dependent upon one another, they lacked for no necessary thing.

In spite of the encouraging word about reinforcements, Mary resolutely prepared herself for ultimate disappointment by saying again and again, "I am not going to believe that a woman is coming until I see one walking up the hill."

The new house was to be called the Mary Lafflin Memorial Cottage. It boasted a studding of planed uprights rather than bamboo, which made it somewhat more attractive than the Johnson cottage, but Mary only said, "They may make it as fine as they wish, if only they will send a woman to keep it so."

Their own house was gay now with sparkling glass in the small windows. The window frames and doors newly painted blue and white, contrasting beautifully with the golden browns of bark and polished bamboo. The doorway between the living and dining rooms was artistically draped with a native cloth of woven grass which blended softly with the walls of bark. Some of Mary's water colors and oil paintings hung on the walls, while new furnishings—a couch, desk, chairs and table—made living infinitely more comfortable than

it had been in the bachelor days of three-legged stools.

Mary's remark about the white canopy she hung over their sleeping accommodations is significant. "It is very pretty," she said, "and serves to keep insects from dropping from the roof onto the bed, and if tucked in carefully, will even keep out driver ants at night."

That it would also serve to keep out the *Anopheles* mosquito, which carried the malaria that periodically laid them low was not even mentioned, because the cause of malaria was not yet known. As its name *mal aire* implies, malaria was assumed to emanate from the mists rising from dank and decaying vegetation. A mosquito net was among Dr. A. C. Good's "indispensables," but its original purpose was to keep out the chill breeze which it was thought brought on the fever. Quinine was known to be effective in reducing malarial fever, but many years were to pass before any systematic prophylaxis came to be practiced.

At the end of the year, Mr. Kerr and Mr. Fraser went down to Batanga to annual meeting, taking with them some twenty little boys who had never seen "the big pond" and who were filled with excitement regarding "the white man's canoe," as they called the steamer.

Dr. Silas and Mary, having heard that Benito Station was also begging for reinforcements, impatiently waited for the news of assignments to come up from the beach. At last, two days before Christmas, the good word came. Benito had, in view of Mary's special need, waived its request in favor of Efulan. The Rev. and Mrs. W. C. Johnston would leave Batanga within a week. With joyful relief of heart, Mary, now in her seventh month of pregnancy, awaited the coming of another white woman.

Christmas Day passed for the Johnsons with only their African friends at hand. All day they kept open house, and flocks of people came and went. Mary wrote: "We had a happy

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day in each other's love, and in the great overshadowing love of the great Christmas Gift and Giver."

As the eventful first year drew to its close, the two looked back over the months and checked progress. Nearly all of the thirty schoolboys had expressed a desire to follow Christ and were reading the primer. Dr. Good's manuscript of the Gospel, after being waylaid and stolen on its way to the beach by Bulu warriors looking for plunder, had been returned with an indemnity of goats and chickens. It was now safely in New York City in the hands of the American Bible Society. The howlings of the local Ngee had died away to a murmur. In fact, two ex-Ngees were now mission employees, being yearlings on the Hill, and another had come to Dr. Johnson for treatment, his faith in his own charms badly shaken. The Sunday school classes had grown. Fifteen hymns had been translated. Several runaway wives had been rescued in time to save them from being hung by their thumbs or having their ears slashed off. The little hospital was flourishing.

The doctor sat down at his desk in the little bark house on the hill that was strangely quiet with all the boys gone. What he wrote for the record was:

"God has brought us to the close of another year. He has given us wonderfully good health and made many new and kind friends for us. We have done little enough for Him."

11. Eight Cents a Day

On Friday, January third, 1896, the little compound on Efulan Hill was thrown into a flurry of excitement by the arrival of carriers from the beach saying that the missionary party and the rest of the caravan would arrive the following day.

With the end of their month's solitude definitely in sight, the doctor and Mary sat down to their last supper alone. Suddenly more carriers appeared, with news that the white people had decided not to set up camp again but to press on to reach Efulan by dark. Hastily Mary reset the table, replenished the food, decked the bark walls with the ferns she had kept fresh in jars of water for the occasion, gave a hasty pat to her brown bangs, "crimped" for the first time in many a moon, and went to the door of her tiny cottage to await the guests.

One by one the weary travelers appeared at the crest of the Hill: the tall gaunt form of Melvin Fraser, the shorter figure of Charles McCleary, the familiar silhouette of Matthew Kerr, and the unfamiliar figures of the long-awaited reinforcements.

As Emily Johnston stepped onto the porch, and the lamp lit up her lovely dark eyes, Mary opened longing arms and the two women clasped one another in a heart-warming embrace. At least one of the men standing in the shadows was moved to sudden tears.

The joyful news that there was a great company of seven white people at Efulan Station was heralded far and near by the throbbing of many drums, so that two days later the little chapel was jammed with a record attendance of four hundred curious Bulus.

There was a surprise in store for them. The Mission, at its recent meeting in December, had assigned Mr. Fraser, Mr.

McCleary, and Mr. Kerr, who was the one remaining veteran of that advance guard of 1893, to open a new station at Ebolewo'o, the site chosen to be the next outpost by Dr. Goode on his journeys of exploration.

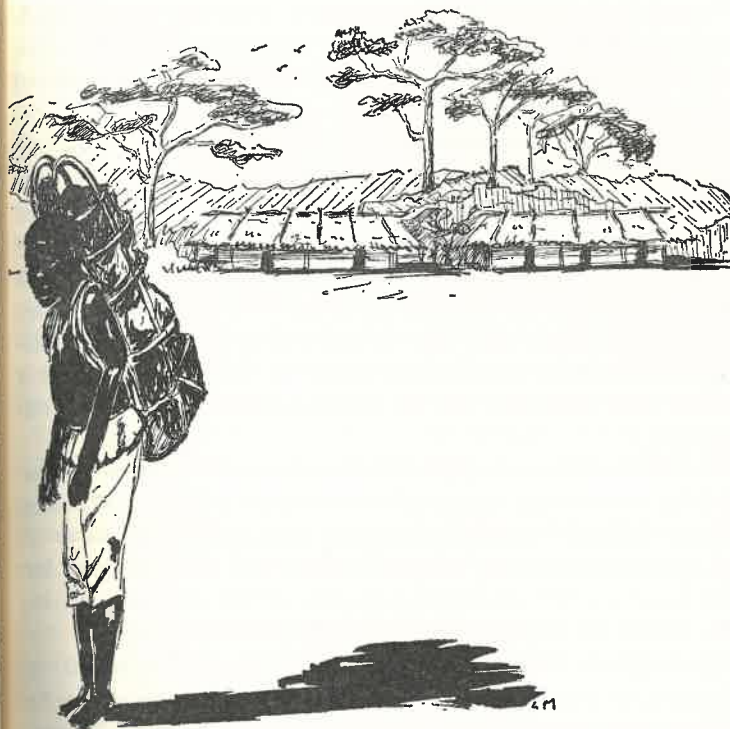
A furor of vehement protest rose from the natives upon the announcement of this plan. Indignantly the old chiefs brandished their spears and denounced the Mission for taking away Efulan's white men. With great difficulty they were restrained and persuaded finally to accept the decree of the Mission. Mr. Kerr then preached his farewell sermon to his Efulan friends.

The following week the station force began making meticulous preparations for the great venture of lengthening the stakes through the forest toward the northeast. It was no small task to select and pack with care all the necessary provisions for the bachelor party of three. Each item had to be protected from mould, mildew, ants and termites by a suitable wrapping or container. To augment or replenish the supplies would require a return trip by one of the missionaries, so nothing must be forgotten or overlooked.

Mary took on extra tasks, and seemed equal to anything—cutting men's hair, sewing denim trousers, making new covers for sun helmets, sewing mosquito nets, packing pantry and medical supplies.

"It will be a hard life for the men," Mary wrote, "yet I most envy them the pleasure of going to those people who have never heard of God, and telling them of Him. I am glad that I can talk to the people now."

The equipment was weighed and divided into loads of from thirty to forty pounds—all that a bearer could carry on his back. It was estimated that it would take the caravan of five men five days to make the sixty-mile journey through the jungle, and it was soon apparent that the task of finding men who would be willing to take a hazardous journey so far into the interior presented serious difficulties. Carriers were willing



to go to Ebolewo'o in the company of the missionaries, but they were afraid to return alone.

Their fears were not unfounded. There had always been bickering and fighting among the tribes: petty quarrels over the theft of food or possessions, disputes over women, wrangling over gardens. Any one of these might result in a sudden attack or stealthy murder. The schoolboys on the compound often had to be guarded from such hostility, and many times the disquietude was such that the missionary accompanied the boys to the spring or to the gardens to protect them from danger.

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Worse than these local animosities were the larger feuds between tribes. Ill-feeling had long existed between tribes of the beach and those of the bush, a feeling that centered around that old breeder of wars—greed. The tribes of the coast, having had firsthand contact with European traders, had already acquired a love for the attractive articles available by exchange. Ivories and rubber from the forest belt brought great riches in bright calico, beads, knives, and salt. These treasures the coast tribes coveted for themselves. The bush tribes should not be allowed to bring their rubber and ivory to the coast, they said, but should rather trade through the beach men, who would then resell to the white men at a profit. This naturally led to jealousy, quarreling, and even murder.

It was for this reason that the beach carriers feared to venture far away from home unless accompanied by white men. After weeks of waiting in vain for men enough to carry all the needed equipment, it was decided that Mr. Kerr and Mr. McCleary should proceed with part of the caravan, leaving Mr. Fraser to recruit more men and follow later.

Accordingly, Mr. Fraser left Efulan on February 10. As recorded in Silas Johnson's diary, this was the hardest day the doctor had spent to date in Africa. After working all morning to get twenty-seven loads divided and distributed, he started the caravan off, only to have word come back that they feared to pass a certain town without him because there had been a killing there. So the weary doctor walked with the men all afternoon to escort them past the danger point and returned to Efulan late that same night.

Now the Johnsons and the Johnstons were left alone as the assigned force for Efulan Station. The new arrivals devoted themselves to language study and Mrs. Johnston, having had some experience in practical nursing, helped with the medical work. Dr. Silas had his hands full with the hospital, with the

Eight Cents a Day

workmen, who were constructing school and dormitory buildings, with classes in the school, where he and Mary took turns teaching and supervising, and with the Sunday school and preaching services each week. His Bulu vocabulary was increasing with amazing rapidity. Yet, although the preparations of lessons and sermons consumed much time and energy, he and Mary continued to work faithfully on the Bulu-English vocabulary.

Together with the new missionaries, the doctor made frequent visits to the towns strung along the trail at the foot of the Hill. In a certain town called Nyabitandi, two miles distant from the station, several believers had been enrolled, and it was decided to establish a Sunday school there.

Dr. Silas went into the jungle with the men of the town to help gather striplings and bamboo poles for the building. He remarked that the men were so lazy it was like moving a threshing machine to get them started at anything. But a start was made. During the doctor's absence on an itinerating trip, Mr. Johnston gathered together a group of seventeen schoolboys from the station, and together they went out to Nyabitandi where the building material lay in the street. By dint of much unaccustomed hurry, they succeeded in erecting a little chapel before the doctor's return. This was the first visible sign of the outreach and growth of the embryonic Church of the interior.

In November of 1896 another notable event took place. Dr. Silas wrote the story as follows:

The other evening at a meeting of the Inquiry Class I suggested a plan to my boys by which they could send out a couple of their number to read the Bible and teach the people in distant towns where we missionaries could not go more than once or twice a year. The boys, I explained, could live for about eight cents a day, making the trip of one week cost about fifty-six cents.

I then took up the first collection ever taken in Bululand. It

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amounted to one dollar and fifty-eight cents and I was proud of it. It came from boys who had nothing but manual labor to give, and it meant getting down to hard work to pay it. If people at home would give in like proportion the world would soon hear of Christ.

The two boys who were sent were gone six days and spent seventeen cents less than their allowance. They were kindly received and were listened to with due respect. We have great hopes for this branch of the work.

The experiment was the beginning of that remarkable and fruitful movement for the evangelization of the Bulu by mission schoolboys that was to account for the phenomenal growth of the Church of Christ in Kamerun.

To the south of Efulan lay the unexplored region of the Ntum tribe. With five carefully chosen men accompanying him, Dr. Silas took a five days' journey into the territory, telling the Good News of salvation as he went. His journal covering the events of the trip is typical of the careful records he kept of all his subsequent journeys. At each place he visited he painstakingly learned and jotted down the name of the clan, the town, the chief, the approximate population, and the outstanding characteristics of the people, together with the distances between towns, rivers, and forest stretches. It was



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this minute knowledge of the country, the tribes, and the people that knit the close bond between Dr. Silas and the Africans that has been often remarked upon. The latter became aware that to this Christian American, an African was a person of value, an individual, who was worth knowing in all phases of his life.

In January of the following year Mr. and Mrs. Johnston took a trip to Ebolewo'o, which was now called by its new name, Elat. The original name of Ebolewo'o, meaning Rotten Chimpanzee, is still retained as the name of the government post now occupying the site, but the name Elat, meaning "Covenant," or "Uniting," was chosen as more befitting a center dedicated to the proclamation of the Gospel that was to cement the tribes together as brothers in a new pact of peace, and to make them partakers in the new covenant of God.

During her stay at Elat Mrs. Johnston was deeply impressed with the terrible need for the light of the Gospel in this new field. The darkness and gross superstition of the people surpassed anything she had witnessed even around Efulan. Here was stark paganism at its worst, and her heart ached for the unhappy women. Like Mary, she too felt "the pull of the primitive" for pioneering in a hard field tugged at her spirit. The loneliness of the men sent to start the new station appalled her.

I am new at the work (she wrote in a letter home) but it seems to me a woman has the right to sacrifice herself or run the risk of sickness as well as the men, and here I think she could help three men do a greater work.

The wisdom of her words and the need for the helping hand of a woman in the opening up of new fields was soon evidenced by the repeated attacks of illness reported by the lone men at Elat, illnesses caused largely by improper food and lack of proper care, but it was 1898 before feminine rein-

forcement for Elat arrived, with the coming of Dr. A. B. Lip-pert and his wife.

12. Baptism in Bululand

Little by little the light of the gospel message preached so faithfully Sunday by Sunday at Efulan began to penetrate the Stygian darkness of the Bulu tribe. One of the earliest converts was a little old woman who was to become one of the most remarkable Christians the Mission was ever to enroll. Her name was Minkoé mi Ntem, but she was always known as "Nane" (Mother). Small of stature—she could stand under Mrs. Johnston's arm—old Nane's wrinkled brown body enclosed a heart that throbbed with a great love for her new-found Savior. One night after she had made her decision to become a Christian she went toiling up the steep hill in the dark to tell the missionaries that she must leave at once to go tell her sister the Good News. That her sister lived thirty miles away mattered not at all; such joyful tidings could not wait. "And Nane first findeth her sister Zamo . . . and she brought her to Jesus."

It was old Nane who, upon Mary's arrival at Efulan, had put her motherly arms around the young woman ten thousand miles away from her own mother and the only white woman in the Kamerun jungle. Nane wanted her to know that her loneliness was understood and that she, Nane, would be a mother to her.

Nane's sister Zamo also became a great Christian. She held

meetings in her little smoky kitchen and persuaded women by the score to accept Christ. Time and again she would toil the thirty miles up hill and down till she stood at the missionary's door and presented her harvest of names—once as many as twenty-four of them—to be added to the company of the redeemed.

Zamo had a daughter named Abômô, and she too was a faithful worker, and a frequent visitor on the Hill. When the people in the villages saw her on the trail they would scoff and say, "Why do you trouble yourself to go up there? The white people never give you a present. They do not even feed you."

But Abômô would say, "If they gave me a cloth it would soon be in rags; if they gave me food I would be hungry again tomorrow, but what I get from them goes into my heart and stays there always."

But if there was the occasional bright ray of light in the surrounding darkness, there was overwhelming blackness in the valley at the foot of the Hill.

One Sunday the doctor went down to try to save the life of a woman who had eloped and had been caught and brought back to her husband. She was sitting naked in the middle of the street, one foot in a stock made from a heavy six-foot log; her head and neck smeared with ashes. Her husband had threatened to hang her; he could afford to, as he had sixteen other wives. The yard was full of noisy men, each one urging his own suggestion for punishment, the most favored being to cut off her ears and let her go. This surprising leniency was due to a dream that came to the son of the woman's former husband. It seems he had had an interview with the spirit of his dead father in which it was forbidden that the woman should be killed. Upon the white man's intercession the woman was led away unharmed and the doctor returned to Efulan. No sooner was he out of sight, however, than the will

of the majority prevailed, and with a sharp knife the ears of the recreant wife were severed from her head.

A few days later the mother of a prominent chief in the vicinity died of bronchial pneumonia. Silas went down to the funeral and found some four hundred persons gathered in the town. For nearly three hours he watched them dancing in the street, firing their guns, yelling and shouting themselves hoarse. At length there was silence. A fiendish-looking man advanced to the corpse, slit open the abdomen, removed the uterus, cut it open and began searching for the witch that had caused her demise. The crowd waited patiently for a while, but as time went on and the witch failed to appear, the onlookers began to disperse until at length there was no one left in the street.

The doctor looked around expectantly for someone else to claim the body and dispose of it. No one came. Dr. Silas, with the help of a schoolboy who was with him, dug a grave and gave the remains a decent burial. This act of kindness, without precedent in that village, made a tremendous impression, and has not been forgotten to this day. The heart of the chief, however, was not softened by this example. A few weeks later one of his wives ran away from him and when she was brought back he gave her forty lashes with a wire whip.

It was amid such scenes of dire ignorance and cruelty that Mary's baby girl was born on a Sunday morning, March 8, 1896. She was the first white baby in all that vast stretch of interior Kamerun. According to her father's written report she was "a nice girl weighing nine and a half pounds 'dressed' as they say of a turkey." The doctor had good reason to be thankful for the competence of Emily Johnston that day, for Mary had convulsions, and for several hours required vigorous treatment. A few days later Dr. Silas write, in true male form, "I feel much worse for the strain. It is hard to be both the father and doctor at the same time."

The news of baby Mary's arrival sped from lip to lip through the forest and was the consuming topic of conversation in every village palaver house and in every smoky kitchen. Those who climbed the steep path to Efulan came back with incredible tales of the goings-on in the house on the Hill.

"The baby cannot be seen," they said, "for clothes! *Eké!* what kind of a thing is this? Clothes on a newborn baby! What a waste!"

Mary wrote home:

It is good to see our little one dressed in her dainty clothes after seeing only naked children and babies for over a year. Of course her clothes are a great curiosity to the natives. How such extravagance does astonish them all! They say she is beautiful and fairly hold their breath if I start to uncover her little feet. For days after we first showed the baby to a few friends I heard nothing outside but people saying, "*Bi aye yene mon*" (We want to see the baby). And just as often I gave the reply, "*Mon a ne óyo*" (The baby is asleep).

The women refused to be discouraged when they could not see the baby; they waited for it to wake up, and then climbed on each others' backs to peek in the windows. What they saw scandalized them.

"The white woman is heartless; she is cruel; she lays the baby in a box all by itself and walks off and leaves it. She lets it cry and cry and rarely feeds it."

The village chiefs speculated for hours as to the size of the dowry the girl-child would bring the doctor. One of them, following the current custom of bartering for a child as soon as it was born (or even before), made what he considered a magnificent offer of goats and goods, and was nonplussed at Silas Johnson's lack of response to his offer.

Baby Mary's birth was duly registered in the government records at Batanga, her father making the long trip on foot to the beach for that express purpose. Upon his return he reported that it was a very complex problem to know how to

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be born, to be married, or to die according to German regulations.

In June the little force at Efulan was saddened by the news of the sudden death in Batanga of Mrs. Oscar Roberts, M.D., who, it will be remembered, had sailed from New York with the Johnson party in 1894. It was the first break in their traveling party and Mary's heart ached for the bereaved mother at home. "But we know there is no chance in God's dealings," she wrote her own mother. "All we can do either here or at home is to keep in His will and leave the rest to Him. Laughter and tears lie very close together in Africa and it is well they do, else the tears might have the best of it."

At Elat the three men came down with fever one after the other. Mr. Kerr came back to Efulan to recuperate amidst the comforts of home that a woman's hand provides. There was a close bond between the Johnsons and the kindly veteran who had introduced them to the ways of Africa. Henry, as they called him, was always doing something to make life more pleasant for others. On this visit he fashioned a little high chair for baby Mary, and to the astonishment of the Bulus, made a little wagon that could be pulled by the nurse-girl.

The homemade stove with which Mary had struggled for over a year was an ingenious invention consisting of stones piled on one another and cemented together with clay. Over this extended an iron rod from which to hang the pots and kettles. How the housewife had contrived to turn out delicious bread and biscuits with it is a mystery. Her sense of humor may have had something to do with it, for she could write blithely about rocks falling into her bread pudding, flavoring it with sand, as though the incident were hilariously amusing. But now friend Henry put together a new sheet iron stove that was a delight to use.

When baby Mary was five months old, a unique service was

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held in Efulan chapel. The Rev. W. C. Johnston, using what Bulu he could command, undertook to explain to that primitive assembly the meaning of the solemn rite of baptism. And then, before the staring eyes of the uncomprehending crowd, he sprinkled the symbolic drops on the little red-gold head of Mary, daughter of Nnôm Ngee. It was the first baptism ever seen in the Kamerun jungle. Mary's mother wrote wistfully in her journal, "How I would have loved to have my dear parents present!"

In February of 1897, two years after the coming of Dr. Silas and Mary to Efulan, and one year after the opening of Elat Station by Messrs. Kerr, Fraser, and McCleary, the Mission ventured to push on still farther toward the north. Mr. Kerr and Mr. Roberts were sent to scout the country surrounding the newly established German government post at Lolodorf, on the Lobo River.

The Germans were now tightening their hold on the country, with their headquarters at Kribi on the coast. New roads had been cut to Efulan and on to Elat, shortening by many miles the formerly tortuous trails. The Commander at Kribi had begun dealing severely with the offenders in the repeated stealing palavers along the Efulan-Kribi road.

In all these early dealings with the Africans the government officials leaned heavily on the missionaries for help, recognizing their superior understanding of native customs and their familiarity with the vernacular.

On one occasion the Commander sent a letter calling together all the chiefs of the Efulan district, and asking Dr. Silas to make it clear to them that all stolen goods must be returned. If they could not thus arrive at a peaceful settlement, the Commander would send soldiers; towns would be burned, and people killed.

Upon receipt of the letter the doctor, accompanied by Mary, went down the hill to the gathering of the chiefs. They slept

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two nights in the village, reasoning with the people. A translation of the official communication was prepared for distribution to the more distant chiefs, but no one could be found who would take the risk involved in delivering it. "The two brave soldiers," my mother wrote, "were afraid to advance further with such a message, so the matter was left standing until further word from Kribi." Mary wrote further:

It is a vexing and trying time. How many things a missionary is called upon to do besides preach the gospel! It is these outside things that try his patience and vex his soul, to say nothing of the wear and tear on his body. While in the village we held two services, telling of the Great Commander who loves us.

In October Mr. Kerr left for America on a much-needed furlough. While he was in the States the first mail ever sent out by the Bulu people arrived for him in Philadelphia. It read, in true Bulu idiom, "Hunger for you has come to our town."

When, early in the following year, the long-awaited Gospels in Bulu arrived from America, pandemonium broke loose on Efulan Hill. In spite of some bewilderment in the minds of many on learning that the Word of God must be bought and paid for, the supply was exhausted almost at once. All the boys in Dr. Silas' class were now able to read. Four grown men enlisted in a beginners' class in order to learn to decipher the precious Word. Thus early was a beginning made in the program of adult literacy in West Africa.

In 1898 the infant station on Efulan's hilltop was closed for lack of missionary personnel. The Johnsons were due to go home on furlough. Mrs. W. C. Johnston, after giving birth to a baby boy, was left with her limbs completely paralyzed. Obviously the Johnsons, too, must return to the States. The Mission could spare no one for Efulan.

With heavy hearts the missionaries made preparations for departure. The doctor called in Ngumbia, the chief of the

Baptism in Bululand

town at the foot of the hill, and for the sum of nine sheep and twenty marks per month, the latter promised to protect the mission houses and property during the absence of the missionary force.

A caravan of fifty carriers, seventeen of them hammockmen for the women and children, set out on the fourth of May. The wearisome six days' journey down to Batanga was in striking contrast to the gay trip up when the missionaries had been fresh from home and full of the vigor and enthusiasm of youth. Now, weakened by repeated illness, and knowing all too well the black horror that lurked in the friendly-looking villages through which their long caravan passed, their hearts ached as they thought of the interruption of the task they had undertaken. Yet there lived within them an unshakable conviction that the Lord who had commissioned them would yet work His miracle in the midst of the Bulu people.

The five weeks' voyage homeward was a nightmare for all the party. Mrs. Johnston was unable to move; her husband succumbed to an attack of malaria, which made him incapable of helping either his wife or their baby Robert. Mary, who was pregnant, succumbed to seasickness and came down with a fever; baby Mary had malaria and a bad cold.

"This tub is a bad roller; I do not feel well myself," wrote the doctor as he fought to keep on his feet. Finally he wrote, "We are all very miserable indeed!" Then he too succumbed.

Small wonder that Mary sighed at the end of their furlough as she contemplated another voyage, "Would that we could annihilate distance, and *step* from here to there!"

13. Baby Overboard

Upon arriving in Los Angeles, the Johnsons enjoyed a glad reunion with their friends. Mary spent much time with her father, who had suffered for a year with a tumor on the brain, which had made him unable to work even at his beloved gardening. As the visit drew toward its end, she knew when she bade him good-bye that she was not to see him again.

Meanwhile, she enjoyed to the full the delightful obligation of showing off to friends and relatives her little Mary, the first white baby to be born in the Kamerun jungle. On October 14 this joy was augmented by the arrival of a second daughter, who was named Lois.

During this stay in the homeland, Dr. Silas was welcomed back into medical circles and assisted his old colleagues in surgery, including an operation on his wife. He was also invited to address the Los Angeles Medical Society.

The esteem in which he was held by prominent physicians was evidenced throughout his subsequent furloughs. In later years Dr. E. Forrest Boyd, a prominent Los Angeles physician, said of his old friend: "There is no doubt about the heights to which Dr. Johnson could have risen in the United States. In terms of dollars and cents and social prestige he would have been outstanding in any place."

Dr. Johnson's power as a speaker was also soon recognized. To quote Dr. Boyd again: "The way he handled himself on the platform paralleled his ability as a doctor. He was a master of psychology and could adapt himself to any audience."

He addressed synods and presbyteries, colleges and universities, youth conferences and Christian Endeavor conventions, and many young people responded to his call for volunteers for

Baby Overboard

the mission field. His keen sympathy and love for the African were coupled with a facile tongue and unusual pictorial powers.

To a college group he would speak of hunting for big game, and then go on to talk of the greatest hunt of all—that for human souls.

To a group of businessmen he said:

I am working for the best firm in all heaven and earth and the job is most profitable. The business is not a get-rich-quick scheme so far as gold in the pocket is concerned, but it is the safest and best paying proposition that has ever been presented to you or ever will be. It is no soft job, and no place for slackers. Spartans are needed, not quitters. It is work that satisfies the soul. There is no work that abides save work done for Christ.

This dramatic quality in Dr. Silas' speaking carried over admirably into the Bulu idiom as well, and it is small wonder that his sermons were remembered and treasured through the years. Many remembered how he preached in the old Efulan church on the parable of the man who built his house upon a rock, and that other man who built upon the sand. Both houses were constructed before the very eyes of the congregation, so vivid was the word picture, so graphic the gestures. The sound of the hammer, the noise of the storm, the force of the wind, the crash of the fall—they heard it all. His African listeners sighed in pity for the foolish man, and exulted in triumph with the wise man, and no one in all the crowd under the thatched-roofed chapel wanted to build his house of faith on shifting sand.

For Dr. Silas the highlights of his furlough were the meetings he attended at which he heard Dwight L. Moody preach, and the concerts where he listened to Sousa's band. He also spent a number of happy days with his father on the old farm in Kansas, riding behind the old horse "Prince," plowing the potato field,

and revelling in the feel of the soil, for which, as he once said he had "a craving like that of a child for candy."

When it came time to return to Africa, the hardest leaving of all was the good-bye he and Mary had to say to the three-year-old baby Mary. The health hazards on the field were in those days too great for little children, and so Mary's parents reluctantly decided they must leave her with Grandmother Hays.

On June 17, 1899, the doctor, with Mrs. Johnson and Lois now eight months old, embarked for Africa by way of England. Mr. W. C. Johnston accompanied them, having left his wife still ill but walking with the aid of crutches.

Upon sailing from America Mary Johnson had written home: "We have had our year of rest, and a blessed year it has been. Never did flowers seem so beautiful or the sky so bright as on the last days in Los Angeles. In the midst of all this love and loveliness—to close one's eyes and recall scenes in Bululand! Nature is beautiful there too, but *human* nature! What need for home and love! But rays of light come even from Africa—letters telling of the services of Christians trying to live aright amidst ridicule, and pleas for the ministers to return and tell more of the Savior. May our work there be upheld by the prayers of God's children in this favored land, that we may be able to preach Christ alone—and Him crucified."

The voyage down the coast was one of the stormiest the ship had ever made. The steamer stood first on its bow, then on its stern, and Dr. Silas at last had to tie Mary and baby Lois to the bunk with a sheet to keep them from falling on the floor. When the small ship anchored off Batanga, the storm had not abated; it seemed it would be impossible to unload. The surf boat brought alongside to receive the passengers leaped into the air with every high wave, and came down with a terrific jolt. The ship's ladder was one minute ten feet above the water, the next it was crashing against the side of the ship.

The captain pondered awhile and then told the doctor to

slide down a rope. This he did, with Mary looking fearfully over the side. Then the captain padded the rope and lashed Mary to it, and she too slid down, while the baby, in the arms of the captain, yelled in protest. Then, with the little boat still leaping about in the sea, the captain wrapped the baby securely in a blanket and tossed her overboard into the arms of its father, braced to receive her. By a miracle he caught her. Later she wrote: "It was the most exciting moment of my life. I wish I could remember it."

From Batanga, Mary reported:

Upon arriving at Batanga we hastened toward the interior as soon as possible. And now let me say, "Hurrah for the mule!" But you didn't know we had a mule, did you? At Teneriffe the doctor spent all day looking for one that would fit a missionary purse. This one did, if not in price, then in size—ears excepted. When our caravan started for Efulan, Lois rode in the hammock; I was installed on the mule. We call him Jack. He marched through the mud like a major and jumped over fallen logs like a goat. I rode him all the way with the exception of a few miles, so I am proud of Jack.

Question—whether the new baby or Jack excited the most curiosity! Old people were forgotten in the mad rush after something new. People turned out en masse. Then one old man opened his arms wide and ran toward the doctor and embraced him as if he were his long-lost child.

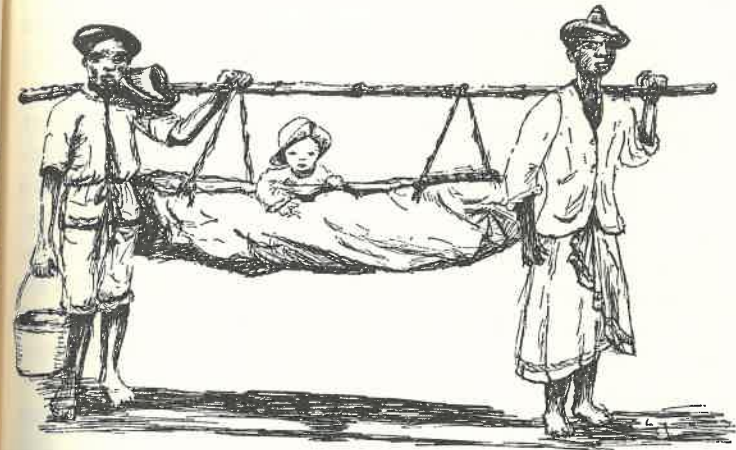
Efulan is not as we left it. The grass and weeds have grown, but all five of the Christians have been faithful and one more has been added.

14. Jungle Warfare

There were other changes that the missionaries found very disturbing. The unrest and bad feeling between the tribes had greatly increased. The thieving and stealing of women and goods in retaliation for grievances had given way to the open burning of towns, and fierce quarrelling that resulted in shooting and murder. The Germans in that year of 1899 found themselves with a special kind of jungle warfare on their hands, and shortly realized that the Bulu chiefs, when roused, were something to be reckoned with.

As hostilities increased, Efulan found itself cut off from the beach, and all communications with the rest of the Mission were temporarily interrupted. The missionaries at Elat and Lolodorf became anxious about their friends as weeks went on and no news of them was received. Dr. Lehman and Mr. McCleary set out to reconnoiter. Friendly chiefs south of Elat tried to stop them, fearing they would be killed on the way, but after detaining them two days they let them go, upon the condition that Mr. Johnston should come from Efulan to meet them and escort them through the unfriendly territory. The rescuing party arrived safely at Efulan, and plans were made to take Mary Johnson and Lois to Lolodorf. Mr. Johnston and Dr. Lehman were to remain to protect the property and to calm the excited Bulus at Efulan.

It was a hard, wet, four-day trip by foot, hammock and mule-back for the three Johnsons. Jack the mule had to be carried over one stream. It took eight men to do this and they nearly lost him when he fell down the bank. The party passed some four hundred Bulu warriors on the path, and when they finally reached Lolodorf, Mary was shaking with fever and dysentery,



but they were all grateful to God who had guarded them and brought them through every danger. They would have been utterly helpless if the Bulus had wanted to harm them.

Serious disturbances took place around Elat, and during this period Mary and Lois were at Benito. It had seemed best to relieve the congestion at Lolodorf and Dr. Silas had escorted his wife and baby to Kribi, where they had found a steamer bound for Spanish Guinea. During the two months' separation from her husband, Mary chafed at the lack of any news from Kamerun, but was grateful for the calm quiet beauty of the lovely palm-bordered beach. She did not dream that daughter Lois would one day return to that very beach and live in that self-same house on the bluff as a missionary to the tribes of the coast.

In February Dr. Silas, in spite of the governor's warning of possible dangers, set out to the beach to meet the returning pair. He declined an official escort and started out with a few carriers, who deserted him one by one. One of the men took a

firebrand to the river one night and tried to get some fish. He came plunging back frightened out of his wits, thinking he had been attacked by soldiers. It turned out that he had collided with two elephants in the river.

Gradually the missionaries returned to their posts at Elat. The government began building a fort on the crest of Ebolewo'o hill, giving the Mission no alternative except to sign a paper to the effect that it wanted no protection from the government. The Mission chose the latter course, fearing to lose the site altogether. They finally did lose it, however, and the present station of Elat is some distance away on a lower level. Two hundred workmen and 150 soldiers straightway began fortifying the hill.

One powerful chief, who had been prominent in the uprising, was named Oba'a. The Germans offered a reward for him, dead or alive. Some of his own people threatened to betray him. Oba'a came out of hiding one dark midnight and knocked at Mr. Johnston's door, begging for help. He wanted to give himself up, but was afraid he would be killed. Mr. Johnston advised him to go back into hiding until an approach could be made to the government.

Oba'a preferred to stay. Dr. Silas confirmed Oba'a's opinion that it would be best to give himself up. Accordingly, Mr. Johnston accompanied him to the officer in charge, making a strong plea on his behalf. A second chief also was turned over by Dr. Silas, and both men were given lenient treatment, being banished to Douala for a period of years. Mr. Johnston became known thereafter as "the man who saved Oba'a."

Gradually, with the coming of more German troops, order was restored. At the end of the uprising there were thousands of Bulu living in rude shelters or hiding in the forests, having burned their own homes to prevent the "enemy" from doing so.

15. Church on the Hill

The work was resumed at Efulan in spite of the fact that the Bulu war grew stronger than ever. Mary wrote:

We have such large audiences these Sundays that we have to sit out under the plantain trees. Last week the house was filled by women alone. We held the opening exercises out under the trees and then I told the women to go into the church. Such a time I had getting them quieted! They went in a grand rush, pell-mell, bracelets rattling, voices pitched as high as the trees, confusion confounded—and all this rush in order to get the *front* seats. Think of it!



The little Sunday school in the town two miles from Efulan had grown to a considerable size. With these evidences of expansion in the congregation it was thought time for the formal organization of the church, a dream long cherished by the missionaries. Mr. McCleary arrived from Elat for the occasion. There were also two new missionary guests at Efulan, Mr. and Mrs. William Dager, who had arrived from America during the uprising and had been unable to reach Elat promptly.

Regarding the taking of this important step, a fellow missionary wrote:

Our brethren at Efulan have been most deliberate and cautious. Only after years of probation and the test of being left for a time without a resident missionary have the Christians been deemed ready for the organization of the church. Last autumn the believers there contributed ten dollars and fifty cents toward the carrying of the Good News to the Ntum country. One woman even pulled off her leg ornaments and added them to the contribution. It was all she had to give.

The Great Ngee

Mr. McCleary wrote:

It was our blessed privilege to organize the church of Efulan with six charter members, and to ordain one church elder. There are about thirty-five believers in the inquiry class. There was no house large enough to hold the crowd, so the meeting was held out under the plantain trees. When those six Christians, four women and two men, arose out of the crowd to be set apart as believers in God, it was an impressive scene.

Mary Johnson also described the event:

May 13 of the year 1900 was a day long looked forward to and long to be remembered. On that day the first Bulu were baptized and formed into the first church of Christ in this part of Kamerun, and for the first time the Lord's Supper was celebrated by members of the Bulu race.

The photograph shows the faces of the communicants, and let me introduce each one to you, that you may feel somewhat acquainted with them and be able to pray for them more intelligently.

At the right stands Ndongo, the man who had been ordained as the first Bulu church elder. Ndongo knows the forest trails as you know the streets of your town. Several years ago he enrolled as a believer and has been plodding toward the light ever since.

Just in front of Ndongo stands Mese, the only one of the four women not a widow. Her husband has another wife to whom his heart clings, although he is trying to put her away; she makes life very unpleasant for Mese.

The woman standing is Abia Ngon. To look really natural she should have a basket on her back or some food tied up in a leaf in her hand. She and Mese were formerly wives of the same man. When he died, Mese, being young, was passed on to another man, but Abia remained a widow.

At Mese's right is Biso, a quiet little woman letting her light shine. She has one son, a wild young man for whom she always prays by name when she prays in public.

The smiling little woman perched on the stump, with a red cap on her head, is Monkoé, better known as Nane, of whom the Bulu

Church on the Hill

say, "She is surpassingly skillful in leading people to Christ." She is almost a dwarf in stature, and is the mother of ten children, of whom only three are living. Two of these are in the inquiry class.

Nlate, on the left, is about seventeen years old, the youngest of the flock, and the scholar. His knowledge of the four Gospels is almost phenomenal.* He has a wife, a little girl of about ten years of age, whom he has given to us for two years for the consideration of four yards of calico a month. She is learning to read and write, to sew and to sweep, and I trust will be a helpmeet for him when they begin life together.

How very notable was this step forward in the advancement of the Bulu people and the work of the Mission may be grasped by contrasting this scene with the terrible darkness of a contemporary picture at the grave of Mvondo, the powerful chief of Ebolewo'o, who died a few months before. Upon his demise, seventeen of his wives were caught and detained until a pledge was given that some one would be killed for having perpetrated his death. The outcome was that three lives were sacrificed: one woman was killed, one was drowned, and one man's throat was cut. The women were dispatched to cook for Mvondo in the spirit world, and the man to gather firewood for him.

As Mvondo was a member of the secret *So* society, the people feared that they might have unwittingly offended the *So*. Therefore they assembled to offer sacrifice and to cleanse themselves from guilt. They concocted a potent medicine and poured it into earthen jars partially filled with water. Then they put the jars in a row, eight feet apart. In front of this row they placed plantain stalks for seats for the women and children, ninety-four of whom came to sit there and watch the proceedings. The *So* members then disappeared into their den to make more medicine, reappearing presently with a

* Eighteen years later Nlate was ordained to the ministry, the first pastor of the Bulu race.

sheep, a male of the first year. Every man present then laid hands on the sheep, presumably with the purpose of transferring his guilt to the animal, much as the Israelites did with the scapegoat. One man with a short knife divided the sheep

asunder while it was still alive, letting the blood run into first one and then another of the jars. Each person then washed in the bloodstained water; the rite was finished, and the people considered themselves cleansed.

By the end of that year new recruits were added to the Mission, but so many missionaries, both old and new, were ill, that the outlook was most dismal. Eight of the missionaries needed to go on health leave at once, and at annual meeting in December a petition was sent to the Board asking for eight replacements. In March of 1901 it became necessary to close Lolodorf Station. Elat was left without a doctor. Efulan was reduced to one missionary,

Mr. Robert Johnston, whose brother, W. C. Johnston, was ill at Batanga, while Dr. and Mrs. Silas Johnson were on their way home.

This return home after a year and a half on the field was due to Mary Johnson's illness. In February her symptoms had caused Dr. Silas grave anxiety and he had taken her again to Batanga. From there he sent a slide specimen to England but the sputum arrived too old for analysis. Dr. Silas therefore made his own decision to take his wife home at once. They sailed with Dr. and Mrs. Lippert, also on health leave, on April 14, arriving in New York May 30.

There was one consolation in the dark outlook for the doc-



tor and Mary—the joy of being with Mary's mother and little Mary. Realizing what lay ahead, Dr. Silas made plans to take his wife to the ranch of relatives in Arizona, where he hoped the dry desert air might improve her health. Mother Hays and the children went along, too, and while little Mary and Lois had wonderful fun riding the horses and being spoiled by doting uncles, the hoped-for improvement in Mrs. Johnson did not take place. The cough grew worse; weakness and fever ravaged the tired body. At length the family returned to Los Angeles where Dr. Silas opened an office and resumed his medical practice.

In September of that year 1902, he and Mary transferred their membership to Immanuel Church, offshoot of First Presbyterian Church. Thus began that long and rich relationship with Immanuel which was to be Dr. Johnson's source of strength and encouragement until the end of his labors.

As Mary Johnson weakened in body, her spirit remained keenly alive to the needs of others, and her thoughts were never far from Africa. The last weeks of her life were spent in her mother's home. Her fellow worker in Kamerun, Mrs. W. C. Johnston, upon receiving word of her death wrote:

While Mrs. Johnson was not permitted to spend the last two years of her life on the field, yet in spirit she was with us. Her interest in the work never abated. She rejoiced with us as souls were born into the Kingdom and sorrowed with us for those who fell. She constantly sent messages of love and encouragement to the Christians at Efulan, until they settled into the habit of coming for news at the arrival of each mail, and when her last message came, saying, "Tell old Nane that I will meet her in Heaven," it was announced on Sabbath morning in church. A great hush fell, while tears rolled down many cheeks, so that we said with the Jews of Bethany, "Behold how they loved her."

The end had come softly. Mother Hays and the two little girls were downstairs in the front room of the old home when

The Great Ngee

Dr. Silas came down from Mary's room. His face was flushed and his eyes were bright with tears as he said in a hushed voice, "She is gone; an angel came and took her away; I saw him come and I saw him go."

Mary Johnson was thirty-four years old. The day was the twenty-second of March, 1903.

One who had known her in Africa wrote upon hearing of her death:

I count it a great privilege to have known her and to have been counted among her friends. There are many memories of past days, some glad and some sad, in which her sweet, gentle, thoughtful ways are scattered here and there like the fragrant arbutus in the depths of the forest, sometimes in sunny nooks, sometimes where the sunbeams break through. Her memory will always be fragrant in the hearts of all who knew her.

16. Bereft

On the evening of July 17, 1903, Dr. Silas boarded the train in Los Angeles with his two little girls, motherless since March. The friends gathered to bid them godspeed were poignantly reminded of the leave-taking nine years earlier when the doctor and his radiant bride had sung with them a parting hymn and had left for their chosen field.

The little party was bound for Wooster, Ohio, the home of Mrs. Lydia B. Good, the widow of the Efulan pioneer. To her in his extremity Dr. Silas had turned, with that peculiar confi-

Bereft

dence one missionary always feels toward another member of the missionary family. Mrs. Good had consented to assume the care of the two girls so that Dr. Silas might be free to return to Africa.

Mrs. A. I. Good, nee Lydia B. Walker, was a public school-teacher when she volunteered for the mission field and was appointed to the Gaboon Mission. Preceding Dr. Good by five years, she was married to him in 1883, on board the *U.S.S. Zuniebaugh*. Her only child, Albert I. Good, was born in Gaboon. As previously mentioned, Mrs. Good's failing health had forced her to return to America shortly before her husband's fatal illness. Though her heart had ached with the desire to return to Africa, she had remained at home to care for her son who, at the time of this story, was an honor student at Wooster College, and was the champion player of the tennis team. Mrs. Good was a consecrated and conscientious Christian; she took Mary and Lois into her home as a service to God and to the cause she loved.

A page out of Dr. Johnson's diary will give a glimpse into the heart of the often misjudged missionary who in stern obedience to God, appears heartless in abandoning his children in pursuit of his calling. The page, written at Wooster in October, 1903, reads as follows:

This morning I went to church for the last time with my dear little girlies. My heart ached very much indeed. When I put them to bed it was with a lump in my throat, and although I tried not to let the children note it, yet Lois began to feel it and her eyes filled with tears, though she tried hard not to let them be seen. Mary noticed her and chided her slightly for crying, whereupon Lois turned to me and asked, "Papa, don't little girls cry a *little* sometimes when their papa is going far away to Africa to be gone a long time?"

That was almost too much for me, but I assured her she was quite right, and then they knelt at my knees to say their evening prayer.

The Great Ngee

My heart was so full it seemed it might burst, and the lump in my throat ached so terribly that I could hardly get my breath, but before they had finished their prayers, a flood of tears came to me and I sobbed and cried until I felt relieved. The girls, at first startled, understood, and I held them in my arms and strained them to my breast. Then I got them quiet and to bed, promising that I would waken them at twelve-thirty when I had to go. This I did, and gave them an apple to help them get fully awake when I kissed them good-bye. After taking leave of Mrs. Good I was about to leave the house when Lois called out saying, "Mary says you are going to Africa now." So I went back and kissed them good-bye again. Let it suffice to say here that the parting was hard.

For the next five years "Aunt Good," as they called her, took care of Mary and Lois, nursing them through the customary childhood round of measles and mumps, chicken pox and incidental pains, struggling with the meager budget, and supervising the monthly letters to the father so far away who eagerly awaited the mail. I hope there were compensations.

Soon after the doctor's departure, Mrs. Good wrote to him, "Lois often says, 'I wish I could go to heaven.' I ask her if she is lonesome and she says, 'No, but I will forget mama. If I could go up and see her, then I would remember. It just seems as if I didn't have any papa.'"

For the most part, however, the childish letters were cheerful, with any blank spaces on the reverse side usually filled in with crooked kisses.

Mary wrote to her father, "I would like to see you. I wish years were shorter. I love you one hundred ships full. I wish you were here. I get tired waiting for you. Maybe when you come I will be so glad I will not eat my supper. When you get some new pants send us a piece like we sent you pieces of our new dresses and aprons."

When Albert Good was graduated from Wooster College, Lois remarked gravely on the way home from the commence-

Bereft

ment exercises, "I don't remember seeing my papa graduate from college."

At dinner the offer of a second helping of oyster soup brought forth the reply, "Yes, thank you, but please don't give me more than two ostriches in it."

The lonely father's hearty laugh would fill the little bark room when he read reports such as these, but more often tears filled his eyes when he saw the childish scrawls in the monthly mail bag.

During Dr. Silas's prolonged absence from the African field, the Rev. W. C. Johnston had returned with his wife and their two children. In this time the church at Efulan had grown phenomenally. Twice the bark walls had been removed and the inclosure lengthened and widened, but still it could not contain the congregation. The most recent structure, to accommodate six or seven hundred persons, had been built at a cost of \$150, which the Christians were asked to raise.

The time came around for the annual meeting of the Mission to be held at Batanga. When it was only one week away, a checkup disclosed that the fund to complete payment on the new Efulan church was still \$50 short. The matter was laid before the congregation on Sunday with the request that the debt be cleared within the week.

During the next few days men and women toiled up Efulan Hill carrying chickens, eggs, peanuts, corn, kegs of gunpowder, shirts, knives, red sashes. By Thursday noon the last dollar was in. Still the people came, until finally the missionaries, like Moses of old, "restrained the people from bringing."

A few weeks later, on Christmas day, 1903, eleven years after the first messenger of the gospel had appeared on Efulan Hill, and three and a half years after the first six Bulu Christians had been baptized, the new house of God was dedicated and filled with a congregation of 602 African men and women. Like certain others on the world's first Christmas day they

The Great Ngee

said to one another, "Let us now go and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And when they had seen it, they returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen."

Unfortunately, Dr. Silas had been unable to attend the dedicatory service. His assignment to Efulan upon his return from furlough included the oversight of Elat Station, while Hymen L. Weber, a medical doctor recently arrived, was to take over the hospital at Efulan.

From now on, Dr. Silas spent more and more of his time at the newer station. He wrote to his brother that he was trying to do a great deal of work there for one man, but was grateful for the good health that made it possible. He added wistfully, "I miss a home of my own very much, and hope to have one again some time."

In July of that same year Dr. Silas's hope was realized. Just before he had returned to Africa, he had become engaged to Miss Laura Grace Moser of Pasadena, California, and arrangements had been made for her to sail for the port of Batanga on the S.S. *Sokota* on its midsummer voyage. Laura Moser was the daughter of the Rev. William C. Moser, a pioneer preacher of the Presbyterian Church in the days of Pasadena's emergence as a settlement in its own right.

The *Sokota* anchored offshore at Batanga on July 30, 1904. Laura Moser, on its deck, strained her eyes toward the coast-line where a small boat was pushing off through the surf, bringing four missionaries to greet her, one of these the bridegroom, and another the Rev. William Dager, who was to perform the marriage ceremony. One hour later, with the ship's captain and other officers standing by in starched white uniforms, Laura and Silas were pronounced husband and wife. Soon the two were lowered over the ship's side into a small boat waiting for them in the ruffled sea, and as the sun sank into the rosy west, the bride found herself being carried

Bereft

through the foaming waves to a group of missionaries and their Bulu converts who had gathered on shore to welcome her to their land.

Within a week the doctor and his new helpmate were established in the little bark home on Efulan Hill. Lois wrote to her father, "Dear Papa, are you glad that we have a new mama?" Mary wrote: "Dear Mama, are you glad that you have two little girls? I wish I were there. We never had a wedding among our relations before."

It was well that there was now a force of seven missionaries at Efulan, for otherwise Laura Johnson would have been much alone. The doctor spent weeks and months on the road, exploring, making maps, and collecting data, preaching along distant trails, treating the sick from his medicine kit, seeking out boys for the station school, and making valuable contacts with the native chiefs.

At the close of 1904 he wrote in his diary:

I have had a year of very hard work, as all the missionaries I have been associated with have been new at the work, and much has fallen on me in the way of responsibility as well as labor. It is hard not to be able to see my dear little girls, but He knows all about that. The Lord is greatly blessing the work here now, and it is a joy to work with Him. We have a church of forty-six members and war and murder are things of the past—at least for the present.

17. Maps of Nowhere

In January, 1905, two notable events took place in the West Africa Mission. The first of these was the visit of the Rev. A. W. Halsey, Secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. The other was the appointment by the Mission of a committee of three men to explore the interior of the Kamerun with a view to further expansion.

The government had been making some slight progress in opening up the forest country and the high plateaus beyond the boundaries of the Bulu tribe. A government post had been established in the mountainous region a hundred miles north-east of Elat. New roads were being cut through the jungle. The Mission was eager to keep pace with the new developments.

The coming of Dr. Halsey to Africa marked the first time that a deputation from the Board had ever visited the field. The Mission had repeatedly requested such a visit, feeling that the problems confronting the work under the three nations then governing the mission area—the French, the German, and the Spanish—required the counsel and the understanding help of Board members which only a firsthand knowledge of the situation could guarantee. Mrs. Halsey accompanied her husband on this visit, and during their three months' stay they both endeared themselves to every member of the Mission.

Only a few months previous to this, the Board had raised the question whether, in view of obstacles interposed by the local governments, the entire work of the Mission should not be handed over to the Protestant churches working under the three respective flags, while the Mission itself occupied some

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new field. But so strong a protest was made to this by the West Africa Mission that the project was abandoned.

The first of the six locations visited by Dr. and Mrs. Halsey was Baraka Station, situated ten miles from the sea, on the Gaboon River, the center of the oldest work in the care of the West Africa Mission. One year previous to Dr. Halsey's visit, a committee appointed by the Mission to investigate the needs and opportunities of the Gaboon field had estimated a population of 18,000 in the towns visited during their tour. At Baraka a church had been organized, enrolling as charter members thirty-eight Christians who had formerly belonged to the church on Corisco Island.* It was felt by the committee, and later by the Mission also, that in spite of the differences of language and the difficulties of complying with the demands of the French government, the work in Gaboon should be continued.

In order to visit the stations along the Gaboon River, it was necessary for the Halseys to travel by the waterways. Dr. Silas was appointed to accompany them, and the journeys were made in a little gasoline launch called the *Dorothy*, which had been given to the Mission a few years earlier and of which Dr. Silas was soon to become the captain.

Efulan was the last station reached by the visitors. Dr. Halsey, in *A Visit to the West Africa Mission*, paid tribute to Dr. Silas, as he saw him at work during his stay on the hilltop:

During our visit at Efulan the pastor of the church was at home on furlough. The acting pastor was a layman, Dr. Silas Johnson. On Sunday he superintended the Sunday school and preached. During the week he conducted the inquiry class of two hundred and fifty persons, led the prayer meeting, presided over the session, was physician *in ordinaire* to all the missionaries in the station, house doctor to all the patients in the hospital and in the dispensary,

* Corisco Island, off the Coast of Spanish Guinea, was occupied by the Presbyterian Mission in 1850.

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itinerator who in the year of our visit had traveled a thousand miles on foot seeking boys for the school and preaching the Gospel in many Bulu towns. He was superintendent of all building operations and one of the authors of the new Bulu handbook. . . . My visit to Africa suggested the bare possibility that some missionaries in Africa's debilitating climate can lay claim to a variety and extent of service quite equal to that of any overworked home pastor or jaded secretary. . . .

The medical missionary has no time to himself. I saw patients standing at the door of the doctor's home before seven in the morning. They came when we were at the noonday meal. Their dusky faces were seen peering in the doorway when the stars were shining in the evening sky. Time is no element in the life of the African; he carries no watch. Patience is the crowning virtue required in the medical missionary, for pain and suffering admit of no rules. The weary traveler must be eased of his pains even though he comes at the most untimely hour.

The report given by Dr. Halsey, upon completion of his visit to Kamerun, Spanish Guinea, and Gaboon, persuaded the Board in New York to withhold judgment on the work in West Africa over a period of five years, during which time the Mission was encouraged to renew its efforts and to continue, in the face of all obstacles, to press inland.

The visit of Dr. Halsey made a lasting impression on the hearts of the missionaries. The memorial gift of a mission press, which today functions at Elat Station under the name of the Halsey Memorial Press, stands as a tribute to Dr. Halsey's faith in the future of the Church in West Africa and of his belief in the influence of the printed word. Six million pages were printed on the Halsey Memorial Press in a recent year. One of its quarterly publications, *The Drum Call*, is widely circulated in the United States.

The site committee, appointed by the Mission to explore the jungles toward the east in search of a suitable location

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for another station, consisted of Wilmer S. Lehman, M.D., Mr. Francis B. Guthrie, and Silas F. Johnson, M.D.

Accordingly, in May, 1905, Dr. Silas bade farewell to his wife at Efulan and set out for Lolodorf to join the other members of the committee. A chronicle of the departure of this committee from Lolodorf was written by Miss Jean Mackenzie, whose gifted pen did more for the work in West Africa than that of any other writer. Jean, as all West African missionaries affectionately called her, served for many years in the forest and along the coasts of Kamerun and Gaboon. Of the site committee she wrote:

A great black rain has come up out of the east and broken on the house. I think of course of those three men who started yesterday right into that black East. They had in mind a new station and are determined to find a site, though we have as yet neither funds nor men, but you remember the man whose ambition was a horse and began with the purchase of a horseshoe.

Drs. Johnson, Lehman, and Mr. Guthrie went off in all good faith. They are to be gone several weeks and . . . well I don't know where they are going, though I traced the maps for days—copies of German exploration tours signed very grandly and covered with German notes very hard to understand, the names of towns and tribes with occasional flourishes of blue pencil for rivers. This was less instructive than you think, for it was a study of maps of Nowhere not to be compared with printed maps of Kamerun colonies.

For days there has been about the station a great aura of going on a journey, a calling up of carriers, a packing of *chop boxes* (boxes of tinned food). Then, at the last, the making of wills by the married men while he of the light heart (Mr. Guthrie, unmarried) stands at ease. Then presently the men are off on their wheels into the east, and the women watch them from the gate, with babies held up to see their father go.

The trip lasted six weeks. The men traveled by bicycle, by foot, and by canoe more than 800 miles through the jungle, among tribes that had never heard of Jesus Christ. Although

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the dialects they heard spoken differed from the Bulu, they were able to make themselves understood and they preached the Gospel to crowds of people all along the way. A caravan of eighteen young boys went with them, and in the villages where they set up camp these boys also testified to their faith in the Savior.

As the little party was wheeling along a fairly good road in a pleasant valley, they suddenly came upon a German officer with twenty soldiers. Immediately it became apparent that the German government had not yet succeeded in subduing the tribes in this distant sector of jungle. Insurrections were still frequent. The officer and his soldiers, in quelling a riot in a nearby town, had just shot thirty people in the village. As the missionaries did not want to be seen traveling in the company of soldiers, they reluctantly turned back. The doctor felt it to be a great pity, as at that point "the road was good and wheeling was fine play."

On a high hill at Yaounde the government had a well-established post. The missionaries made courtesy calls and were cordially received by the officials. The degree of development on the government site surprised the little party of travelers. They found a compound with well-built government buildings, one shop, a Hausa village, and a Roman Catholic Mission which had the best layout they had seen in Africa, in its confines combining good carpentry, masonry, a brick and tile plant, and a fine site. Dr. Silas wrote in his voluminous notes, "The country is fine and the soil good, but the people are overburdened with government work and government demands for their produce."

Some villages they found almost deserted, as the people were running away and hiding from the soldiers who were forcibly recruiting men for the making of roads. They also met large caravans carrying rubber and ivory to the coast to trade for goods. The leaders of these caravans were usually

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beach men who employed carriers from the interior tribes to carry the loads. There are today in Benito, Spanish Guinea, women who in their girlhood accompanied their husbands, leaders of such caravans, on journeys that took them 1,000 miles from home into the eastern reaches of the Kamerun jungles.

On the eighth day of their journey the missionaries found themselves on the banks of the Nlong River, surrounded by the powerful Bene tribe. It was said that no white man had ever crossed the Nlong River, and that no white man had ever dared to show himself in the town of Mbita Menge, the tribe's big chief. This powerful chief had once owned one hundred wives, but now was reduced to a handful of seventy. Undaunted, the missionaries crossed the river in an old broken canoe. They found the formidable Mbita suffering from a toothache. With impressive flourishes, Dr. Silas extracted the offending tooth. Promptly the toothache ended and a lasting friendship began.

Mbita sent the drummer to beat out a summons to his people. From all the little paths of the surrounding forest they came, eyes big with curiosity to see the white travelers. Soon they were seated on the ground, 570 of them, and Dr. Silas preached to the Bene. That day, for the first time in their turbulent lives, these primitive people heard the gospel of love and peace.

Mbita urged the missionaries to stay and build a chapel near his town. The party spent a week in the vicinity, visiting the villages and telling the Good Tidings, and then they pressed on, but the doctor remarked, "I have never known people to beg so to be taught the Word of God."

Twenty-eight days after their departure from Lolodorf, the explorers came out of the forest into a clearing. They walked through a town of sixty-three bark houses lining each side of the long village street, and decided it was the most promising site they had yet encountered. This was the one that they sub-

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sequently recommended to the Mission, the site that a few years later was to be occupied by Dr. Silas and to become Metet Station, where Dokita Nnôm Ngee was to spend the greater part of the remainder of his missionary life.



The other places visited by the site committee were also destined to be occupied in later years. All along the trails they explored, there are chapels and schools and churches today, where the tribes, having laid aside their old animosities, worship together the Great Chief whose tribe they have become.

18. "Captain" Silas

It was the custom in the early days of the West Africa Mission to hold the annual meeting at a different station each year. In November of 1905 the missionaries stationed in Kamerun and in Spanish Guinea journeyed southward by sea to the old station of Baraka in the French Congo, commonly known as Gaboon.

During the busy days of annual meeting sixteen of the missionaries, to whom the seashore and the river were a welcome change from the jungles, boarded the decks of the little launch *Dorothy* for an outing. Built to accommodate four passengers, she groaned beneath her load and stuck on a sand bank. The sea was rough, and half the party became seasick, but the scenery was beautiful along the green banks of the estuary, as they eventually chugged farther upstream, and the trip was a pleasant relaxation after days of business sessions. For Dr. Silas and Laura the trip was only a forerunner of countless voyages to be made later on, for during this annual meeting the Mission decided to assign these two to Baraka Station, to work among the Mpongwe and Fang tribes up and down the Gaboon River and its tributaries.

The three years spent in Gaboon were probably the hardest years of their lives. Furthermore, although Dr. Silas was never known to complain of any mission assignment, his heart was in the Kamerun. The Gaboon era of his life was in the nature of an interlude, a sudden break in the flow of service that began and ended at Efulan.

So it was that he who was a poor sailor, miserable on the water, spent weeks and months aboard the small launch, *Dorothy*, wrestling with her engine, almost suffocated by the

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sickening fumes of gasoline and bilge. The *Dorothy* stuck for hours on sand banks, nosed in and out of malodorous creeks slick with the slime of the mangrove swamps, lay anchored beside the muddy banks of fever-infested villages, and plowed through the rough waters of the bay.



The doctor made frequent visits to distant villages upstream in search of schoolboys for the Baraka School. At intervals along the way he would tie up the launch and go by canoe up the little streams, where he stopped and preached the Word in small palaver houses. Getting out his medical kit, he ministered to the sick. Although forbidden by the French government to do any extensive medical work at the station, the law allowing only doctors with a French certificate to practice in the colony, he used every occasion to relieve the sufferings of the people in the towns along the trails he followed in his journeys. When no house could be found in the village fit to set up camp, he pitched his tent and fought mosquitoes all night long.

Days later, back again at the station, he would overhaul

"Captain" Silas

the *Dorothy's* engine, see to it that the three small mission boats were in repair, mend the sails or make new ones, make a new life preserver, sew up a flag, charge the batteries for the launch, do what he could for the sick in the dispensary, teach a class in the boys' school, reroof the storeroom, preach in the chapel, conduct the catechism class, and attend to a thousand-and-one jobs far removed from the work of a medical missionary.

On one occasion, when the doctor was on the *Dorothy* nosing up the Gaboon River, he heard his little dog barking furiously inside the cabin. He entered to find Laura up on the cushions of the seat, the dog furiously snapping at a young shark two feet long that had flopped in through the window. The doctor soon dispatched it, and a few minutes later it was in the frying pan over the oil stove in the galley.

The mission boats, the *Christine*, *Lafayette*, and *Evangeline*, were often at the mercy of wind and wave. One time the *Lafayette* capsized, her sail was lost, one woman was drowned, and the others swam two miles to shore.

Many of the weeks spent up the river, and many days at home in Baraka, were devoted to the making of maps and charts of the region. After several months of painstaking work, the doctor finished a map of the estuary and the Gaboon River and its tributaries. This map was used for years in Board publications. It gives minute details of the villages, the population of all towns visited, and the navigability of every branch of the river explored. It gives also mute evidence of hours spent under the sweltering sun, the doctor sea-captain pestered by insects as he navigated, sounded for depth, and drew the charts on his pad.

But the continual exposure took its toll. Many pages of the doctor's journal, and of Laura's as well, are blank, or hold the brief word, "fever." Several attacks of malaria were very severe, yet they did not stop, only halted, the visits upriver.

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The latter part of the year 1906 the doctor made his voyages alone. In December his first son was born, and was christened Herbert Good Johnson. That same month reinforcements arrived for the work in Gaboon, the Rev. John Wright and his wife. Mrs. Wright recorded some of her impressions of her association with Dr. Silas in the Gaboon field as follows and sent them to Lois:

We first met your father in November, 1906, on the beach at Batanga upon our first arrival in Africa. A large consignment of goods had been brought ashore, and all hands went to work taking care of it. I recall the quizzical expression in your father's eye as he said to the men, "You didn't expect to have to do such things in Africa, did you?" . . .

I was miserable from an attack of tonsillitis, and your father upon our arrival at Baraka insisted that I stay on the *Dorothy* while the men went up and put the house in order. When they came back I wearily wended my way through the village and up the hill to the old gray house which was literally buried by sixteen years of tropical growth. But when I entered the house there was a comfortable bed made up for me, lovely white sheets and all! Did anything ever seem quite so good! I felt like a queen, with *men* instead of *ladies-in-waiting*.

The clearing began straightway, supervised by your father, and what a pleasure it was to see things emerge from the jungle—the beautiful hibiscus and the tropical shrubs, the palms with their waxy fronds, and the coffee trees whose blossoms almost burdened the air with their fragrance. I loved it all! A clearing was also made leading down to the river. How often at night I have looked down that clearing for the light of the *Dorothy* as she came in, and have listened for the chug-chug of her engine.

A little bark chapel was soon under way, and a small dormitory for the schoolboys (girls could hardly be expected as yet). What with the jungle cleared away, a dispensary, a school, and a chapel, we were at last a mission station. We viewed it all with pride.

We had a French-speaking native as head teacher, and your

"Captain" Silas

father and I taught classes. His class was a large one of older boys; mine was a small class of smaller children in the opposite corner. Your father believed in learning the language by *using* it. He assigned me to a class of women in the Sunday school within three weeks after our arrival—just did it with an air of finality, casually, as if to say that of course I would have no difficulty coping with the situation!

Those were tiring days for the Johnsons, but I am sure that they always remembered with joy the sight of the crowds of people hurrying down to the beach when the *Dorothy* would approach, their keen ears having heard her engine long before she came into view. Nor could they ever forget the cry of joy that went up, "Dorothy a soa, Akéva, akéva!" (The *Dorothy* is here, thanks be!)

To how many little villages did the *Dorothy* bring the Light of the Gospel in that dark land!

Notwithstanding all the diversified activities of the doctor, the prevailing passion of his life remained unchanged. Nothing brought him such joy as to see some African child born into the Kingdom. A story he loved to tell and retell was about one such, Ndongo. Ndongo was an old hunter of the Fang tribe who once brought an antelope to sell to the doctor. In return for the antelope he received two pieces of new blue cloth. After that episode Ndongo came to church every Sunday. One day the doctor asked him point blank, "Ndongo, when are you going to come out for Christ?" "Oh," said Ndongo, "right now."

And so, with a few Christians present, he knelt down and prayed, confessing his sins in a manly, straightforward manner. "I will have something to give you tomorrow," he said as he left. The following day he returned bringing a strong bark box. In it were five skulls—the skulls of his ancestors, polished to a dull red lustre through years of veneration.

"Take these away," said Ndongo. "I have believed in them and trusted them all my life, as did my fathers before me."

Now they are nothing to me, for truly I believe in God and in Him alone." Two years later Ndonggo was baptized into the great company of believers in the one and only true God.

When Dr. Silas was not busy with station duties he spent long hours pouring over manuscripts. The Mission had appointed him to be chairman of the Revision Committee that, in the light of recent and careful study of the Bulu idiom, had been given the task of improving the translation of the Gospels. Dr. Silas was always very careful to remind the Mission that he knew neither Greek nor Hebrew, and therefore felt himself unqualified to do any translating of the Bible. He gladly served on the Literature Committee, spending wearisome months at his desk long after the arduous tasks of the day were over, pouring over manuscripts and correcting errors in orthography. His flawless use of Bulu helped the translators over many a difficult passage. There are eight hymns in the Bulu Hymnal which he translated.

After the annual meeting in December, 1907, Dr. Silas and Laura were recalled to Efulan to spend there the three months remaining before their furlough. After leaving the steamer at Batanga, they set out to walk to Efulan. Christmas Day overtook them on the way from beach to bush station. They ate their Christmas dinner on the trail, with a fallen log for a table, a Yule log for food instead of for the flame—a jungle innovation.

Also in December of that year His Excellency, Governor Seitz, called a council of representatives from all the missionary societies at work in Kamerun. Mr. George S. Schwab and Mrs. Schwab represented the West Africa Mission. At this council it was decreed that in all mission schools two years' instruction in the vernacular and three years in German was to be given. Due to the very large number of dialects used in the Kamerun, it was deemed impractical to designate any one native language to the exclusion of others. It was also decreed

that the Missions should discourage the practice of polygamy, and a law was to be passed prohibiting child marriages under twelve years of age. The government further agreed that the rum trade should be limited by prohibiting the use of rum in payment of carriers, nor was it to be transported on the railroad.

At Efulan the doctor's delight at returning to medical work was somewhat tempered by the multiplicity of station duties. Teaching the men's Bible class, the catechumen classes, supervising the boys' school, preaching on Sunday, conducting carpentry classes, teaching boys to carve in ebony and ivory, writing reports, and serving as chairman of the Literature Committee, added not a little to the activities in the hospital.

In April, 1908, Dr. Silas and Laura sailed home. The year was not a restful one, as the doctor carried with him the unfinished manuscripts of the revised Bulu Gospels. Four months later he mailed the completed work back to Africa for review by the committee. The furlough was a sad one for Laura. She disembarked in New York to be met by the news that her mother was being buried that very day. Five months later her father also was laid to rest. In December Dr. Silas was bound more closely still to his beloved Immanuel Church in Los Angeles by his ordination as a ruling elder of the congregation. The same Sunday that he was ordained his two daughters were admitted into the church as members.

Before the doctor returned to Africa he arranged to leave his two girls with their grandmother, Mrs. Charles B. Hays. Mrs. Hays was well along in years and had lost her only daughter in the mission cause, but she did not falter when she was asked to take up the burden her loved one had laid down.

April of 1909 found Dr. Silas and Laura back once more at Angom, the French society being still unable to take over the field. The *Dorothy* had lain for many months uncared for and unrepaired. When it was again in shape, the journeys up and

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down the Gaboon River were resumed. The work of translation continued, this time a revision of the Epistles. Even with the help of a good assistant from Efulan, this revision took almost a year to complete. In November, with Jean Mackenzie assisting as nurse, the doctor's second son, Silas Edward, was born at Baraka.

The following month the Mission held its annual meeting. In view of the fact that the Paris Missionary Society had definitely agreed to occupy the Gaboon field within a year, action was taken leaving the work at Angom in the hands of the church under the supervision of Benito Station, until it should be taken under the wings of the French.

19. Missionaries Buy a Station

It will be remembered that in 1905 the site committee of which Dr. Silas had been a member had recommended to the Mission that, although there were neither men nor funds for expansion, Metet should be considered the next step inland. In 1908 the Board suggested another expedition to confirm the recommendation. Mr. W. C. Johnston and his wife were assigned to the task. Again we have a report from Jean Mackenzie's pen:

In January, 1908, there started out from Efulan a caravan of twenty people, two of whom were white. This was a company of

Missionaries Buy a Station



Christians bound for a region some two hundred miles inland. Of these, only Mr. W. C. Johnston and his wife did not carry burdens; the rest were laden.

On the 13th of April the caravan returned, having covered hundreds of miles. By what forest they went, in what populous and obscure villages they camped, what burning words they spoke, and to what thousands of people, it is not in the scope of this report to tell; nor of the incidents by the way; nor of the evenings before the tent door when the members of the caravan met together for counsel, when they gave account of their several adventures, and spoke of the deep things of God which had opened up before them as they talked to the people by the way.

This expedition is the last and the most exhaustive of several

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which have covered the same territory, and is the expression of the conviction of the Board and of the Mission that God calls us inland.

At annual meeting the Johnstons reported to the Mission as follows:

The explorations recommended at the last mission meeting have been made. After spending more than two months in the Bene country, the two members of the committee designated for that work decided upon the site two miles east of Metet. The site has also been visited during the year by Mr. William Dager. We have an option on the site including about two hundred acres for two hundred marks, the option running for one year.

The committee recommended that the Board be asked to authorize the purchase of the property, that work be opened and supported by Bulu churches and that suitable buildings be erected, the cost to be provided by the missionaries. The response of the Mission to this report was instantaneous and enthusiastic. They "passed the hat" and generously contributed from their own pockets the necessary funds that for so long had not been forthcoming through the Board. Then they waited anxiously for the reaction in New York. In February, 1909, the Board approved the purchase of property for the new station of Metet but one formidable obstacle remained. Missionaries had supplied the money, but they could not provide the personnel, since every missionary on the field was already overburdened with the established work.

Until someone could be found to man the new station, the need and the opportunity of the virgin field were laid at the door of the African Church. The young church at Elat took up the challenge. From their congregation they sent several fine leaders, meeting all expenses of the project with voluntary contributions, and in so doing experiencing some of the thrill of the early Church in sending missionaries to the regions beyond.

Missionaries Buy a Station

One of these "sent ones" was an Elat church elder, Ako'o Ze, who with his wife, Ajap Evina, spent two months itinerating among the primitive people of the forests skirting the Nlong River. "Ako'o, meaning Rock, and "Ze" meaning Leopard, were fitting names for the young pioneer; on the Rock his faith was firm, and like a leopard his heart was fearless. Amid scenes of unadulterated heathenism he held fifty-four meetings, in one of which more than 900 persons heard the Gospel for the first time, and a total of over 3,000 Bene tribesmen had the message of salvation preached to them. A little later two young men, whose tribes had formerly sought each other's blood, went hand in hand to carry to the unevangelized people of the Metet area the message of God's forgiving love.

But the man who served longest, and who was present to welcome the missionary later assigned to Metet, was the first elder of the Elat church, ordained on the day of that church's organization in 1902. Osom, during the two years that he labored in the area, was indeed a worthy representative of his church. On a beautiful hill looking northward to the mountains around Yaounde, Osom made the first forest clearing that was to grow into the station of Metet. When he built himself a little bark house, he gathered into it the children of the village and unfolded to them step by step the mystery behind the little black marks written on slates of smooth white wood that could be erased by a sandpapery leaf of the forest. He taught them to sing gospel songs and to recite scripture verses. With his accordion he walked miles along jungle trails, singing his way into the hearts of a music-loving people.

The Bene were less openhearted than the Bulu and less responsive; they listened cautiously. Slowly but surely Osom, with his warm, friendly smile, won their confidence and trust; his kindly life dispelled the clouds of suspicion which at first obscured his message. Jungle tribes that had seen white men only as stern and sometimes harsh officials, or as traders who

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were often unscrupulous in their bartering for ivory and rubber, viewed the coming of more white men with distrust and even alarm. But Osom's assurances that the missionaries desired, not to exploit, but to serve and to teach, allayed their fears. Thus, before ever a missionary came to establish a station at Metet, Osom, the Bulu John the Baptist, had gone before and prepared the way.

The end of the year 1909 found the Caboon work in the hands of the Paris Missionary Society, and the Kamerun Mission at last had someone free to occupy Metet. Silas Johnson, now forty-four years of age, left Angom with a feeling of satisfaction in a hard job well done, and turned with zest to the new assignment, work for which it seemed he had been brought to this hour. The challenge of the unexplored field at Metet made his heart leap.

20. Fourth Leg

Kamerun, as the doctor found it upon his return to the colony in January of 1910, was vastly different from the Kamerun of 1906.

The Germans had begun work on 120 miles of railroad, to give entry to the interior from the port of Douala. The tortuous forest trails had been straightened somewhat, and dirt and gravel roads, although narrow and in the rainy season cut by gullies and mudholes, afforded much easier travel for cyclists than the jungle paths of former years. The four mission stations—Batanga, Efulan, Elat and MacLean—were now

Fourth Leg

all accessible by dirt roads connecting with Kribi and the government post of Yaounde.

Each of these stations was conducting a flourishing school where German as well as the vernacular was taught. All the schools were highly commended by the German government, so that no longer did the missionary have to travel far and wide in search of boys to enroll, for they now came by the hundreds, while scores who had completed the course were teaching in strategic centers throughout the Mission.

The national Church also had made great strides. The teaching of the duty and the value of systematic contributions to the Church had borne fruit; the fifteen churches then existing in Kamerun were all self-supporting. New churches had built their own chapels and were paying their own catechists in surrounding outposts. Several young seminary graduates had been licensed, and a few had already been ordained to the ministry. The threefold aim of the Mission: "to establish a self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating Church" was held steadily before the people, so that missionary zeal had already gripped the hearts of Bulu Christians, making it possible for the congregations to respond to the call of the regions beyond with men and with money.

Since the evangelistic, educational, and medical work of the Mission was now well under way, it was high time to begin planning for the fourth leg of the mission stool—vocational training. It was felt that not only the heads and hearts of the Africans but their hands also should be trained and given work to do. Accordingly an industrial school was projected to present to the African the new and somewhat unwelcome idea of the dignity of labor.

About this time a young adventurer by the name of Frank James came to Kamerun on a hunting expedition and was killed by a wounded elephant. As a memorial to him, his sister, Mrs. Robert Hoe, gave \$1,000 toward the establishment

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of a school to be named the Frank James Industrial School, and a new appointee, Mr. Fred H. Hope, was assigned to teach the classes. The school was begun on a very modest scale but developed rapidly. The tailor shop was the most popular department, as coats and trousers took the eyes first of carriers from the more sophisticated beach tribes and then of Bulu men of Elat as well. Gradually classes in other lines of industry were added: rattan weaving, cobbling, hat-making, carving in ivory and ebony, blacksmithing, mechanics, furniture-making, and carpentry. The nine apprentices in the latter group had plenty of opportunity to practice their newly acquired skill at the station, for many of the buildings required replacement or repairs.

Dr. Silas, on his way from Batanga to his new assignment at Metet, took the familiar but improved and shorter road via Efulan. He slept in the little bark house that he had painstakingly built thirteen years before and the visit brought a flood of memories to his heart. On Sunday morning when he stood in the large thatched church on Efulan Hill and preached to a congregation of 1,440 persons, he was deeply stirred. What a miracle of grace had been wrought in the nine short years since the establishment of Efulan Church with a membership of six Bulu Christians! The doctor was also thrilled to learn that since his initial experiment in 1896 of sending schoolboys out into remote areas as gospel teams, the church had twelve times borne the expense of sending out similar teams to evangelize the neighboring tribes.

The following Sunday at Elat, where he was greeted by a salvo of many guns, Dr. Silas preached again, this time to a crowd of 3,000 that overflowed the McCleary Memorial Church, a bark structure recently constructed.

Dr. Silas and Fred Hope drew up plans for a small residence to be built at Metet to house the Johnson family of four. Mr. Hope agreeing to take his carpentry class to Metet to be-

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gin the building whenever materials should be ready. Mrs. Johnson with her two little ones, Herbert, three years old, and Silas, eight months, were to remain at Elat until a temporary structure could be made ready for them.

On February 24, 1910, Dr. Silas and the Rev. Melvin Fraser, then pastor of the Elat Church, who accompanied him, cycled into the village of Metet. The town turned out to greet them *en masse*, while drums in nearby villages beat out the message that the white men had arrived. Thus notified, people came racing along the shady forest paths converging on Metet, and soon a crowd of nearly 400 persons was milling around the little clearing, shouting, gesticulating, and shoving, as they stared at the strange white men. Finally Osom got them quieted down enough to ask them to sit on the ground and listen to what the missionaries wanted to say to them. They complied noisily but promptly and with great curiosity, and when all was still Dr. Fraser spoke to them simply and briefly of the love of God and the gift of salvation through His Son. As he listened, Dr. Silas looked the crowd over with interest, and reflected that the Bene were not unlike the Bulu whose curious crowds had followed him about on Efulan Hill fourteen years before. The headgear and coiffeurs were perhaps less elaborate, but the scanty attire and the profusion of beads and ornaments were the same, as was the expression of almost complete incomprehension on their tattooed faces.

When the meeting disbanded, the chief remained to make a real estate deal with the missionaries. He sold them three dilapidated bark houses for one mark each, and further agreed to provide food for a price and to permit the felling of trees for planks. The small native house built by Osom was to serve as a dwelling for the missionaries until further building could be done.

During the following weeks, Dr. Silas worked furiously. With the help of a few untrained men, saw pits were dug,

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giant trees were felled, planks were sawed out, and dry sheds were built. Two small bark structures were erected, one to serve as a kitchen for the future missionary residence. In spare moments the doctor assisted Osom in the school where already there were more than one hundred boys in attendance. No wonder the doctor wrote home: "I am working too hard, too fast."

During the busiest week came news of his father's death. There was not time even to mourn—that would come later. When on furlough he would realize how great was his loss.

The Mission was keenly alive to the thrill of this new venture at Metet, the longest step into the jungle yet taken. At Elat one of the women determined to share in the experience. Mrs. Myrtle McCleary, widowed during her first year on the field, affectionately called "Mama McCleary" by the hundreds of schoolboys who passed through her schools, mounted her bicycle and pushed over the trails toward Metet. Along the way she stopped and held meetings in the palaver houses of the villages strung along the paths—"women's meetings," into which the men crowded and gawked and listened, either out of curiosity or because they feared the speaker's influence on their wives, should she suggest any change in the African way of life. "Mama McCleary" took down her hair as many as seven times a day, and was always assured that it was "beautiful like a horse's tail." When she asked the men why they built their houses with no back doors, she was told, "So our women won't run away."

During Mrs. McCleary's short visit to Metet, Dr. Silas was called one day to a near-by village to attend a woman in labor. Very shortly after he had delivered the baby he departed, leaving the mother and infant in charge of an old woman of the village, with strict injunctions that the child was not to be given anything to eat until his return. A few hours later he went back to find the mother sitting up eating roasted cater-

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pillars, while the old woman chewed up bananas and fed them to the newborn babe.

Exactly three months after his arrival, with the aid of Mr. Hope and his carpentry class during the first weeks, Dr. Silas finished building a residence for his family. He had brought Laura and the children to Metet after the first month and they lived in the kitchen until other rooms were completed.

That year of 1911 was a lonely one for Laura who, like Mary Johnson of 1895, saw no other white woman during the entire year. The doctor had been elected a member of the executive committee, which meant many long, exhausting journeys in addition to lesser local trips, made in answer to the calls that kept coming from all sides of Metet for schools and teachers. He spent eight strenuous weeks pushing his bicycle over the rough hilly trails and walking where it was impossible to pedal.

In between these wearying journeys he supervised the clearing of the station grounds to make room for gardens to be set out by schoolboys and workmen. The farmer-doctor was now in his element! Four thousand plantain trees, twelve thousand pineapple plants, one hundred pawpaw trees, sixty avocado trees, these and more were planted. Ducks and chickens were also raised; good eggs for the project were sent all the way from Benito in Spanish Guinea.

In the space in front of the temporary hospital shack the doctor planted two flamboyant trees. "When these are grown," he said to his helpers, "patients will gather in their shade to hear the Good News of Life while they wait for medical attention." *So they have done, and so they do, for the trees are still standing.*

The sawyers and carpenters now began laying in a new supply of lumber for a second dwelling. The planks were stored in a bark shed to dry, when, one day, Dr. Silas heard a shout of "Nduan! Nduan!" (Fire! Fire!) and looked to see the roof of

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the storehouse all ablaze. In a twinkling he was in the midst of the crowd shouting for plantain stalks and ordering excited men to the spring with buckets. Then onto the blazing roof he sprang, urging others to help, while the flames raced and the men flayed about with the juicy plantain stalks. The bucket brigade kept water coming, and finally some of the flimsy bark structure was saved, but at the cost of many burned hands and arms and eyebrows, among them the doctor's. In the shed two hundred African mahogany planks were lost.

Among the sawyers the doctor employed was a tall, striking man by the name of Zambô Engombé. One day some of the workmen came to Dr. Silas privately and asked him, "Do you know that Zambô is using your saw to make boards for himself? His house is full of sawed planks."

The doctor made no reply, but his blue eyes flashed fire. Without a word he strode to his motorcycle and drove straight down the road to Zambô's village. Accosting him in the doorway of his bark hut, he fixed stern eyes upon him.

"Zambô, is it true that you have used my saw and have made many planks for yourself that you have hidden here in your house?"

Zambô's fine dark eyes returned the doctor's gaze steadily, unflinching. "It is true," he said.

"Then tomorrow at dawn you will come to my house and we will go to the police at Yaounde, for you are guilty of a prison offense." And with that Nnôm Ngee drove home.

The following morning at the first call of the "*okpwa*," the bird that is the feathered alarm clock of the African forest, the doctor heard a firm knock at his door. He opened it and there stood Zambô.

"*Ma nyô*" (This is I), he said briefly.

Surprised, the doctor invited him to enter and sit down. After a few minutes of searching questions and straightforward an-

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swers, Dr. Silas suddenly reversed his decision. He called in Laura and recounted Zambô's story and action.

"This is a valuable man," he told her. "He denies nothing; he faces up to the consequences of his wrongdoing without a quiver. He is my man."

And from that day forth Zambô was indeed the doctor's strong right arm, his huntsman, his guide, his cook and washman on many a long, lonely jungle journey, his faithful and trusted friend.

The incident illustrates one of Silas Johnson's finest and most loved traits. In all his dealings with men, both black and white, he unfailingly, and with generous charity, searched out the good and the praiseworthy in a man's character. He never berated another's weakness nor dwelt upon his faults.

21. Charmed Leopard

News that reinforcements for Metet were on the way was received with delight by Dr. Silas and Laura. The Rev. Gayle C. Beanland, who arrived in 1911, was a genial Southern gentleman of sterling character, who was to become the doctor's staunch partner in the labor of evangelizing the tribes around and beyond Metet.

Of his association with Dr. Silas, Mr. Beanland writes as follows:

When I first arrived in Africa I started to Metet by way of Efulan. When the throngs of people asked where I was going, and I replied, "Metet," they said, "Why, that is where our great father, Nnôm Ngee lives! Give him our Mbôlô! (greeting)."

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After a pleasant interlude at Elat, I finally arrived at Metet's new clearing in the forest and met the man who was to be my African father and friend for many years to come. . . .

We planned all our work together, and he always saw to it that I was engaged in such activity as would help me to grow and to improve. Often when we were on the road together he would call in a group of Africans and talk to them about salvation, and he would urge me to join him, thus increasing my evangelistic experience. When I made visits into the villages and engaged in personal work, he was always interested in my reports and made many valuable suggestions concerning methods of working among the people. . . .

Dr. Silas was a master-artist in arbitrating disputes. He could keep the friendship of people even when they suffered from his decision in the settlement of the disputes he adjudicated. He understood the African people thoroughly, and was able to anticipate their reactions to any given situation.

In those days young girls were sold as mere chattels, and we rescued many who had been torn from their homes and sold into polygamous marriages to which they gravely objected. In many cases the Mission redeemed the girls and took them over as mission property in order to protect them. Dr. Silas redeemed scores of them personally, advancing the goods to their fathers or brothers and setting them free from their former obligations. Many are the Christian women today who owe their freedom to the intercession of this good doctor.

One such woman was Enyeke. Unmercifully abused by her husband, she ran away to the station. Dr. Silas sent for her husband, who came storming to Metet demanding his woman. Calmly the doctor talked to him, trying to show him the error of his cruel ways and striving to uphold the rights of the woman. The old man would not listen. Finally, invoking the law which gave a woman the right to annul a polygamous marriage by returning the dowry, the doctor counted out the bride price and handed it to the irate husband, who then de-

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parted, leaving Enyeke. She began to help the doctor in the hospital, eventually completed her nurse's training, paid back to the doctor her dowry price, and is today one of the valued nurses in the Metet Hospital.

Another woman thus redeemed by Dr. Silas was Nurse Eyenga Efa, better known throughout the Mission as "Josie." The following is a translation of her story which she wrote for *The Drum Call*:

When I was five or six years old, my father married me to a man much older than I. I lived with his family, who treated me well, but my thoughts were ever with my own family, and one day I ran away to them. My dowry had been paid with guns and spears—how many I was too young to remember. My father did not make me go back, but not wishing to return the dowry, he sent another girl in my stead.

When I was about fifteen, I was married to a man who had ten wives. Shortly afterward I fell sick, and for a while received help from native medicine.

There was an evangelist in our town whom we wives wanted to hear preach, but my husband would not let any of us go. But one day he went on a trip and we had our chance. The evangelist's words touched me deeply, but I was afraid to tell anyone, because of my husband. When my husband returned, someone told him where we had been; he locked us in a room and beat us.

Later he decided that we could go to the meetings if we each cooked food for him before we left. We were soon enrolled in the catechumen class.

My physical condition became worse and my husband was angry, believing that I had been unfaithful to him. We quarreled, and he wanted me out of his sight, so he sent me to my town. Then I went to the mission doctor at Metet for help.

I had been there nine months when the doctor asked me to help care for a patient. That was my first patient, and since then I have cared for thousands. My own ailment began to improve, and the mission told my husband that he must pay for my medicines. He

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promised, but never did, so the doctor gave him three hundred francs for me (about \$75) and I was free!

After work hours I learned to read and write. I saw that to be a really good Christian I must know how to read my Bible, and to be a good nurse I must know how to read the names of different medicines. The names of the medicines were very hard at first, and I had to ask again and again, but I was not ashamed, for I was more afraid of making a mistake.

In my years at the hospital I have helped in every department. I love the work because it was at the hospital I got well, and so I want to be a help to others.

All through the years Dr. Silas's heart went out in a special tender way to the women of Africa, and they were deeply grateful for his pity and his love.

One of the early converts at Metet was Nguele Ngana. For many years Nguele, like Zambô, was a faithful friend to Metet's doctor, serving in various capacities as houseboy, cook, hunter, medical assistant, and companion in travel. He was also his confidant, for on one occasion when the doctor was "full up of enduring" the ingratitude of a patient who refused to cooperate with him, he remarked to Nguele, "These people are sometimes like a dog who has fallen into a pit; when you throw a rope around his neck to pull him out, he chews off the rope!"

A leopard had been making night raids on the Metet premises, making away with ducks and chickens. When at length it killed three of Mr. Beanland's goats, the people averred that it was a charmed leopard, with a witch that made it immune to death.

Nguele scoffed. "What is a charmed leopard? I myself will kill it," he said. And off he went into the forest with his gun.

Stealthily he made his way through the jungle, coming at last upon the tracks of his prey. Cautiously he pursued the trail until at length, parting the tangled brush, he glimpsed the

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leopard a stone's throw away. Noiselessly he lifted his gun and took careful aim. "And I prayed, O how I prayed," he related; "O my Father, my foolish people think this leopard has a potent charm. Speed the bullet and prove that Your power is the stronger!"

Then with a steady hand he fired; the shot went home; the leopard fell dead. Exultant, Nguele went for help, and men carried the carcass to the station, shouting as they went, "The charmed leopard is dead! Ho!"

Crowds of people emerged from the villages as the leopard was carried past, until, once arrived at the station, there was an excited throng shouting and singing in a frenzy of delight. Suddenly every head was lifted. Put-put-put came the sound of the doctor's motorcycle. Dr. Silas drove up to the excited crowd, took in the scene at a glance, and let out a mighty shout, "Thanks! Thanks! The charmed leopard is dead! God has triumphed! Thanks, large thanks!"

The crowd took up the chant, swaying in rhythm and clapping their hands with gusto. It was a great day for Nguele, but no one enjoyed it more than Dr. Silas.

Within a short time after the arrival of Gayle Beanland steps were taken to explore further the territory lying beyond Metet. It was known that occupying the area some ninety miles eastward there was a very large and powerful tribe called the Yebekolo. Still farther beyond were the Mekaé. Both tribes were reputedly fierce and hostile, and were known to be cannibalistic. During tribal wars they killed any enemy they captured, and then divided his flesh among the victorious warriors, who boiled it in great kettles and ate it on the spot. A chieftain who wished to honor a distinguished guest would order a slave killed for the banquet. As a rule only men were permitted to partake of the feast, and only men were eaten—usually men of another tribe.

The government had made little impression on these tribes;

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it handled them cautiously, and warned Europeans against going into the territory. During the visit of one of the site committees of the Mission to this area, three Africans were reported killed and eaten. A white trader who ventured into the district was caught by a cannibal chief and imprisoned. Word of the capture reached the ears of a distant government official. The officer did not attempt to command the release of the captive, but astutely sent to the chief a gift of three women. The cannibal chief reckoned that the acquisition of three wives was not a bad exchange for a meal, and so the trader was set free.

Such reports naturally struck fear into the hearts of the Bene around Metet, and when the missionaries suggested that it was time for the Bene Christians to take the gospel to their neighbors, there was little response. Finally one teacher and an evangelist agreed to make the try and spy out the land to the northeast. They started out bravely enough, but as they progressed from town to town they met with such fierce opposition that their spirits flagged and they resolved to return to the home base. Just at their darkest and most timorous hour, however, they were met by Gayle Beanland and a caravan of schoolboy volunteers. Thus reinforced, they plucked up their courage once more and continued their journey with the missionary and the schoolboys.

One of the most dreaded chiefs of the district through which they were traveling was Biwole Beti, who was feared by all the lesser chiefs of the tribe. When the caravan reached the town of Biwole, however, they were invited to spend the night, houses were provided for them, and wives of the chief were ordered to prepare food for the company. A large, curious crowd gathered in the enormous palaver house, and the missionaries were allowed to talk to the assembly. But when the chief was pressed for permission for the Mission to establish work in his area, he grew ominously silent and suggested

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that the party retire. He would give his answer in the morning. That night the drums throbbed feverishly and furiously, summoning the chiefs to a conclave. Gayle's "quaking young witnesses" wondered what their fate would be on the morrow. At dawn the missionary went to the chief for the promised answer.

"I have held a council with my brother chiefs," said Biwole Beti curtly, "and we have decided that you are not welcome here. You offer us no commercial advantages and we are not interested in your message."

Courteously thanking his host for the hospitality of the night, Mr. Beanland took his leave of the recalcitrant chief and, following the scriptural injunction, he and his young men "departed thence, shaking off the dust under their feet for a testimony" against the town of Biwole Beti, and pressed on.

Deep in the bush the party came upon the village of the chief Zenge Bilunga, who showed himself willing to accept a teacher and an evangelist. Accordingly, two men were designated and urged to take heart and fearlessly begin the work of announcing the Good News. The missionary then returned to Metet, but hardly had he reached the station than the two men chosen came following close on his heels, terrified by the threatenings of the hostile people among whom they had been left.

Gayle Beanland's return to Metet had been necessitated by



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a very important event which took place in March. More than one thousand persons, the largest crowd ever assembled at Metet, gathered for the organization of the Metet Church. The ten believers baptized that day were enrolled as charter members. Nearly 300 inquirers remained in the preparatory class awaiting baptism.

Dr. Silas witnessed this impressive service with a great thankfulness in his heart that once more he had been permitted to see the birth and the growth of a congregation of the Church of Christ in Africa, had been privileged to sow the seed where no other had yet sown in soil where already, after two short years, it was springing up a hundred fold.

22. A Clinic for the Yebekolo

With the burden of the unreached Yebekolo and Mekáe lying heavy on their hearts, the missionaries at Metet determined to try again. Accordingly, both Gayle and Dr. Silas set out with a caravan of seventeen carriers and a handful of new recruits, who, assured of the presence of the white men, were willing to make the attempt. When the party reached a point in the dense forest fifty miles east of Metet, they came upon a town in a beautiful spot which so pleased the missionaries that they called a halt. Gayle and Dr. Silas wheeled into the

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village street, coming to a stop at the palaver house at the end of the wide open space between the two long rows of huts. The town chief was seated on a bench in the half-walled house, his horny hands stretched out over a smoky fire. He scrutinized his guests with his one good eye, but made no move to greet them.

Dr. Silas decided to take the taciturn bull by the horns. "Mbôlô," he said pleasantly, flashing his usually irresistible smile. Receiving no answer but a stony, one-eyed stare, he went on quickly, "I am the Dokita of Metet."

Still he caught no flicker of interest.

"We have come here, my friends and I, to start a school in your town. We see that you are by far the best man around here."

As the chief's single eye evinced no response to the flattery, he continued. "Our schoolteacher is just behind us and will be here in a few minutes. He will need a house to live in."

The only movement on the part of the chief was a slight opening of his mouth.

"He will also need a good house in which to hold classes until a schoolhouse can be built. And we will need a good site for that school. Come, show us where it should be built."

The old chief looked stupefied, apparently wondering whether the town was really his or the white man's, but he rose slowly and followed the missionaries into the street. A little later he nodded assent to their choice of a house for the teacher, and nodded again when they indicated a site for the proposed school. Dazedly he agreed to their suggestions as to the food that would be required by the teacher.

With the business accomplished, the doctor reached into his pocket and pulled out a tin of sardines, which he gravely opened and presented to the chief. He then mounted his bicycle, and when he and Gayle looked back, they saw the old man sitting in the palaver house just as they had found him,

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gaining, were exchanging for meat. From one of the houses came a medley of raucous voices chanting, or rather shouting, at the charts. Under the shade of a large tree, scores of people stood, sat, squatted, or lay stretched out full length, as they waited their turn at the doctor's clinic. Bandaged feet, legs, arms, and heads were everywhere in evidence. Children, black eyes staring out from heads yellow with sulphur, dashed past him. A big burly fellow went howling up the street holding in front of him, for all to see, a large tooth that had just been extracted.

Olinga hesitated at the edge of the crowd, his eye on the meat that was being cut up into pieces; he wanted to make sure of a large portion for himself, and was about to shout an order when the doctor approached him.

"Mbôlô Olinga!" said Dr. Silas, proffering his hand. "Welcome back. We are so glad to see you, because we want to tell you that we like your town very much indeed; it is exceedingly beautiful. There is a fine site just at the edge of the clearing where we are going to build you a fine school. Will you come see it?"

Olinga demurred, obviously taken aback. He would rest first, he said, and see them later. Thereupon he disappeared into his house, from whence his voice roared forth issuing orders for a roast leg of antelope. Later the missionaries called on him and again pressed him to inspect the chosen site. "We will begin clearing away the brush and cutting trees in the morning," said Dr. Silas. "Will you not come see it now?"

"No, not now. Take my son, here, and show him the place," said the chief.

So Olinga's son accompanied the two white men, who were followed by a dozen men of the caravan, armed with cutlasses. Dr. Silas was taking no chances on a change of mind, so while he and Gayle chatted with the son of the chief, the men fell to with their cutlasses and began to make a clearing, slash-

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ing away at the underbrush until darkness fell and put a stop to their work.

Returning to the town, the missionaries invited Olinga to a conference, and when all were seated, Dr. Silas brought out a bag of money and urged the chief to put a price on his land and accept payment. It was then arranged that on the morrow Olinga's son would accompany the missionaries to the government post to register the transaction with the German officials. This was done, and two days later two hundred square meters were measured off, payment being made in twenty German marks.

Dr. Silas, "mission accomplished," returned then to Metet, leaving Gayle Beanland to stand by for a few weeks to see the project under way. Within a month forty schoolboys were in attendance at the new school, while 350 persons were congregating for Sunday services.

The teacher left at Olinga's town, which we shall now call Efufup, meaning Light, the name given it by the first converts there, was Owono, a big six-foot Christian whose zeal went far beyond the teaching of the charts to the winning of men for Christ. Daily he went out from the classroom into the villages near and far, making friends with the people and urging them to attend Sunday services at the station. Distant towns began to wake up to the fact that they, too, might have a school, a teacher, and a preacher. Urgent pleas began to come in from all sides, and as fast as competent boys could be trained, they were sent out into the surrounding areas. Slowly, but surely, "the true light which lighteth every man" spread to the far corners of the Yebekolo tribe.

But the name that shines brightest in the roll of volunteer workers from the Bulu field is that of a young schoolteacher from Efulan Hill named Mvondô Ngbwa. Mvondô answered the plea for help six months after Dr. Silas established the station of Metet. He at once took over the major part of the

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school program and threw himself into the new work with enthusiasm. Within a few weeks his influence was being felt, for one bright Sunday morning thirteen of his schoolboys took their stand for Christ.

Mvondô gave two years of devoted service to the Metet and Yebekolo fields, serving fearlessly in the midst of the cannibal country, notwithstanding the threatenings of the many tribesmen who remained hostile to the mission program. With him in that far country were his wife and children, who endured the hardships of a strange and primitive land as good soldiers of the cross. But there was an adversary in the field. Sleeping sickness had laid its scourge on the eastern area of Kamerun and swept like a flame over the swampy land. In stricken towns victims died by the score, and among those to contract the disease was Mvondô. Far away at Efulan the tidings started a revival that flooded the forests about Nkoñemekak with what has been called "The Great Awakening." Christians of the Efulan church, in memory of Mvondô and for love of the Christ he served, pledged hours or days of personal work in an evangelistic campaign, of which one missionary wrote:

It has come like an immense flood and we have felt as helpless and as impotent to control it as if we were tossed upon the billows of a mighty ocean. We have been awed and humbled as we have witnessed this wonderful revival, and to us who have not been long on the field, and who know little of the hard days of beginnings, it has seemed as if God had waited until these days to make bare His strong right arm.

A total of 4,700 days of personal work was pledged, and hundreds were born into the Tribe of God throughout those days when Christians were stirred to take up the torch that had dropped from the hand of a tribal brother.

23. Of Motors and Babies

The London School of Tropical Medicine is the best of its kind in the world. When Dr. Silas left Africa for furlough in 1912, he stopped off in London to take advantage of a two months' course offered there. The curriculum was stiff, and he was very tired from his strenuous three years of pioneering in the new Metet field, but by digging hard he kept up with others in the course. The certificate he received was to him a prized possession, but the practical knowledge he had acquired, making him more able to alleviate the ills of the African, he counted of more value still.

Christmas of 1912 was the first in ten years that he had spent with Mary and Lois. Little time was granted him for the pleasures of home, however, so great were the demands made on him for speaking throughout California. "I do not wish to shirk my duty," he wrote to his brother, "but I begrudge every hour I am away from my girls."

One of the important incidents of this furlough was the acquisition of a motorcycle. The new roads in Kamerun, even though rough and rocky, would now permit its use, and Dr. Silas had made this known to his friends in Immanuel Church. The money was at once forthcoming; the motorcycle was purchased, driving lessons began, and by the end of furlough the doctor was able to handle the new vehicle of travel.

It was on April 13, 1913, that he and Laura and little Silas set out once again for Africa, leaving Herbert, Mary, and Lois with a sister of Laura's in San Jose, California.

During the year of the doctor's return to Kamerun, two of the mission doctors had been sent home on health leave. On top of the responsibilities to other stations thus thrust upon him