

Doctor To Africa

The Story of

STIRRETT OF THE SUDAN

By

DOUGLAS C. PERCY

MISSIONARY IN NIGERIA, WEST AFRICA

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THE SUDAN INTERIOR MISSION Africa

CHAPTER NINE

"Who Will Stand in the Gap Before Me?" . . .

THE CABLE closed an era: "Dr. Stirrett died July ninth. heart failure." As the news flashed from east to west, no seismographic shock was recorded, save as it touched thousands of hearts around the world. With his last breath, a curtain was pulled over the pioneer effort of the Sudan Interior Mission, leaving a great gap and a sense of unutterable loss to those left behind. As one of the missionaries said: "Who is going to pray for the health of the missionaries and the salvation of the *Hausa* people now?"

The passing of the beloved physician stirred Jos as nothing else has done, and sent its concentric circles of sorrow into the towns and hinterlands of the whole of West Africa. The day after his death, it was the talk of Jos town.

Moslem and pagan, Christian and pseudo-civilized realized that their champion had passed and they would not see his like again. The African pastor of the Methodist Church in Jos said to J. Wiebe: "Dr. Stirrett loved the African. He lived for him and he died for him. Now he is covered with African soil. We thank GOD for such a display of love."

Dr. Stirrett died in the harness of the Gospel. He had attended the missionary prayer meeting on the afternoon of July eighth, and shortly afterwards went with W. Williams to the *Hausa* prayer meeting in the town, which on Thursday took the place of his usual market service, a daily program that he adhered to whenever he was in Jos. A testimony to his faithfulness to these motley throngs gathered in the market place came out after his funeral.

For some time, it had been noticed that his daily two-mile walk to the market and back was telling on him, and the field director, C. G. Beacham, and Dr. E. A. Harris of the Bingham Memorial Hospital, both advised him not to take the long walk any more.

The Doctor obeyed, somewhat meekly for him, but sought the aid of anyone in Jos who might

have a car, and who would be willing to take him down. His daily trip to Jos town and market held unbroken until the day before he died.

Early on the Friday morning, his personal boy went into the small, one-roomed house, to clean up as usual, and there he found the Doctor helpless beside his bed. Who knows, but that like Livingstone, he was having his early morning watch, speaking to his Lord, when the Lord spoke to him.

He was carried lovingly to the Bingham Memorial Hospital, where he regained consciousness for a short time, then fell asleep in JESUS.

The simple funeral service was held in the S.I.M. chapel in Jos at 3:30 p.m. of the same day, when a host of white and black gathered to bid farewell to the *Bature Mai Magani*. Black hands carried the frail body into the chapel for his last earthly service. A. Stewart, who had worked with the doctor in translation work, led the gathered throng to the throne of grace in prayer.

Mr. Hector Kirk, for long years a co-worker with Dr. Stirrett, then read the majestic account of Elijah, "**a man of like passions**" bringing the prophets of Baal to confusion. In speaking briefly C. G. Beacham linked the lives of these two men of faith together, Elijah and Stirrett, men of like passions with ourselves, as the type of praying men whom GOD delighteth to honor.

T. L. Suffill closed with prayer, after which Dr. P. Bamden of the S.U.M. Hospital at Vom, Mr. W. Richmond and Mr. T. L. Suffill also of the S.U.M., and Dr. E. A. Harris, Mr. J. Trewin and Mr. H. Kirk of the S.I.M., acted as pallbearers to the grave side where the Doctor's remains now await the resurrection call of the One whom he loved and whom he served.

There can be nothing more lonely than to stand around an open grave on an African hill top. It is so often the case that the dread tropics take the toll from amongst the young, the strong, those just starting out on the course that GOD had laid down for them. Just a few weeks previous, news had filtered down from French West Africa of the death of a young S.I.M. worker, Ralph K. Gano, who left behind him a young wife and a six-months-old baby.

The Ganoes had labored for the Master in Africa for only two years, until GOD called Ralph Home.

The feeling of those around the Doctor's grave was somewhat different. For over 47 years he had kept the faith, he had finished his course, and now had come his crowning day! To those gathered around, there was a sense of jubilant exultation, that overrode the natural feeling of sorrow at the loss of such a loved and valued co-worker. To quote Miss D. Howe: "All the way from Miango to Jos for the funeral, we kept saying that one could only feel a sense of triumph that the Doctor was now with the Lord.

The little chapel in Jos was crowded with white folk and Africans, with a goodly number of the latter also standing outside. More gathered at the grave side. It seemed very appropriate that African Christians had carried the casket. It was some time, before many thought of the casket and what it contained, their minds taken up with thinking of the welcome he had received on the other side.

Until we started to sing the hymn "More love to Thee, Oh, CHRIST," there was little tearful feeling. But as we remembered the utter consecration of the Doctor, we felt that this should be our prayer, that as never before we might love and serve Him, who has done so much for us."

Nothing more lonely than an African grave side? There could be no loneliness for the one who has gone from us. He was in gladsome, immortal company. Even in the cemetery he was not alone. To one side lay Mr. and Mrs. E. G. Cook, who in the prime of life and vigor had laid down their all for the Master in Africa. Scattered throughout West Africa were the remains of countless brethren, black and white, who would now gather to welcome the aged warrior, the *Bature Mai Magani*, into the celestial city.

Down the streets of Ebony Row, he would be triumphantly escorted, and his "*Sannu dai, sannu dai*," would greet many a long unseen black face, who would rise and call him blessed.

There could be no sorrowing as of those who had no hope, amongst those who committed his body to the dust. They knew of his hope in CHRIST, and while the curtain had come down on the earthly ministry of Dr. A. P. Stirrett, his life and the living stones that GOD had privileged him to have for the building of the church of CHRIST in Africa will long remain after him.

He has entered into a deserved reward and rest. We remain to finish the task, to make CHRIST known. If we should change a name in Joshua 1:2, we could say: "Stirrett my servant is dead, now therefore 'you' arise, go--."

Going with such a GOD, preaching the unsearchable riches through our lives, gifts and prayers, will bring to fulfillment the paraphrase of a favorite hymn of Andrew Stirrett:

"Bringing Sudanese! Bringing Sudanese! We shall come rejoicing, bringing Sudanese!"

~ end of chapter 9 ~
