

DAVID LIVINGSTONE
MISSIONARY EXPLORER OF AFRICA

by

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CHAPTER THREE

"ANYWHERE, PROVIDED IT BE FORWARD"

"Crossing the Orange River," said Livingstone, "I got my vehicle aground and my oxen got out of order, some with their heads where their tails should be, and others with their heads twisted around in the yoke." This was his first experience of traveling in Africa and occurred while he was on his way to Kuruman. But in spite of the difficulties Livingstone enjoyed the freedom of traveling, camping, and hunting in Africa.

On his way he came to a station called Hankey where there had been an epidemic of measles. During this siege the Hottentots had begun having prayer-meeting at four o'clock in the mornings. The meetings were well attended and were so well liked that they were continued. But the difficulty from Livingstone's point of view was that the people, having no clocks or watches, sometimes rang the bell for service at the wrong time. Sometimes they were assembled at twelve or one o'clock instead of four.

The missionary who belonged at the station had returned from the Cape with Livingstone and was welcomed back by the firing of guns in his honor and enthusiastic hand-shaking. The lives of these black Christians were beautiful, especially compared with those of a Dutch family in the neighborhood. This family spent their Sundays in dancing instead of worship.

The trip to Kuruman took over two months.

There Livingstone was to await the return of Mr. Moffat, and then with instructions from the Missionary Society to go on farther north to establish a new station. Having received no orders,

he thought of going on into Abyssinia, where there was as yet no Christian missionary. He was strongly opposed to the idea of crowding the missionaries together around the Cape when there were vast regions to the north utterly without the Gospel. He also believed strongly in the training of native workers. Consequently, taking with him another missionary and two of the best native Christians, he started northward.

About two hundred and fifty miles north of Kuruman he selected a place for a station. If he could only have employed more native workers he would have been glad, for they won their countrymen much more readily than the white missionaries could.

In writing to his sisters, he told some interesting incidents of the journey:

"Janet, I suppose, will feel anxious to know what our dinner was. We boiled a piece of the flesh of a rhinoceros which was toughness itself, the night before. The meat was our supper, and porridge made of Indian corn-meal and gravy of the meat made a very good dinner next day. When about 150 miles from home we came to a large village. The chief had sore eyes; I doctored them, and he fed us pretty well with milk and beans, and sent a fine buck after me as a present. When we had got about ten or twelve miles on the way, a little girl about eleven or twelve years of age came up and sat down under my wagon, having run away for the purpose of coming with us to Kuruman. She had lived with a sister whom she had lately lost by death. Another family took possession of her for the purpose of selling her as soon as she was old enough for a wife. But not liking this, she determined to run away from them and come to some friends near Kuruman. With this intention she came, and thought of walking all the way behind my wagon. I was pleased with the determination of the little creature, and gave her some food. But before we had remained long there, I heard her sobbing violently, as if her heart would break. On looking round, I observed the cause. A man with a gun had been sent after her, and he had just arrived. I did not know well what to do now, but I was not in perplexity long, for Pomare, a native convert who accompanied us, started up and defended her cause. He being the son of a chief, and possessed of some little authority, managed the matter nicely. She had been loaded with beads to render her more attractive, and to fetch a higher price. These she stripped off and gave to the man, and desired him to go away. I afterward took measures for hiding her, and though fifty men had come for her, they would not have got her."

Not long after his return from the first journey Livingstone set out on a second tour into the interior of the Bechuana country. His objects were to better learn the language and to train more native workers. His companions on this journey were two native Christians from Kuruman and two other natives who were to manage the wagons.

Bubi, chief of the Bakwains, was one of Livingstone's best friends. His people, too, were honest and never attempted to steal from the missionary's wagon.

It is interesting to know how Livingstone got them to dig an irrigation canal. He had promised to bring them rain, as their own doctors professed to do. And this was his method. The men set about it quite willingly, though most of them had only sharp sticks with which to dig. Unfortunately the native teacher stationed with Bubi's people was taken with a violent fever and had to leave, and Bubi himself was afterward burned to death by an explosion of gunpowder.

While passing through a part of the great Kalahari Desert, Livingstone met another friendly

chief, named Sekomi, of the Bamangwato. The people of his country were so ignorant of the nature of GOD that they called any being they considered superior god. Often Livingstone himself was given that title. One sad incident that happened while Livingstone was in this place was an attack on a woman by a lion. The poor woman was devoured while in her own garden, and the cries of her helpless children were most pitiful.

Livingstone was first appealed to by one chief and then by another to help them out of their difficulties. There were several reasons for his popularity among the natives. One was his medical ability. But of greater value were his rules of justice, good feeling, and good manners.

One time Livingstone wrote in a letter to a friend, "I have patients now under treatment who have walked 130 miles for my advice; and when these go home others will come for the same purpose." They kept him busy, but he found that the practice he received in speaking the language to his patients was a great benefit to him. He had a very active mind, for while he was engaged in his difficult travels and was meeting with all kinds of experiences he was also studying the languages and making scientific observations of the continent. He wrote to a friend that in the desert he had found at least thirty-two edible roots and forty-three fruits growing wild.

"I wish you would change my heart," said Sekomi one time. "Give me medicine to change it, for it is proud, proud and angry, angry always." Livingstone began to tell him of how JESUS would change it, but he would not listen. "Nay, I wish to have it changed by medicine, to drink and have it changed at once, for it is always very proud and very uneasy, and continually angry with some one." Then he rose and went away.

During the journey Livingstone was within ten days' journey of Lake 'Ngaroi, of which he had heard at the Cape. He was too busy with his missionary labors at this time to go in search of the lake. But years later he really discovered it.

Part of his journey had to be taken on foot because some of his oxen had taken sick. On the way he overheard some of his companions talking about him. "He is not strong," they said. "He is quite slim, and only appears stout because he puts himself in those bags [trousers]; he will soon knock up."

This was too much for him. He quickened his speed in their walks and kept it up so long that they soon confessed that they were beaten.

Back to Kuruman again in June, 1842, Livingstone found that no instructions had yet come from the directors for him. But he could not wait idly for such instructions. He went to the assistance of Sebehwe, a chief who was having trouble with neighboring tribes. Sebehwe listened attentively while Livingstone told him the story of JESUS. What joy to know that one more chief was listening to the Gospel!

He traveled on north to Bakhatla, where he had purposed to build a new station in the midst of a fertile country inhabited by industrious people. They even had an iron-mill, and Livingstone, being a bachelor, was permitted to enter. There was no fear of his bewitching the iron, as was the case with married men.

The chief promised Livingstone that if he would only come and be their teacher he would get all

his people to make the missionary a garden. But Livingstone could make no definite promises on account of the slowness of the directors.

Five days' journey beyond the Bakhatla was the village of Sechele, chief of the Bakwains. "Tell me," he said to Livingstone, "since it is true that all who die unforgiven are lost forever. why did your nation not come to tell us of it before now? My ancestors are all gone. and none of them know anything of what you tell me." This was a hard question for the missionary to answer. and it remains unanswered - a challenge to the church.

On he went, traveling four hundred miles on oxback. The skins of the oxen were so loose that he could scarcely make his overcoat stick on as a saddle. Then, too, he had to sit very erect or be in danger of being punched by the animal's horns. But what were these discomforts, when in the evenings he could sit around their fires and after listening to their stories tell them the sweetest story of all.

Returning to Kuruman in June, 1843, Livingstone was overjoyed to find a letter from the directors authorizing him to establish a station in the new country. Another welcome letter brought money for the support of a native worker.

Finding another missionary who was willing to accompany him, he set out for the proposed station at Bakhatla, and they reached their destination about the last of August, 1843. The chief welcomed them cordially. and Livingstone proposed buying a tract of land for the station.

He insisted on making the deal in a legal manner with a written contract to which each party attached his signature or mark. The directors had not given them authority to do this and they were uncertain whether or not their arrangements would be satisfactory. If they were not, Livingstone said, he was willing "to go anywhere - provided it be forward."

~ end of chapter 3 ~
