

CHAPTER XLV

A SHIPPING COMPANY FOR JESUS

THE kindly Minister of *Chalmers Church*, now very deeply interested, offered to spend the next day in introducing me to his clerical brethren. For his sake, I was most cordially received by them all, but especially by Dr. Dunmore Lang, who greatly helped me; and now access was granted me to almost every Church and Sabbath School, both Presbyterian and Independent. In Sabbath Schools, I got a collection in connection with my address, and distributed, with the sanction of Superintendents, Collecting Cards amongst the children, to be returned through the Teachers within a specified date. In Congregations, I received for the Mission the surplus over and above the ordinary collection when I preached on Sabbaths, and the full collection at all week-night meetings for which I could arrange.

I now appealed to a few of the most friendly Ministers to form themselves into an Honorary Committee of advice; and, at my earnest request, they got J. Goodlet, Esq., an excellent elder, to become Honorary Treasurer, and to take charge of all funds raised for the Mission Ship. For the Public knew nothing of me; but all knew my good Treasurer and these faithful Ministers, and had confidence in the work. They knew that every penny went direct to the Mission; and they saw that my one object was to promote God's glory in the conversion of the Heathen. Our dear Lord Jesus thus opened up my way; and now I had invitations from more Schools and Congregations than I knew how to overtake—the response in money being also gratifying beyond almost all expectation.

It was now that I began a little plan of interesting the children, that attracted them from the first, and has since had an amazing development. I made them shareholders in the new Mission Ship—each child receiving a printed form, in acknowledgment of the number of shares, at sixpence each, of which he was the owner. Thousands of these shares were taken out, were shown about amongst families, and were greatly prized. The Ship was to be their very own! They were to be a great Shipping Company for Jesus. In hundreds

of homes these receipt-forms have been preserved; and their owners, now in middle years, are training *their* children of to-day to give their pennies to support the white-winged Angel of the Seas, that bears the Gospel and the Missionary to the Heathen Isles.

Let no one think me ungrateful to my good Treasurer and his wife, to Dr. and Mrs. Moon, and to other dear friends who generously helped me, when I trace step by step how the Lord Himself opened up my way. The Angel of His Presence went before me, and wonderfully moved His people to contribute in answer to my poor appeals. I had indeed to make all my own arrangements, and correspond regarding all engagements and details,—to me, always a slow and laborious writer, a very burdensome task. But it was all necessary in order to the fulfilment of the Lord's purposes; and, to one who realises that he is a fellow-labourer with Jesus, every yoke that He lays on becomes easy and every burden light.

Having done all that could at that time be accomplished in New South Wales, and as rapidly as possible—my Committee gave me a Letter of Commendation to Victoria. But there I had no difficulty. The Ministers had heard of our work in Sydney. They received me most cordially, and at my request formed themselves into a Committee of Advice. Our dear friend, James M'Bain, Esq., now Sir James, became Honorary Treasurer. All moneys from this Colony, raised by my pleading for the Ship, were entrusted to him; and, ultimately, the acknowledging of every individual sum cost much time and labour. Dr. Cairns, and many others now gone to their rest, along with two or three honoured Ministers yet living, formed my Committee. The Lord richly reward them all in that Day!

As in New South Wales, I made, chiefly by correspondence, all my own engagements, and arranged for Churches and Sabbath Schools as best I could. Few in the other Denominations of Victoria gave any help, but the Presbyterians rose to our appeal as with one heart. God moved them by one impulse; and Ministers, Superintendents, Teachers, and Children, heartily embraced the scheme as their own. I addressed three or four meetings every Sabbath, and one or more every week-day; and thus travelled over the length and breadth of Victoria, Tasmania, and South Australia. Where-

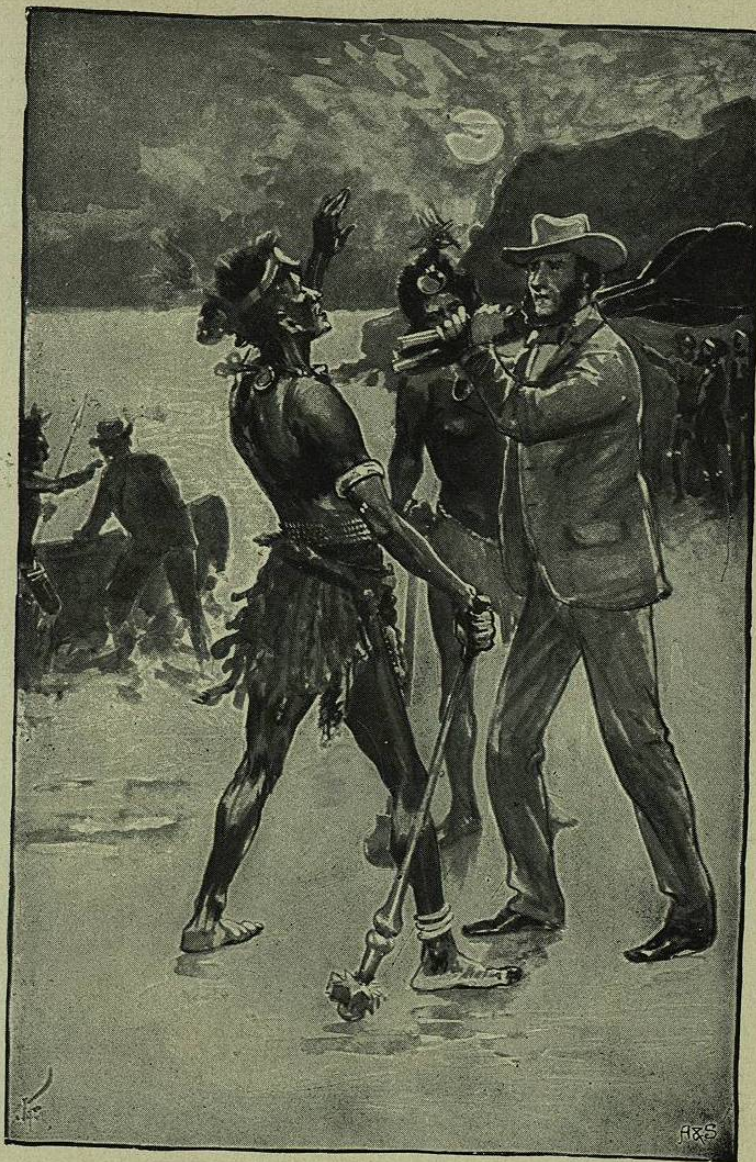
soever a few of the Lord's people could be gathered together, thither I gladly went, and told the story of our Mission, setting forth its needs and claims.

The contributions and collections were nearly all in very small sums. I recall only one exception,—a gift of £250 from the late Hon. G. F. Angus, South Australia, whose heart the Lord had touched. Yet gently and steadily the required money began to come pouring in; and my personal outlays were reduced to a minimum by the hospitality of Christian friends and their kindly conveying of me from place to place. For all this I felt deeply grateful; it saved money for the Lord's work.

The work was unceasingly prosecuted. Meetings were urged upon me now from every quarter. Money flowed in so freely that, at the close of my tour, the fund had risen to £5000, including special Donations of £300 for the support of Native Teachers. Many Sabbath Schools, and many ladies and gentlemen, had individually promised the sum of £5 yearly to keep a Native Teacher on one or other of the New Hebrides Islands. This happy custom prevails still, and is largely developed; the sum required being now £6 per annum at least—for which you may have your own personal representative toiling among the Heathen and telling them of Jesus.

Returning to Melbourne, the whole matter was laid before my Committee. I reported how God had blessed the undertaking, and what sums were now in the hands of the several Treasurers, indicating also larger hopes and plans which had been put into my soul. Dear Dr. Cairns rose and said, "Sir, it is of the Lord. This whole enterprise is of God, and not of us. Go home, and He will give you more Missionaries for the Islands."

Of the money which I had raised, £3000 were sent to Nova Scotia, to pay for the building of our new Mission Ship, the *Dayspring*. The Church which began the Mission on the New Hebrides was granted the honour of building our new Mission Ship. The remainder was set apart to pay for the outfit and passage of additional Missionaries for the field, and I was commissioned to return home to Scotland in quest of them. Dr. Inglis wrote, in vindication of this enterprise, to the friends whom he had just left, "From first to last, Mr. Paton's mission here has been a great success; and it has



"Arkurat started up, and refused to let us go."

been followed up with such energy and promptitude in Nova Scotia, both in regard to the Ship and the Missionaries, that Mr. Paton's pledge to the Australian Churches has been fully redeemed. The hand of the Lord has been very visible in the whole movement from beginning to end, and we trust He has yet great blessing in store for the long and deeply-degraded Islanders."

CHAPTER XLVI

AUSTRALIAN INCIDENTS

HERE let me turn aside from the current of Missionary toils, and record a few wayside incidents that marked some of my wanderings to and fro in connection with the Floating of the *Dayspring*. Travelling in the Colonies in 1862-63 was vastly less developed than it is to-day; and a few of my experiences then will, for many reasons, be not unwelcome to most readers of this book. Besides, these incidents, one and all, will be felt to have a vital connection with the main purpose of writing this Autobiography, namely, to show that the Finger of God is as visible still, to those who have eyes to see, as when the fire-cloud Pillar led His People through the wilderness.

Twenty-six years ago, the roads of Australia, except those in and around the principal towns, were mere tracks over unfenced plains and hills, and on many of them packhorses only could be used in slushy weather. During long journeys through the bush the traveller could find his road only by following the deep notches, gashed by friendly precursors into the larger trees, and all pointing in one direction. If he lost his way, he had to struggle back to the last indented tree, and try to interpret more correctly its pilgrim notch. Experienced bush-travellers seldom miss the path; yet many others, losing the track, have wandered round and round till they sank and died. For then it was easy to walk thirty or forty miles, and see neither a person nor a house. The more intelligent do sometimes guide their steps by sun, moon, and stars, or by glimpses of mountain peaks or natural features on the far and high horizon, or by the needle of the compass; but the perils

are not illusory, and occasionally the most experienced have miscalculated and perished.

An intelligent gentleman, a sheep farmer, who knew the country well, once kindly volunteered to lift me in an out-of-the-way place, and drive me to a meeting at his Station. Having a long spell before us, we started at mid-day in a buggy drawn by a pair of splendid horses, in the hope of reaching our destination before dusk. He turned into the usual bush-track through the forests, saying, "I know this road well; and we must drive steadily, as we have not a moment to lose."

Our conversation became absorbingly interesting. After we had driven about three hours, he remarked, "We must soon emerge into the open plain."

I doubtfully replied, "Surely we cannot have turned back! These trees and bushes are wonderfully like those we passed at starting."

He laughed, and made me feel rather vexed that I had spoken, when he said, "I am too old a hand in the bush for that! I have gone this road many a time before."

But my courage immediately revived, for I got what appeared to me a glint of the roof of the Inn beyond the bush, from which we had started at noon, and I repeated, "I am certain we have wheeled, and are back at the beginning of our journey; but there comes a Chinaman—let us wait and inquire."

My dear friend learned, to his utter amazement, that he had erred. The bush-track was entered upon once more, and followed with painful care, as he murmured, half to himself, "Well, this beats all reckoning! I could have staked my life that this was impossible."

Turning to me, he said, with manifest grief, "Our meeting is done for! It will be midnight before we can arrive."

The sun was beginning to set as we reached the thinly-timbered ground. Ere dusk fell, he took his bearings with the greatest possible care. Beyond the wood, a vast plain stretched before us, where neither fence nor house was visible, far as the eye could reach. He drove steadily towards a far-distant point, which was in the direction of his home. At last we struck upon the wire fence that bounded his property. The horses were now getting badly fagged; and, in order to save them a long roundabout drive, he lifted and laid low a

portion of the fence, led his horses cautiously over it, and, leaving it to be re-erected by a servant next day, he started direct for the Station. That seemed a long journey too; but it was for him familiar ground; and through amongst great patriarchal trees here and there, and safely past dangerous water-holes, we swung steadily on, reached his home in safety, and had a joyous welcome. The household had by this time got into great excitement over our non-appearance. The expected meeting had, of course, been abandoned hours ago; and the people were all gone, wondering in their hearts "whereto this would grow!"

At that time, in the depth of winter, the roads were often wrought into rivers of mire, and at many points almost impassable even for well-appointed conveyances. In connection therewith, I had one very perilous experience. I had to go from Clunes to a farm in the Learmouth district. The dear old Minister there, Mr. Downes, went with me to every place where a horse could be hired; but the owners positively refused—they would sell, but they would not hire, for the conveyance would be broken, and the horse would never return alive! Now, I was advertised to preach at Learmouth, and must somehow get over the nine miles that lay between. This would have been comparatively practicable, were it not that I carried with me an indispensable bag of "curios," and a heavy bundle of clubs, arrows, dresses, etc., from the Islands, wherewith to illustrate my lectures and enforce my appeals. No one could be hired to carry my luggage, nor could I get it sent after me by coach on that particular way. Therefore, seeing no alternative opening up my path, I committed myself once more to the Lord, as in harder trials before, shouldered my bundle of clubs, lifted my heavy bag, and started off on foot. They urged me fervently to desist; but I heard a voice repeating, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." There came back to me also the old adage that had in youthful difficulties spurred me on, "Where there's a will, there's a way." And I thought that, with these two in his heart, a Scotchman and a Christian would not be easily beaten.

When I found the road wrought into mire, and dangerous, or impassable, I climbed the fence, and waded along in the ploughed fields—though they were nearly as bad. My bundle

was changed from shoulder to shoulder, and my bag from hand to hand, till I became thoroughly tired of both. Pressing on, however, I arrived at a wayside Public-house, where several roads met, and there I inquired the way to Learmouth, and how far it was. The Innkeeper, pointing, answered—

"This is the road. If you are on horseback, it might be three to four miles just now, as your horse is able to take it. If you are in a conveyance, with a good horse, it might be six miles. And if you are walking, it might be eight or ten miles, or even more."

I said, "I am walking. How many English miles is it to Mr. Baird's farm?"

He laughingly replied, "You will find it a long way indeed this dark night, considering the state of the road, fenced in on both sides so that you cannot get off."

I passed on, leaving my Job's comforter; but a surly watchdog got upon my track, and I had much difficulty in keeping it from biting me. Its attacks, renewed upon me again and again, had one good effect,—they stirred up my spirits and made me hasten on.

Having persevered along the Learmouth road, I next met a company of men hastening on with a bundle of ropes. They were on their way to relieve a poor bullock, which by this time had almost disappeared, sinking in the mire on the public highway! They kindly pointed me to a light, visible through the dusk. That was the farm at which I was to stay, and they advised me to clear the fence, and make straight for that light, as the way was good.

With thankful heart, I did so. The light was soon lost to me, but I walked steadily on in the direction thereof, to the best of my judgment. Immediately I began to feel the ground all floating under me. Then at every step I took, or tried to take, I sank deeper and deeper, till at last I durst not move either backward or forward. I was floundering in a deadly swamp. I called out again and again, and "coo-ee-d" with all my strength, but there came no reply. It grew extremely dark, while I kept praying to God for deliverance. About midnight, I heard two men conversing, apparently at no very great distance. I began "coo-ee-ing" again, but my strength was failing. Fortunately, the night was perfectly calm. The conversation ceased for a while, but I kept on crying for help

At length, I heard one voice remark to the other, "Some one is in the swamp." And then a question came, "Who's there?"

I answered, "A stranger. Oh, do help me!"

Again a voice came through the darkness, "How did you get in there?"

And I feebly replied, "I have lost my way."

I heard the one say to the other, "I will go and get him out, whoever he may be. We must not leave him there; he'll be dead before the morning. As you pass by our door, tell my wife that I'm helping some poor creature out of the swamp, and will be home immediately."

He kept calling to me, and I answering his call through the darkness, till, not without peril, he managed to reach and aid me. Once I was safely dragged out, he got my bag in his hand and slung my clubs on his shoulder, and in a very short time landed me at the farm, dripping and dirty and cold. Had God not sent that man to save me, I must have perished there, as many others have similarly perished before. The farmer's wife heartily welcomed me and kindly ministered to all my needs. Though not yet gone to rest, they had given up all hope of seeing me. I heard the kind servant say to his mistress, "I don't know where he came from, or how far he has carried his bundles; but I got him stuck fast in the swamp, and my shoulder is already sore from carrying his clubs!"

A cup of warm tea restored me. The Lord gave me a sound and blessed sleep. I rose next morning wonderfully refreshed, though arms and shoulders were rather sore with the burdens of yesterday. I conducted three Services, and told the story of my Mission, not without comfort and blessing; and with gratifying results in money. The people gave liberally to the work.

Thereafter, a Schoolmaster drove me a long distance across the country to Violet Town, where for the night we had to stay at an Inn. We had a taste of what Australian life really was, when the land was being broken in. A company of wild and reckless men were carousing there at the time, and our arrival was the signal for an outbreak of malicious mischief. A powerful fellow, who turned out to be a young Medical, rushed upon me as I left the conveyance, seized me by the

throat, and shook me roughly, shouting, "A parson! a parson! I will do for the parson!"

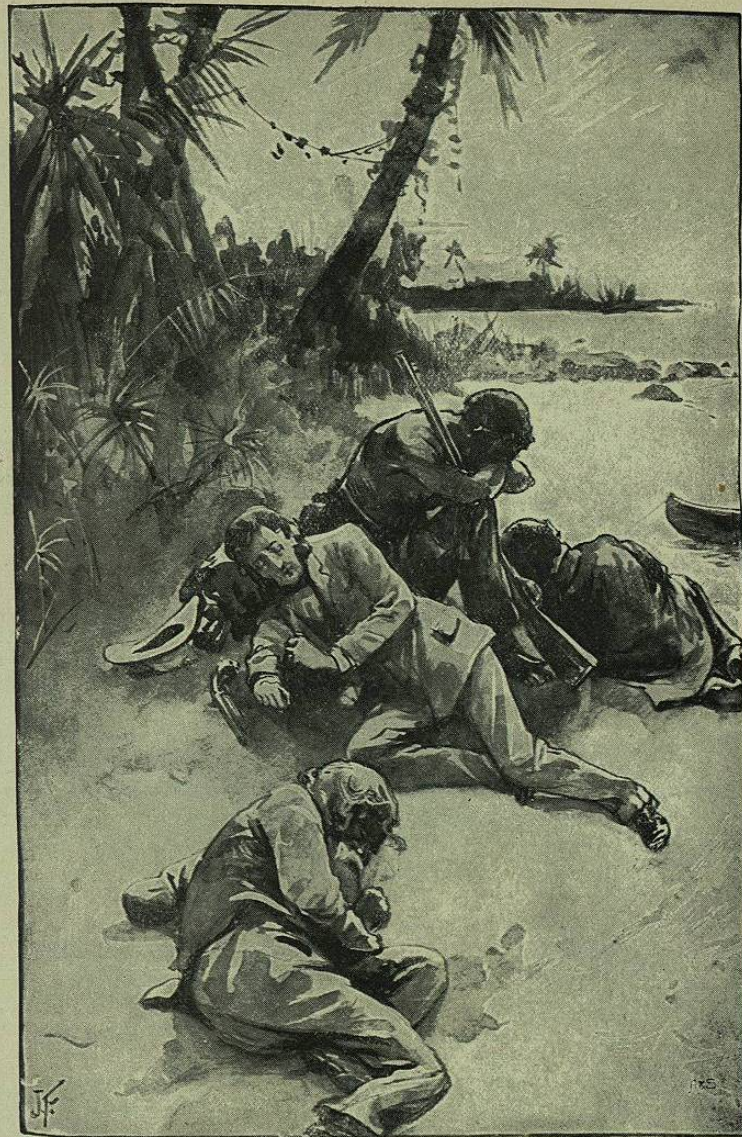
Others with great difficulty relieved me from his grips, and dragged him away, cursing as if at his mortal enemy.

After tea, we got into the only bedroom in the house, available for two. The Teacher and I locked ourselves in and barricaded the door, hearing in the next room a large party of drunken men gambling and roaring over their cards. By and by they quarrelled and fought; they smashed in and out of their room, and seemed to be murdering each other; every moment we expected our door to come crashing in, as they were thrown or lurched against it. Their very language made us tremble. One man in particular seemed to be badly abused; he shouted that they were robbing him of his money; and he groaned and cried for protection, all in vain. We spent a sleepless and most miserable night. At four in the morning I arose, and was glad to get away by the early coach. My friend also left in his own conveyance, and reached his home in safety. At that period, it was not only painful but dangerous for any decent traveller to stay at many of these wayside Inns in the new and rough country. Every man lived and acted just as he pleased, doing that which was right in his own eyes; and Might was Right.

CHAPTER XLVII

AMONGST SQUATTERS AND DIGGERS

AFTER this, I made a Mission tour, in a somewhat mixed and original fashion, right across the Colony of Victoria, from Albury in New South Wales to Mount Gambier in South Australia. I conducted Mission Services almost every day, and three or more every Sabbath, besides visiting all Sunday Schools that could be touched on the way. When I reached a gold-digging or township, where I had been unable to get any one to announce a meeting, the first thing I did on arriving was to secure some Church or Hall, and, failing that, to fix on some suitable spot in the open air. Then, I was always able to hire some one to go round with the bell, and announce



"Utterly exhausted, I lay down on the sand."