

Pastor and People.

LIFE.

The dead grain dropped to its cold earth bed :
The earth said, " Surely it is not dead ;
There is life in me, my life I give—
Take it, O poor dead grain and live."

And power wrought. To the light of day
Upward the tender blade made way ;
Above and around the glad air played,
" There is life in me for the tender blade."

The cloud dissolved and ceased to be,
" My life for thine—thou hast need of me."
The great sun gave of his glowing heat,
And the poor dead grain was living wheat.

The waving harvest field in glee
Shouted, " O man, here is life for thee—
Here is life for thee from the cold earth clod,
Thy life is the breath of the living God."

A PRAYER.

Great Lord, in earnest, trustful prayer we ask
That every day, in whatsoever place
We be, the calm, sweet radiance of Thy face
May rest upon us, brightening every task ;
That we may be all-glorious in Thy light,
Well-burnished vessels, giving back the glow
And lustre far and near, that so
The circling gloom and darkness be made bright,
We ask that evermore Thy light within
May broaden and intensify and chase
From heart and life the looming shade of sin,
So that Thy constant witnesses—e'en we—
We may, with star-like radiance, in the place
Thou chooseth, shine in risen life with Thee.

THE GOSPEL IN LARGE CAPITALS.—IV

DR. PATON'S STORY OF A CHRISTIAN ADVENTURE.

BY FIDELIS.

Having built his church, Mr. Paton next essayed to be his own printer and publisher, and taught himself the art of printing so well that he was able to print off his first Tannese booklet quite successfully, so much so that he frankly tells us, in his delight over his feat, he threw off his hat and danced like a schoolboy about his printing press, at dead of night, when all the rest of the island's population lay fast asleep. His delight had full justification. The Tannese language had been first put into written forms by himself, then he had prepared the translation and printed it with his own hands ; and now, through his own single-handed agency, the first sheet of the Holy Scripture in Tannese was ready to go forth on its light-giving mission. Gibbon has told us of his feeling on the night when, at Lausanne, he completed his great history. John Paton had more reason for rejoicing when on his remote island he completed his first booklet. Shortly after we have a different scene : " One day, while toiling at my house, the war chief, his brother, and a large party of armed men surrounded the spot where I was working. They all had muskets besides their own native weapons. They watched me for some time in silence, and then every man levelled a musket straight at my head. Escape was impossible. Speech would only have increased my danger. My eyesight came and went for a few moments. I prayed to my Lord Jesus, either Himself to protect me or to take me home to His glory. I tried to keep working on at my task, as if no one was near me. At that moment, as never before, the words came to me : ' Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, I will do it,' and I knew that I was safe. Retiring a little from their first position, no word having been spoken, they took up the same attitude somewhat farther off, and seemed to be urging one another to fire the first shot. But my dear Lord restrained them once again and they withdrew, leaving me with a new cause of gratitude to Him for His loving-kindness for time and eternity." There could scarcely be a more impressive instance, not only of the unceasing care of which he speaks, but also of the wonderful power of the higher spiritual nature over the lower sensual one, when its influence is fully exercised.

Trading ships occasionally relieved the monotony of the island-life, often far from

agreeably, though occasionally a bright exception gave the solitary missionary real pleasure. One in particular, an American whaler, commanded by a Christian captain and manned by a Christian crew, was an angel's visit, and that of a kindly Frenchman also made a pleasant contrast to the rapacity and brutality generally exhibited by the English traders, some of whom were little better than slave-traders, being guilty of the infamous " Kanaka labour-traffic," deporting thousands of natives into what was little else than colonial slavery. To the perpetual perils to which the missionary's life was exposed through the caprice and savage feuds of the Tannese, was added another danger, that of murderous ebullitions stirred up by the machinations of these infamous men. It was a sandal-wood trader that brought to Tanna the sad tidings of the murder of the brave Gordon and his wife at Erromanga, urging the warlike Harbour chiefs to follow the examples of the Erromangans and kill their missionary. From this extremity they seemed to be restrained by an unseen hand, but, as if in bravado, indulged in loud praise of the Erromangans, and even Mr. Paton's friendly chiefs showed signs of relapsing into the savagery from which he had partially raised them. The murder of the Gordons had been brought about through the combined influence of cruel superstition, the malignant intrigues of the godless traders and the plague of measles, most destructive to these poor savages, which these unscrupulous men actually introduced among them with the deliberate intention of weakening the people and exciting them to kill or drive away the missionaries ! It was a sandal-wood trader, also, that landed four young men, stricken with measles, on the shore of Tanna and thus spread through the island a plague that swept away, in its course, fully one-third of the entire population of Tanna, while the survivors were often so prostrated by weakness that they were unable to bury the dead. Of course, the enemies of the " Worship of Jehovah-God " believed that the plague was due to its introduction into the island, and the missionary's position grew more precarious than ever. A treacherous and wicked chief called Miaki boldly declared to Mr. Paton : " You and the worship are the cause of all the sickness and death now taking place at Tanna. The Erromanga men killed Missi Gordon, and they are all well long ago. The worship is killing us all ; and the inland people will kill us for keeping you and the worship here, for we love the conduct of Tanna, but we hate the worship. We must kill you and it, and we shall all be well again."

Thus, mysteriously enough, did the course of events threaten the mission with entire destruction. Mr. Paton's life was attempted again and again, but their attempts were foiled in ways that seemed well-nigh miraculous. Repeated attempts to break into his house at night were baffled by his vigilance and that of his faithful dog, which would awake him with a sharp bark when the savages came near, and could, on occasion, even frighten away the murderous cowards. For a time, however, matters somewhat improved. Mr. Paton, by repeated acts of untiring kindness, among other things, by lending the natives a very large net in a time of famine, induced the growth of a more friendly feeling, at least temporarily. A foundation was prepared for a new church, and many of the people seemed willing to receive the missionary's instruction. Miaki, however, still persisted in his attempts to stir up evil passions against the man whose teaching condemned his own wickedness. A temporary check was given to his influence by the visit of a man-of-war, on which the venerable Dr. Geddie, of Anelityum, was a passenger. On ascertaining Mr. Paton's dangerous position (for a long time he had never taken off his clothes at night), the Commodore urged him to leave the island with them. But Mr. Paton felt that he could not leave his posts, thus abandoning the poor Tannese to their heathen darkness, and knowing well the

condition of misery and vice which that darkness implied. Finding the missionary firm in his purpose, the Commodore gave the Tannese a serious exhortation as to their conduct towards Mr. Paton, which was interpreted to them through Dr. Geddie and a man from Anelityum who spoke Tannese, for each of these islands has its distinct tongue. Miaki and others promised to protect Mr. Paton's life ; but old Nouka revealed the real cause of all the otherwise inexplicable hostility towards a man who, as they had every reason to know, was their true friend. He said, naively enough, " Captain Paddam and all the traders tell us that the worship causes all our sickness and death. They will not trade with us, nor sell us tobacco, pipes, powder, nails, caps and muskets, till we kill our Missi, like the Erromangans, but after that they will send a trader to live among us and give us plenty for all these things. We love Missi, but when the traders tell us that the worship makes us sick, and when they bribe us with tobacco and powder to kill him or drive him away, some believe them, and our hearts do bad conduct to Missi. Let Missi remain here, and we will try to do good conduct to Missi ; but you must tell Queen Toria of her people's bad treatment of us, and that she must prevent her traders from killing us with their measles, and from telling us lies to make us do bad conduct to Missi. If they come to us and talk as before, our hearts are very dark, and may again lead us to do bad conduct to Missi."

This pathetic appeal is suggestive enough of the far deeper depravity of these white heathens who loved the darkness and hated the light because their deeds were evil. It suggests also that, in the honor of England, such crimes as were being perpetrated by these subjects of hers should have been visited with the severest punishment. It was, indeed, a mistake to allow the murder of the Gordons to go unpunished. The fact that it did, emboldened the Tannese to renew, eventually, their persecution of Mr. Paton and his new fellow-laborers at the other end of the island, Mr. and Mrs. Matheson, with such fury and determination that before many months had passed the missionaries had to escape for their lives, and the mission had for a time to be abandoned.

This did not happen till after many hairbreadth escapes had convinced Mr. Paton that it was his duty to retire from a field where to remain was clearly to sacrifice his life in vain. A determined attack by a large body of armed savages, led and instigated by Miaki, forced him and his faithful Anelityumese teacher, Abraham, to escape for their lives, leaving all the property contained in the mission-house at the mercy of the plundering barbarians, who melted his type into shot, tore up his books and sold his clothing to the crew of the very vessel sent just in time for their rescue. Mr. Paton had in the meantime joined Mr. and Mrs. Matheson. After a thrilling series of adventures by sea and land, during which he was harassed, deceived again and again, even by his friends, grudgingly protected at times, surrounded and pursued by armed men, and finally, after creeping, under cover of the darkness, through several half-hostile villages he and his three followers at last found themselves in temporary safety at Mr. Matheson's mission station. Here, notwithstanding that they were still in peril from the emissaries of Miaki and the persecutions they incited, Mr. Paton preached to 116 persons in the little mission church, and even went in company with Mr. Matheson to visit the surrounding villages, occasionally meeting tokens of encouraging success. But, with concealed foes lurking on every hand, this was soon found to be too perilous an adventure and the little party had to be ever on the defensive even at the mission-house. Mr. Paton had left, with the Chief Nowar, letters for any trading vessels which might visit his old station, begging that they would put in to rescue any of the party who might survive. But, after purchasing his plundered goods for a trifle from the savages, the

vessels coolly passed on their way, taking no notice of signals of distress. One night, Mr. Paton was aroused by his faithful little dog Clutha, still at his side, just in time to prevent the burning of the mission buildings along with the church which had been set on fire. A tornado, followed by a tropical torrent of rain, came to his aid, and the savages who had surrounded the house withdrew for the time, but were prepared to return next morning to finish their murderous work. Just then, when there seemed no hope, a cry of " Sail O ! sail O ! " was borne to the astonished ears of the little party, and a look seaward assured them that a vessel had indeed sailed into the bay. It proved to be one of the trading vessels which had previously passed them by, but which, at the earnest request of Dr. Geddie, had returned to take the missionaries on board. The rescue came not a moment too soon. The intending assailants disappeared, and after rescuing as much of Mr. Matheson's property as was possible in the short time at command, the little party embarked in two boats to reach the vessel. But it had now drifted to leeward, and in the increasing darkness they failed to find it ; and for some thirty-six hours the refugees had to sit in their boats part of the time under a tropical sun until the whereabouts of the vessel could be discovered. Nowar and Miaki came out to visit them, and the latter tried to beguile Mr. Paton into returning to see the mission-house. Finally he admitted the true state of the case. " We have taken everything your house contained and would have killed you." The seamen on the vessels were actually wearing some of his clothing which they had bought for a little tobacco, and which they utterly refused to give up to their needy owner. Truly, " the barbarous people " were only a shade less heartless than these representatives of British civilization. However, the little party were in due time landed at Sydney ; but Mr. Paton alone eventually survived the hardships and anxiety of that terrible time of suspense. Mrs. Matheson's delicate frame had contracted the beginnings of consumption, of which she died not long after, soon followed by her husband, who had also been greatly weakened by the exposure he had undergone.

CANON WILBERFORCE ON " BINDING AND LOOSING."

The Sacerdotalists will not be pleased at the manner in which Canon Wilberforce has " given himself away " in a sermon preached in Westminster Abbey on John xx. 23, from which we take the following : Examine the context of this commission of the Christ that you may appreciate its significance and its extent. " He breathed on them and said, Take ye the Holy Spirit. Whosoever sins ye forgive they are forgiven unto them." It is inaccurate to limit to a single class a commission conferred upon the Church as a whole. The whole body of the disciples, women included, were gathered in that upper chamber at the time. The Divine act is regardless of sex or station. That the commission is the justification for the exercise of the functions of absolution by the ordained ministry is undoubted, but as representatives of the body. The most authoritative form of absolution, that in the service for the visitation of the sick, ordered in all rubric of Edward the Sixth to be used in all private confessions, distinctly states—" Our Lord Jesus Christ hath left power to His Church to absolve all those who truly repent." The commission therefore reaches to all ; the laity are binders and loosers, and not the clergy only ; binders sometimes, for it is as needful for a physician to know when a patient is not cured as when he is ; but you are loosers, remitters, absolvers, whenever you give the soft answer that turneth away wrath ; when you deal healing precept or example you lead a drunkard to forsake his sin, a prodigal to alter his lust ; whenever you labour so to alter an evil environment that it may be easier for people to do right. You who are rescuing your fellow-creatures, " whose soever sins you remit they are remitted," not as by formal absolution, but in deed and in truth by putting away. You, then, who are ministering lovingly to your brethren in any department of the remedial agencies of the day, believe that your work is commissioned as much as mine, that it is linked to the eternal purpose of God, and consecrated by the breath of Him who said, " Take ye the Holy Spirit."