

Such was the spirit of entire consecration which animated the heart of young Patteson. In the spring of 1855 he embarked with Bishop and Mrs. Selwyn for New Zealand.

It would seem that nature had designed a man of Patteson's birth, training and education for work among the cultivated and historic races of the East, and that he was a man specially fitted to bring about the conversion of philosophical Brahmins, and learned Moulvies of the Asiatic world, rather than to labour among the savages of the South Seas. But he possessed the very qualifications needed for a missionary in the Melanesian Islands. His linguistic talents specially fitted him for the acquirement of the numerous dialects of those islands, and to mould those languages into alphabets and literature. His life at Eton and Oxford had inspired him with a love for seafaring and navigation, and his manly courage armed him for the dangers of a life among tribes of savage cannibals. He commenced his missionary labours under the immediate direction of Bishop Selwyn, in New Zealand, and was able to show his peculiar qualifications as a sea captain in command of the "Southern Cross" along the uncertain coast of New Zealand, from Auckland to Wellington. His first two years were those of severe discipline. The soreness of the wrench from home was still fresh in his tender soul, and the fastidiousness of his nature, which had been the growth of a life of culture and refinement, was being gradually conquered in the fulfilment of many a lowly task.

It was in his twenty-ninth year, on Ascension Day, 1856, that he was specially set apart for the definite work of his life, and he set sail, in company with the Bishop, for Norfolk Island, which was intended to be the headquarters of his mission. Here they found that the whole convict establishment, which had for so many years occupied the island, had been removed, and that the Pitcairn community of "The Bounty" consisted of about 150 adults and some 45 children. From Norfolk Island they sailed to Aneiteum, where they found a Presbyterian missionary from Nova Scotia, the Rev. Mr. Geddie, whose labours among these semi savages had been so fruitful that out of a population of some 4,000 the number of 3,700 had embraced Christianity. Having touched at several islands, the "Southern Cross" steered homeward, and reached Auckland safely after an absence of little more than two months. Another missionary journey was soon made in the mission ship, and during an absence of sixteen weeks Bishop Selwyn and Mr. Patteson visited sixty-six islands and brought home thirty three pupils, from nine different islands, to prepare for the Christian ministry. This was a special feature in Patteson's missionary labours, to visit the various islands of the Melanesian group, and to bring home with him youths to Bishop Selwyn's headquarters, to be trained as teachers, and then send them back as evangelists to their own people.

Coleridge Patteson gave his whole soul to the work. "I wish," wrote Bishop Selwyn, "you could see him in the midst of his thirty-eight scholars at Kohimarama, with eighteen dialects buzzing round him, with a cheerful look, and a cheerful word for every one; teaching A, B, C, with as much gusto as if they were the X, Y, Z, of some deep problem, or marshalling a field of black cricketers, as if he were still captain of the eleven at Eton; and, when school and play are over, conducting his polyglot service in the mission chapel."

Five years of experience of Patteson's singular fitness for the supervision of missionary work among the scattered islands of the South Sea had convinced Bishop Selwyn that he could not do better than intrust to him the sole responsibility of the work, and make arrangements for the consecration of the first Missionary Bishop of Melanesia. It had been thought desirable to send Patteson to England for consecration, and the event would doubtless have been an era in missionary interest had he been set apart for the apostolic office in either Westminster Abbey or St. Paul's. But the devoted missionary decided otherwise: "I certainly feel that it ought not to be," he wrote; "my work lies out here clearly, and it is true that any intermission of voyages or residences in the islands is to be avoided."

His consecration by Bishop Selwyn, and the Bishops of Wellington and Nelson, took place at Auckland on Sunday, Feb. 24th, being St. Matthew's Day, 1861. "The day is come, my dearest father, and finds me very calm," he wrote. Those who were present at this very interesting ceremony fondly recall the event.

The three consecrating Bishops were all such noble-looking men, and there was a goodly company of clergy; the fine, intelligent brown face of the native minister, Hohua, was among them. Then there was a long line of island boys and native teachers, and their wives, who were living testimonies of Patteson's missionary labours. Young Tagalana held the book, and the stalwart Bishop of New Zealand read the words of consecration.

The extreme simplicity of the bearing of the new Bishop was apparent to all. Bishop Abraham, of

Wellington, wrote to Dr. Goodford, the master of Eton, respecting his much-loved pupil: "Anything more conscientious and painstaking cannot be conceived than the way he has steadily dedicated every talent, every hour or minute of his life to the one work he had set before him. However small or uncongenial or drumdrudgery-like his occupation, however hard, or dangerous, or difficult, it seemed to be always met in the same calm, gentle, self-possessed spirit of love and duty which I should fancy that those who well knew his good and large-minded, large-hearted father, and his mother, whom I have always heard spoken of as saintly, could best understand. Perhaps the most marked feature in his character is his genuine simplicity and humility. I never saw it equalled in one so gifted and so honoured and beloved."

"My dearest father," Patteson wrote, "the point is settled; I almost fear to write that I am a Bishop in the Church of Christ."

Then, referring to the dangers attending his work, he writes: "What some of you say about self-possession on one's going about among the people being marvellous, is just what of course appears to me commonplace. Of course it is wrong to risk one's life, but to carry one's life in one's hand is what other soldiers besides those of the Cross do habitually; and no one, as I think, would willingly hurt a hair of my head in Melanesia. How I think of those islands! How I see those bright coral and sandy beaches, strips of burning sunlight fringing the masses of the forest, rising into ridges of hills, covered with dense mats of vegetation! Hundreds of people are crowding upon me—naked, armed, with uncouth cries and gestures; I cannot talk to them but with signs. But they are my children now. May God enable me to do my duty to them."

Some months elapsed before he received a letter from his father, who wrote from Feniton Court, Honiton, June 12, 1861: "Oh! my dearest Right Reverend well-beloved son, how I thank God that it has pleased Him to save my life until I heard of the actual fact of your being ordained and consecrated. Only conceive that an old judge of seventy-two, cast out of his own work by infirmity, should yet live to have a son in the holy office of Bishop in the Church of Christ!"

The high social position of the Coleridges and the Pattesons cast a halo of interest, and even of romance, around the life and work of the first Bishop of Melanesia, which did much to foster that popularity of mission work which has characterized the life of the English Church for the last thirty years. The earnest, humble and self-consecrated spirit of the gifted son of one of England's foremost judges did much to deepen the interest in foreign missions.

The life of Bishop Patteson was laborious in the extreme. The captain of the Eton eleven, the Oxford athlete, and the navigator in the South Seas had tutored himself to a physical endurance. Things which appear to most men to be trials and privations, were to him simply pleasures and recreation. But he was overworked, and sadly felt the need of more men. His missionary field was that of scattered islands, in which diverse languages were spoken, and it became evident that there must be strong reinforcements. For this he earnestly pleaded. In writing to a friend, he says: "We want earnest, bright, cheerful fellows, without that notion of making sacrifices perpetually occurring to their minds. Men who have got rid of the notion that more self-denial is needed for a missionary than for a soldier or a sailor, who are sent everywhere, and leave home and country for years and think nothing of it, because they go on duty. A fellow with a healthy, active tone of mind, plenty of enterprise, and some enthusiasm, and, above all, who does not think himself better than other people, because he is engaged in mission work—that is the fellow we want."

From the time that Patteson first arrived in the mission field, he had, both before and after his consecration as bishop, established his headquarters at Kohimarama, near Auckland in New Zealand, where he collected his scholars and students from various islands, and carefully trained them with the hope of establishing a native ministry suited for the peculiar requirements of such a scattered diocese. He also spent a very large proportion of his time on board the mission ship, "The Southern Cross," where he found leisure for linguistic and literary work, as well as for much private reading and correspondence. He had, however, for some time, felt that it was desirable to move his headquarters nearer to the Melanesian group of islands, both on account of the climate, and because several voyages in the year could be made, instead of one long period of absence from headquarters. New Zealand lay altogether to windward, and his return voyages had always been made against the prevalent S. E. Trade Wind. It had therefore been proposed that he should accept the offer of a small island, named Curtis Island, lying off the coast of Australia, and transfer the headquarters of his mission to that spot. But this plan was superseded by a more satisfactory one—an offer being officially made by the government to

allow the mission to place its headquarters at Norfolk Island, which had for many years been a penal settlement for English convicts, but which had ceased to be used for this purpose. It was also inhabited by the Pitcairners, the descendants of the mutineers of "The Bounty." Norfolk Island is about five miles long, and three miles across, and is traversed by some excellent roads made, in former years, by convict labour. The scenery is described by Patteson as like that of a large, well-wooded English park. Pasturage for cattle was abundant; whilst there was a great variety of fruits—oranges, lemons, bananas, guavas, melons, and peaches. The substantial church erected for the use of the English convicts was available, and the Bishop erected residences for himself and his missionary party, and school houses for his numerous pupils. His labours among the islanders were largely blessed of God. Many natives were baptized, a goodly band of native converts had been placed in the ministry. It was Bishop Patteson's constant aim, as far as possible, to adapt Christianity to the simplicity of the people to whom he ministered. Writing from Norfolk Island, in 1866, he says: "I have for years thought that we seek in our missions a great deal too much to make English Christians of our converts; we assume English Christianity to be necessary, and we encumber our message to the heathen man with unnecessary requirements. The ancient Church had its 'selection of fundamentals,' a kind of limited expansion of the Apostles' Creed for doctrine, and apostolic practice for discipline."

The Bishop's College, which was denominated St. Barnabas' College, on Norfolk Island, was the centre of spiritual influences. It was from there that the light went forth. Converted natives were trained for the ministry, English students and clergymen were specially fitted and trained for their peculiar work, scholars were instructed in the things necessary to salvation, tracts, books and Bibles were translated, printed and sent forth from this centre of the diocese of Melanesia.

Bishop Patteson was singularly happy and contented in his work. Blessed by God in bringing souls to Christ, beloved and almost worshipped by those who were associated with him, watched in all his movements with the most intense and prayerful interest by an immense number of Christian friends in old England, he felt enthused to a marvellous degree. Repeated invitations from missionary committees and bishops, and a large circle of friends in England, to visit his native land, and so by his presence intensify the interest felt regarding the work of missions in Melanesia, failed altogether to alter his determination to remain firm and steady at the post of duty.

There was only one drawback, one source of trouble, and that was the kidnapping of the native islanders by the "labour vessels" owned by unscrupulous foreigners. It was, at times, very difficult for the Bishop and his missionaries to make it clear to the injured natives that this kidnapping had nothing whatever to do with the work of the English missionaries, and that it was most repugnant to their feelings. But it was this condition of things which brought about the martyrdom of the devoted Bishop.

It was on Sept. 19, 1871, that Bishop Patteson anchored his mission schooner, "The Southern Cross," in the Santa Cruz group of islands. And early the next morning he penned his last letter to his old and faithful friend, Bishop Selwyn, who was then Bishop of Lichfield: "And now what will the next two days bring forth?" he wrote. "It may be God's will that the opening for the Gospel may be given to us now. Sometimes I feel as if I were almost too importunate in my longings for some beginning here; and I try not to be impatient, and to wait His good time, knowing that it will come when it is 'the fulness of time.' Then, again, I am tempted to think, 'if not soon the trading vessels will make it impossible, as men think, to obtain any opening here,' but I am on the whole hopeful, though sometimes faint-hearted."

At morning prayers the Bishop read and expounded the account of the death of St. Stephen. Just before noon a boat was lowered to convey him and his little missionary party to the Island of Nukapu, which lay with the blue waves breaking over the circling reef of the white line of coral sands, and the green trees reaching down to it. The party consisted of the Rev. James Atkin, Stephen Taroniara, James Minipa, and John Nonono, with the Bishop. The savages of the island recognized the Bishop; and when he offered to go on shore they assented. The boat was rowed on to a part of the reef about two miles from the island, where natives invited the Bishop to enter one of their canoes, and, in order to disarm suspicion, he at once complied, and entrusted himself to two chiefs, Moto and Taula, who had before been so friendly to him. The rest of the missionary party remained in the boat. Several canoes gathered round it, and without a word or any warning a native stood up in one of the canoes and, calling out, "Have you anything like this?" shot off one of the yard-long arrows, and the natives in the other canoes then be-