

of Leeds, offered them £1,000 if they would commence a mission in the Congo country. This offer was supplemented by £500 from Mr. Wathen, of Bristol.

Here, then, was the signal to "go forward." Messrs. Comber and Grenfell, two of our missionaries at the Cameroons—men who have since proved their splendid qualities, and whose names will be imperishably connected with the evangelization of Africa—immediately undertook the pioneer work. Without waiting for full instructions from home they took ship to the mouth of the Congo, proceeded seventy miles up the river in a Dutch trading vessel to Mboma, travelled thence to Noki, on the borders of the Congo kingdom, and having sent a letter to the king telling him of their projected visit, returned with valuable information to the Cameroons. In June, 1878, furnished with instructions and stores, they set out again, and with two native preachers and ten helpers, reached San Salvador, the capital of Congo, and were favourably received by Dom Pedro, the King.

The Congo country, the reader must bear in mind, is not a designation given to the whole vast basin through which the great river flows from its source to the sea, but is the name of the comparatively small territory at the coast on the south bank of the river. It is an old and partially civilized kingdom, and in former times was instructed to some extent in the externals of Christianity by Roman Catholic missionaries from Portugal. The Portuguese discovered the country four hundred years ago, and gave the name of San Salvador (Holy Saviour) to the chief town. They imposed a nominal Christianity on the King and his subjects, and allowed him to rule under their auspices. "The sword, the cannon, the slave-whip, and the torture, the strong hand of power and the lust of gain, were the influences that marked their path." For a hundred years the Roman Catholic mission had been abandoned, but no sooner did our missionaries arrive than it was resumed, with the escort of a Portuguese gun-boat; and by the liberal distribution of threats and gifts the Roman Catholics endeavoured to induce the king to expel the English missionaries, but with little success, for the Portuguese name is hated in Congo. The king assumed an apparent coldness, but at heart remained friendly to our men.

Comber and Grenfell, then, had reached San Salvador; and after an unsuccessful attempt to penetrate in a northerly direction to the river Congo above the falls, which impede its navigation from the sea—in which expedition they were well received by the King of Makuta—they returned through San Salvador to the Cameroons, and Mr. Comber came to England to confer with the committee and secure helpers.

In April, 1879, he returned to San Salvador, accompanied by his wife, to whom he had just been married, and by Messrs. Crudgington, Hartland, and Bentley. There, in August, the brave wife died; and after her burial the heroic husband pushed on to Makuta in company with Mr. Hartland, with the view, as before, of reaching the river above the falls; but the tribes were hostile, and the attempt was again unsuccessful. After three months spent in teaching at San Salvador, Comber and Hartland made a fresh attempt in a new direction, to be again repulsed; but hearing on their return more favourable news of the disposition of the king and people of Makuta, they determined—once more to try the Makuta road, which is the most direct to Stanley Pool. Their carriers were afraid to accompany them, and they had with them only Mr. Comber's boy, Cam. As soon as they reached Makuta they were surrounded by an infuriated

people, brandishing knives and shouting, "Fetch the guns: kill the white men." The missionaries appealed in vain; they expressed their readiness to go back, but the natives made a rush, and no course was left them but to fly. Mr. Comber was shot in the back with a slug, and fell, but was able to rise and continue his flight. The chase continued for five miles. At length night befriended the fugitives, and passing through several towns on tiptoe, for fear of waking the people, they reached a friendly place, where Hartland engaged a few men to carry his wounded colleague in a hammock to San Salvador. There, thanks to Mr. Crudgington's skill, the slug was extracted, and Mr. Comber recovered, but not without a severe attack of fever.

In January, 1881, Comber and Hartland, with invincible courage, made another attempt by the Makuta road, while Crudgington and Bentley attempted the task on the north-bank of the Congo.—The Makuta party were deserted by their Krooboyas, and had to return; but the other party, crossing the river at Vivi, accomplished a march of twenty-one days, and on February the 10th, Crudgington, emerging upon an open space, sighted a wide stretch of water, like a streak of cloud in the horizon, and exclaimed, "There's Stanley Pool!"

The extensive sheet of water known as Stanley Pool is an expansion of the river at a point three hundred miles above the coast, and is twenty-four miles long, and of about equal width. It divides the Upper from the Lower Congo. Below it the river flows towards the sea in rapids and torrents through a gorge, and is unnavigable for many miles; but above it there is a clear stretch of one thousand miles before you come to Stanley Falls, which are on the equator, in the very centre of Africa. This gives to Stanley Pool its immense importance. Had it been the purpose of our missionaries to evangelise merely the races on the Lower Congo the Pool would have been their terminus; but as their aim is the conversion of the tribes in the interior, it becomes the starting-point.

The two missionaries, after a variety of thrilling incidents, and a narrow escape from being slaughtered by the savages at Nahasha, were hospitably entertained by Mr. Stanley, who merits the warmest acknowledgments for his unvarying courtesy and helpfulness. He gave valuable information and counsel, and on their return conveyed them on board his steamer along the navigable reach of the Lower Congo from Manyanga to Isangila. Crudgington was now despatched by his colleagues to England for conference. The committee approved the plans of the missionaries; a steel boat, *The Plymouth*, so named as the gift of a friend in that town, was constructed to ply on the navigable reach of the Lower Congo just mentioned; and it was resolved to send out six more men, one of whom, Mr. Dixon, accompanied Mr. Crudgington on his return.

Meanwhile Comber, Bentley, and Hartland established the necessary stations on the north bank of the river, which, however, were presently transferred to the south bank on account of a road Mr. Stanley was constructing there; and Comber, reaching Stanley Pool, secured a plot of ground from Mr. Stanley for a Baptist mission-station at Leopoldville, at the south-west point of the Pool, which received the name of Arthington.

At this juncture Mr. Arthington wrote to the society that he believed the time was come "to place a steamer on the Congo river, where we can sail north-eastward into the heart of Africa for many hundreds of miles uninterrupted, and bring the glad tidings of the everlasting gospel to thousands of human beings who are now ignorant of the way of life and immortality." For this pur-