

Missionary.

Great Missionaries.

REV. ROBERT MOFFAT.

The attention of the world at the present time is turned in the direction of South Africa, and every bulletin from the field of strife is eagerly scanned. Even the school boys know exactly where the towns and cities and rivers are located, as maps are carefully studied. When Robert Moffat went to South Africa, however, little was known of the country; more than that, it was frequented by beasts of prey, and peopled by savage tribes. Robert Moffat was born on the 21st of December, 1795, in Scotland. Of his youth not many particulars are known. It is stated that he improved his opportunities for picking up knowledge, learned to play the violin, and was very fond of athletic sports. At the age of eighteen he was converted at a Wesleyan Methodist meeting, and shortly after received his first missionary impulse, by seeing a large poster announcing a missionary meeting. It seemed to come to him as a personal appeal, and from that moment he determined to be a missionary. It must not be thought, however, that there were no other influences at work in leading to this choice of a life-work. His mother had told him many thrilling stories about the Moravian missionaries in Greenland and Labrador, and these all came up freshly in his mind when his eye rested on that missionary announcement.

About a year after, he was sent as a representative of the London Missionary Society to South Africa. He reached Cape Town, January 13th, 1817, and lodged for a time with a Dutch farmer, from whom he learned Dutch, which enabled him to preach to the Boers in their own language. His mission, however, was to the Hottentots beyond the Boer settlements. Of course he met with much prejudice and opposition in his purpose to preach to these degraded people.

"On one occasion Moffat halted at a farm belonging to a Boer, a man of wealth and importance, who had many slaves. Hearing that he was a missionary, the farmer gave him a hearty welcome, and proposed in the evening that he should give them a service. To this he readily assented, and supper being ended, a clearance was made, the big Bible and the psalm-books were brought out, and the family was seated. Moffat inquired for the servants, "May none of your servants come in?" said he.

"Servants! what do you mean?"

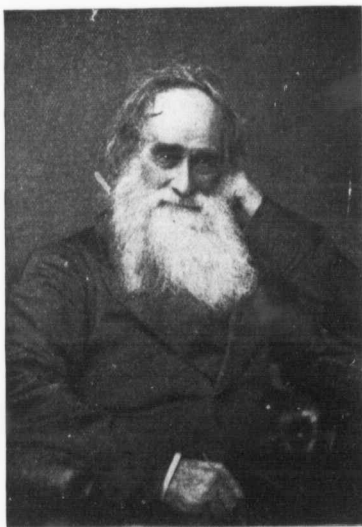
"I mean the Hottentots, of whom I see so many on your farm."

"Hottentots!" roared the man, "are you come to preach to Hottentots?" Go

to the mountains and preach to the baboons; or, if you like, I'll fetch my dogs, and you may preach to them."

The missionary said no more but commenced the service. He had intended to speak on the "neglect of so great salvation," but with ready wit, seizing upon the theme suggested by his rough entertainer, he read the story of the Syro-Phœnician woman, and took for his text the words, "Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." He had not proceeded far in his discourse when the farmer stopped him, saying, "Will Mynherr sit down and wait a little; he shall have the Hottentots."

He was as good as his word, the barn was crowded, the sermon was preached,



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and the astonished Hottentots dispersed. "Who," said the farmer, "hardened your hammer to deal my head such a blow? I'll never object to the preaching of the Gospel to Hottentots again."

A noted chief named Africaner gave Mr. Moffat's friends much uneasiness. He was a dreaded outlaw who had been the terror of the country. All sorts of predictions were made as to what would happen if Moffat placed himself within the power of this savage. One said that Africaner would set him up for his boys to shoot at, another that he would strip off his skin to make a drum of, while a third predicted that he would make a drinking cup of his skull. A kind motherly dame said, as she wiped the tear from her eye and bade him farewell, "Had you been an old man it would have been nothing, for you would soon have died, whether or no; but you are young and going to become the prey of that monster."

Africaner, however, received the young

missionary kindly, and calling his women and pointing to a spot of ground said: "There you must build a house for the missionary." In half an hour the structure was completed, in appearance something like a bee-hive. In this frail house, of sticks and native mats, Moffat lived for nearly six months, being scorched by the sun, drenched by the rain, exposed to the wind, and obliged often to decamp through the clouds of dust; in addition to which, any dog wishing for a night's lodging could force its way through the wall, sometimes to the loss of the missionary's dinner next day. "A serpent was occasionally found coiled in a corner, or the indweller of the habitation had to spring up, in the middle of the night, to save himself and his house from being crushed to pieces during the nocturnal affrays of the cattle which roamed at large. He lived principally upon milk and dried meat, until, after a time, he was able to raise a little grain and garden stuff."

Africaner soon became interested in the Gospel and began to read the New Testament. Before long he was thoroughly converted, and the lion became a lamb, as the love of God filled his heart. He who was formerly like a fire-brand, spreading discord, enmity, and war among the neighboring tribes, was now ready to make any sacrifice to avoid conflict, and besought parties at variance with each other to be at peace. When Moffat took Africaner into Cape Town to present him to the governor, he had somewhat the experience of Barnabas with Saul of Tarsus when he introduced him as Paul the Apostle at Antioch and Jerusalem—many were afraid of the new convert, "not believing that he was a disciple." But the way was won for the Gospel and its triumphs in that field, and the world saw and believed.

For ten years Moffat and his devoted wife labored in Africa without much apparent result, but at last their faith and patience were rewarded and they had the joy of seeing many of the people brought to Christ, and the ignorant and degraded transformed by the power of the truth. Speaking of some of his converts he says: "It was truly gratifying to observe the simplicity of their faith, implicitly relying on the atonement of Christ, of which they appeared to have a very clear conception, considering the previous darkness of their minds on such subjects."

As an illustration of the faith of the missionaries, it is said that during the darkest days, before the Gospel had made any progress whatever, Mrs. Moffat received a letter from a friend in Scotland inquiring if there was anything of use which she could send. The reply returned was, "Send us a communion service, we shall want it some day." Communication between Africa and England was tardy then, and before an answer came to her letter the darkness increased, and the Bechuans seemed as far from salvation