

Missionary.

Great Missionaries.

XV.—MacKay of Uganda.

BY REV. W. H. EVANS.

In recording the names of distinguished missionaries, a conspicuous place will be given to Alexander M. MacKay, the missionary hero of Uganda. He was a child of the home, being born in the parsonage of the Free Church, at Rhynie, Aberdeenshire, October 13th, 1849.

Young MacKay exhibited an immense eagerness for knowledge. When only three years old he could read the New Testament, at seven was reading Gibbons' "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," Milton's "Paradise Lost," and other difficult works. His education, until he was fourteen years of age, was under the direction of his father; then he was sent to the Grammar School of Aberdeen, and ultimately to Edinburgh University. When a boy he manifested a great liking for all kinds of mechanical work. He would walk miles to watch the movements of a steam-engine, and found pleasure in observing the smith working at his forge, or the shuttles flying at the mill. There was doubtless in this a providential ordering, for in his missionary life all his mechanical knowledge was laid under contribution.

After completing his studies at Edinburgh, he went to Berlin, in Germany, where he obtained a position as draughtsman in one of the leading firms. It was in that city that he decided to consecrate his life to missionary work in a foreign land. Writing to his sister in August, 1874, he says, "I am not a doctor, and therefore cannot go as such; but I am an engineer, and purpose, if the Lord will, to go as an engineering missionary."

In 1875 the Church Missionary Society decided to organize a mission in Uganda. It was in response to the appeal of Mr. H. M. Stanley, the famous African explorer, in the London Daily Telegraph. He wrote a vivid description of Uganda and its people, and the strong desire of the kind to be instructed in the Christian religion, and appealed earnestly to Christian England to send out missionaries. Mr. MacKay's offer was at once accepted. In March he was in England preparing his outfit—tools for his mission, and a steamer to be used on Lake Nyanza. A brief visit was needed to Edinburgh, to bid farewell to his family. On the 25th of April, 1876, the band of missionaries, eight in number, of which MacKay was the youngest, took leave of the missionary committee. The missionary made a short address. Mr. MacKay was the last to speak. He remarked, "There is one thing which my brothers have not said, and which I want to say: I want to remind the committee that within six months they will probably hear that one of us is dead. But what I want to say is this: When that news comes, do not be cast down, but send some one else immediately to take the vacant place."

On the 6th of November he reached Rubaga, the capital of Uganda. On the 8th of November he had his first inter-

view with King Mtesa, who was, according to Stanley, "the most striking figure in equatorial Africa."

The impression produced by Stanley's letters was that the king and his people were ready to embrace the Christian religion, but such was not the case. Mtesa had evidently imposed on the great explorer. "Stamlee," said he, "say to the white people when you write to them, that I am like a man sitting in darkness, or born blind, and that all I ask is that I may be taught how to see, and I shall continue a Christian while I live." Mr. MacKay soon found that he was one of the most degraded and bloodthirsty creatures. Before Stanley arrived he burnt to death two hundred youths in one day. A few years before Mr. MacKay arrived his soldiers captured two thousand per-

to get them ready, and the king was highly pleased.

On March 18th, 1882, the first converts were baptized, five young men of promise. Mr. MacKay was filled with gratitude and joy. He says, "We have longed for this day; now that we have seen it with our eyes, may we give our word no rest until he gives these young Christians His grace and spirit." The good work went steadily on, a number from time to time openly confessing their faith and being baptized. On the 29th of October, 1884, Mtesa died, and Mr. MacKay had often pleaded with him to turn from his sins, but apparently without avail.

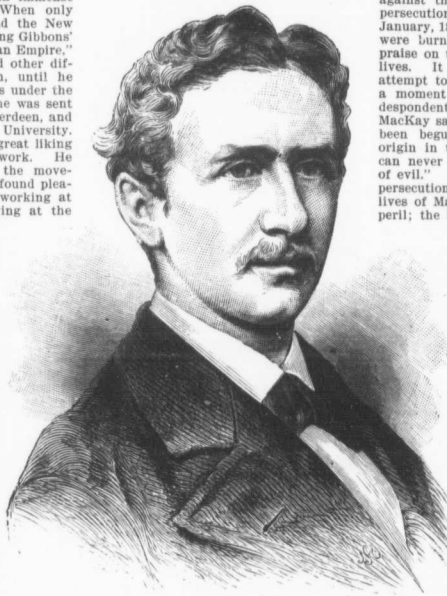
Mwanga, son of the late king, was elected to rule over them. He had all his father's vices without his intelligence. Immediately on his assumption of authority he took a position of antagonism against the missionaries. The fires of persecution broke out. On the 30th of January, 1885, three of the young converts were burned to death. With songs of praise on their lips they laid down their lives. It was the beginning of a fierce attempt to obliterate the mission. For a moment the brave missionaries were despondent, but, regaining their courage, MacKay says, "I believe that a work has been begun in Uganda which has its origin in the power of God, and which can never be uprooted by all the forces of evil." As in primitive times, so now persecution multiplied the converts. The lives of MacKay and Ashe were in great peril; the king had decided to kill them, but God preserved them.

It is touching to read how the people came by night to the mission to be instructed and to be baptized. With joy many of them laid down their lives for the Saviour.

While doing some mechanical work MacKay took a severe cold, fever set in, he became delirious, and on the fourth day of his illness, February 8th, 1890, the devoted missionary passed home to God. On the shores of the Nyanza they reverently and affectionately laid away his mortal remains to await the resurrection morn. The Rev. Mr. Deeks, who buried him, says, "The Baganda Christians, and the boys of the village, stood around the grave, and I began to read the burial service, but broke down with grief. The boys and the Baganda Christians sang, 'All hail the power of Jesus' name.' Never shall I forget that day."

A line or two must suffice as an analysis of Mr. MacKay's character. He was a man of great courage. There was no fear in the presence of danger or of his enemies. His faith, also, was strong. In the hour of trial it never seems to have failed him. Then with patience he waited for the results of his labors. As he felt persuaded they would come, so he calmly waited. His unselfishness shines out continually. When he had to return to the coast in consequence of fever, he did not desert any one of the number to return with him, but urged them to press on to Uganda. And repeatedly he preferred to remain alone among these savages than leave the work unsupplied. His consecration to the Lord Jesus was supreme. His motto was, "Africa for Christ." And he placed all his abilities at the disposal of the Saviour.

This life of cheerful, self-denying labor will doubtless be found in the last great day to have done much for the practical redemption of Africa.



REV. ALEXANDER M. MACKAY, D.D.

sons, who were all slain the same day. When rebuilding the tomb of his father, two thousand were murdered as an offering to the departed spirit. And, regardless of the presence of the missionary, murders were of daily occurrence. He was as full of vanity as of cruelty.

That which attached Mtesa and his chiefs to Mr. MacKay was his mechanical skill. He built a house for the missionaries, and the people came in crowds to see it—were astonished at its glass windows, doors, hinges, locks, and the stairs leading to the upper story. He dug a well, and they were surprised to see the water; when he put a pump in it and made the water flow, they shouted, "MacKay is the great spirit." He made a cart, and painted it bright red and blue. When he yoked the oxen, and drove them, they shouted at the top of their voices, and danced for wonder and joy. When Mtesa's mother died, he wished her to be buried after the fashion of royalty. Mr. MacKay consented to make the coffins. The outer one was of wood, the inner one of copper. It took a month