

It came, as such things do, without any visible exciting cause. There was a wave of tumultuous and simultaneous enthusiasm.

In a few months the whole aspect of the station had changed. The meeting-house was crowded before the service had begun. Heathen songs and dancing ceased, and everywhere were to be heard instead the songs of Zion, and the outpouring of impassioned prayers. The missionaries were beset even in their own houses by those who were seeking fuller instruction. The moral condition of the community rapidly improved.

The two brethren who witnessed this change were sober-minded hard-headed Scotchmen, by disposition not willing to lend themselves to any movement which might seem to have the taint of mere sensationalism. It was only after careful examination that from the many who pressed forward they selected some six to receive the rite of baptism.

Few can enter into the feelings which must have animated the hearts of the missionary band when they first sat down with that little company at the table of the Lord. On the day preceding this memorable occasion in the history of the Bechwana Mission, a box arrived which had been long on the road from England. It contained the Communion vessels for which Mary Moffat had asked nearly three years before.

From the Lives of Robert and Mary Moffat.

THE SYMPATHY OF CHRIST.



ARE you in trouble, or have you ever been in trouble? Then you know the blessing of sympathy. Even when our friends can do nothing to help us, it is still a great comfort to us to have their sympathy.

There is in the world a great deal of sympathy, much more than we sometimes think.

When Mungo Park, the African traveller, was in the wilds of Africa, he came to a village where he was kindly welcomed for the night in a native hut. Early in the morning, he was aroused by the noise of women grinding corn, and by the sound of their voices as they sang at their work. As he listened, he found they were singing about himself, and what they sung was something like this: "Poor man! he has no wife to grind his corn, no one to cover him as he lies down to sleep, nobody to tend him when he is sick." And it was very cheering to him to think that there were such kind hearts, even in savage Africa.

How much more deeply thankful should we be that we live in a land where men's hearts are softened by the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, and where their sympathy is so much kinder than in places where the Gospel is unknown.

But no mere human sympathy is perfect. People are often so much occupied with their own troubles and cares that they can scarcely find time to think of ours; and, besides, they may know nothing at all about the things which try us most, and nothing, or very little, about what we feel.

There is, however, a sympathy which is wholly perfect—that of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Lord of angels, the Maker and Lord of the whole universe, the Son of God. Though He sits on the throne of heaven, He looks down on poor, frail, erring, suffering men with the kindest sympathy.

Nearly nineteen hundred years ago He came down from heaven in order that He might take on Him our human nature. "God made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Christ took our human nature that He might know, by His own personal experience, our feelings, our temptations, our wants, our griefs; and now, though He is so highly exalted, He has forgotten nothing of all He thus learnt about us.

You have read about Him in the Gospels, how kind He was to everybody, but especially to the needy and the suffering. Never was any man so strong in spirit, and never was woman more tender. He had compassion on the multitude, and He wrought a great miracle in order that He might feed them. When the sick and palsied were taken to Him, He healed them every one. How kindly He spoke to the woman who washed His feet with her tears! He wept at the grave of Lazarus; and how lovingly He comforted his sisters in their sorrow! These are only a few instances of His most tender sympathy. Take your New Testament again and read it, and you will find a great many more. And He is just as kind and pitiful to-day as He was in the days of His earthly life.

This sympathy of Christ is shown to all kinds of people, not only to the great, but even to the very lowliest—to the lonely widow as she sits in her poor cottage; to the aged, the sick, the bereaved; to the shepherd on the moor; to the shipwrecked sailor; to the emigrant in a strange land; to the prisoner in his cell; to those who are just about to die. He sees and knows them every one, and He knows all about them—all their circumstances, all their cares, all their tears, their inmost hearts. He can do this because He is not only human but Divine—the Son of God as well as the Son of Man.

He thus sympathises with us always. There is nothing fitful about this sympathy—as there is so often about that of our fellow-men. Even though we may grieve Him by our unbelief, and waywardness, and sin, He does not cease to care for us, and to pity us.

Nor is the sympathy of Christ in any case a barren sympathy. There are people who say they sympathise, but who never help; and there are sometimes those who sympathise with us very kindly, and who would help us if they could, but who are altogether unable. But He has all power in heaven and on earth; the holy angels are all His servants, and He sends them on errands of love to men; and He is always ready to give to us His own Holy Spirit.

Go to Him, then. Tell Him all your need and all your grief. He cares for you; He hears you; He will not fail to help you. "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

S. G.