

ROBERT BROOKING

Was born near Tavistock, Devon, England, in March, 1813. He was orphaned at an early age, earning his own living when only nine years of age, and getting an elementary education at a night-school. He was converted at the age of nineteen, and for some years, in addition to his daily labor as a mechanic, did duty as a local preacher, often walking many miles on Sabbath to preach the Word.

Having offered himself for missionary work in Western Africa, he was sent to Richmond Theological Institute, where he studied about two years, and was specially ordained for that work in November, 1839. We find by his journal that on Christmas day of the same year, just fifty-four years ago, he was on board a sailing vessel, in sight of the Canary Islands, on his way to Africa, and speaks of seeing the churches illuminated in honor of the day. Arriving in Africa, he labored first on the Gold Coast, at Accra, and was afterwards sent to the interior of the kingdom of Ashantee, where his experiences were varied, interesting, and sometimes very awful. In his journal, February 9th, 1842, he says: "Several human sacrifices have been made—have just returned from a walk, and have seen five headless bodies and six heads lying in the street. Thus scarcely a week, or even a day passes, without such scenes being witnessed. One can scarcely go out, but he sees a headless trunk lying in the street or being dragged to the place of deposit!"

After seven years of labor in Africa, a very painful affection of the throat rendered it necessary to quit that climate if he would continue work as a missionary. Returning to England, he spent some time in pleading the cause of missions through the land, but was advised by his physicians to remove to Canada, this climate being considered the best for his throat disease.

After short delay, partly occupied with mission work on the platform, he entered the Canadian Methodist Conference, and became a missionary to the Indians. He had considerable success in winning the confidence of his people on Indian missions. After laboring for several years in Upper Canada, he consented to go to, what was at that time, the most inaccessible region of the great North-West, the Hudson's Bay Territory, and spent nearly seven years at Oxford House and Norway House Missions.

Returning to Ontario, he labored on various missions until the year 1881, when old age compelled him to retire from active work, after seven years of lonely labor among the Africans and thirty-four years among the Indians of Canada. In addition to his labors as pastor, teacher and guide in things spiritual, his mechanical skill was constantly called into use for the general good. On one mission in Ontario, he built a good mission house entirely with his own hands, and superintended the building of both church and school-house, the proceeds of a bazaar held on the spot being the only money available to pay for the stone. He also built a church in Africa, largely with his own hands.

All through his missionary life, he suffered more or less from deafness occasioned by African fever. After all the vicissitudes of this long life, the years of rest and peace in Cobourg were very sweet, nor was he permitted to endure prolonged suffering ere the wheels of life stood still, December 21st, 1893.