

CHARLES TRISTAM, MISSIONARY.

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(Concluded.)

MRS. TRISTAM remained silent for some time, lost in deep thought; then rising from her seat she embraced her son and said, "Let us for the present make no further reference to this painful subject. I will tell your father of our conversation, but I am sure he will be greatly annoyed;" and so the conversation ended. Mrs. Tristam hurried to her own room where she gave way to passionate grief. The blow, although not altogether unexpected by her, had at last fallen upon her with terrible suddenness, and she possessed not the strength to bear it wisely. She was, alas, a stranger to peace, that peace which follows a humble resignedness to the will of God, and soothes the anguish of the tried and tempted soul. But the hardened heart was already melting, the mysterious purposes of an All-wise God were beginning to be wrought in her soul.

To Charlie the interview, as he had feared, had been painful indeed. It was, however, over, and with it also, he felt that the worst was passed, for he had an instinctive consciousness that his parents would not finally withhold from him their consent to his entering upon the life to which he had looked forward with so much pleasure; although he knew too that this could only be given after a long and painful struggle between his parents' feelings of affection and duty. He prayed for strength and guidance, not alone nor chiefly for himself, but for his parents whom he loved with an affection exceeded only by that which they bore for him.

Long and earnestly was the subject discussed that night by the squire and his wife. The squire's first impulse, on being informed of the interview which had taken place but a few hours previous between his wife and son, was to be angry and he talked about "putting all that nonsense out of his son's head," and much more in a similarly imprudent strain; but his impetuosity soon spent itself, and he consented to view the matter reasonably and sensibly. After much had been said on either side (strange as it may appear to the reader, strange as upon subsequent reflection, she thought it herself) Mrs. Tristam who had grown so accustomed to allowing her son to please himself in everything, found herself pleading with his father on his behalf. Thinking therefore that his wife had made up her mind to place no obstacle in Charlie's way, and not wishing to oppose the wishes of both, the squire so far relented as to say at the close of their conversation: "If the boy's mind is made up it is quite useless for us to try to alter it; and to place hindrances in his path would be unwise. Besides who knows what will happen in five years? He may change his mind long before that time expires!" This reflection seemed

at least to show how little his parents really knew of Charlie's character; but it soothed their perturbed feelings and thus comforted, they slept.

CHAPTER VI.

At length it was arranged that Charlie Tristam should proceed to the university, with the full consent of his parents, and upon the distinct understanding, that after taking his degree he should join the Central African Mission. Accordingly to the University of Oxford he went and there continued till he had taken his degree, which he did with much distinction. He had never had the advantage of being a public school boy partly on account of his health, and partly because of his mother's strong aversion to his leaving home. But ever since he had come to the parish Mr. Maitland had been his tutor, and having himself passed through a most brilliant University career, he had given his pupil a most effective preparation for the university. A change was rapidly taking place in Mr. and Mrs. Tristam's disposition towards Foreign Missions: it was perceptible enough to the hard working vicar and others who had regretted the lack of interest the squire and his wife had shown towards this most important branch of the Church's work; it was not unknown to themselves. As their son's university career drew to a close, and they perceived that so far from weakening, his determination to carry out his resolve grew firmer every day, they gradually resigned themselves to that which was inevitable, best of all they were learning to be subservient to the will of God. They were naturally delighted with Charlie's successes at the university, and with the high esteem in which he was held by the head of his college and others who knew him, each and all of whom predicted a useful future for him. Here, as they reflected, was already some compensation at least for the loss they were to suffer in being separated—perhaps forever—from him; not only in this circumstance, however, but in many others, they gradually learned to see the mysterious tracings of the Finger of God, until at length they were constrained to confess that "this is the Lord's doing and it is marvellous in our eyes."

Charlie was now in his twenty-second year. He was no longer the delicate youth he had once been, on the contrary he felt himself to be thoroughly strong and "fit for anything," as he had once proudly informed his mother. This happy condition of things with regard to himself, he owed in a large measure to the keen zest with which he had entered into boating at Oxford, and the scrupulous regularity with which he had taken his exercise therein. He was handsome as ever, more intellectual than ever, the possessor of a great big heart which thumped incessantly with sympathy and affection for his fellow men, sincere, firm, bright, good as gold; here was a typical missionary, the very man for Africa, upon whom would devolve the awful responsibility of first presenting the Gospel of Jesus to his heathen brethren.