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ON THE BANKS OF THE UPPER ZAMBESI.

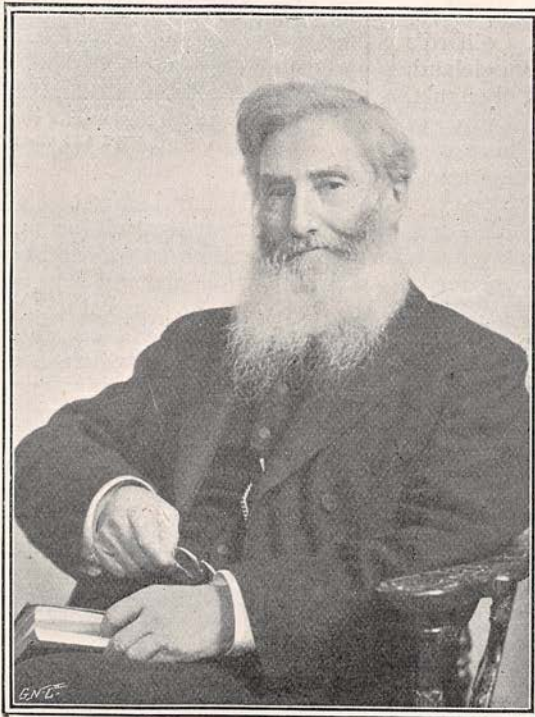
THE STORY OF THE FIRST MISSIONARY TO THE BAROTSI : MORE WONDERFUL THAN ANY ROMANCE.

BY CATHERINE WINKWORTH MACKINTOSH.

IN the Barotsi Mission, as in the Basuto Mission, whose daughter it is, we have the manifestation of the essentially catholic, universal character of heart-felt

Christianity. Like the Good Samaritan, without any human calculations, Christians of no matter what country or denomination, unite their sacrifices and their love to redeem the most brutal and degraded savages who form part of the human family. At the present moment the Barotsi Mission reckons in its ranks men and women of French, Swiss, German, and British birth, as well as several Waldensians from Italy. Above the prejudices, interests, and flags of their respective nations, together they set up the Cross and spread its banner. Theirs is the Imperialism of the Kingdom of God." Bearing the flag of the Prince of Peace to the very thres-

hold of Central Africa, they claimed for Christ the barbaric kingdom of the Barotsis, on the Upper Zambesi, long years before it became a British Protectorate, and was re-named Northern Rhodesia. Livingstone, for pure love of mankind, was the first to explore that dark region : he prospected as the Christian pioneer, and passed on, leaving among the "blacks" a fragrant, kindly memory that paved the way for M. Coillard's heroic mission.



REV. FRANÇOIS COILLARD.
Photo. by Elliott & Fry.

It is a story of missionary romance and tragedy. A roaming, raiding tribe of Basutos, the Makalolo, swept over hundreds of miles from the borders of Cape Colony towards the heart of the Dark Continent and conquered the Barotsis. Thus things stood when Livingstone passed through. But ere long the conquered natives revolted and exterminated their conquerors, and Lewanika was enthroned over the ancestral kingdom, with twenty-five clans tributary to him.

But note how God had prepared the way for the next invasion, again of Basutos, but Christians this time, bent upon a different conquest. At their own cost Basuto Christians had equipped a party of native evangelists, led by that apostolic man, Rev. François Coillard, of the French Protestant Mission, to carry the Gospel afar to the province, as large as Germany, which their kindred had conquered and lost. When they reached the Upper Zambesi, they found the Barotsis had learned the Basuto language from their temporary conquerors, and that it was in that tongue alone that the various clans could communicate with each other. Their own speech was already there in common use, waiting for them!

The first band of Basuto missionaries, crossing the Transvaal in 1876, had been stopped by the Boers, put in prison in Pretoria, and compelled to return. Next year M. Coillard's party struck into Matabeleland, were captured by Lobengula, and driven off by way of Khama's country. Their caravan plunged into the trackless steppes leading to the Zambesi, were misguided into the dreary, deadly Kalahari desert, and only after being looted by marauders reached the borders of the Barotsi country. But this first journey was only a reconnaissance in force. Ten years had to pass, years of weary negotiation and disappointment, before the mission could be planted in the Barotsi valley. Bivouacking in waggon or tent for months waiting for access to the king, detained by revolution, plundered with impunity, wading rivers to their waist, preyed upon by lions and crocodiles, their books, instruments, clothes, and medicines deluged, their waggons sinking in bogs, their hatchets cleaving a slow way through deep forests, their hearts sickened by sights of slave markets and by the massacres, poison-cups, and brutalities that filled the people's life with terror,



ONE OF THE BASUTO MISSIONARIES TO BAROTSLAND, WITH HIS WIFE AND CHILD.

M. and Mme. Coillard held to their campaign with calm, unconquerable faith, with no protection save their own personal influence and character.

The Barotsi valley occupies the bed of an ancient lake, studded with ant-hills, on some of which the villages are built. During a third part of the year the Zambesi overflows, and it becomes a lake again. This is the time for hunting, when the animals crowd on the islands for refuge. While the king and all his men go off to feast on antelope, and to accumulate skins for their winter clothing, the villages are abandoned to women, children, and slaves.

Women, children, and slaves! In these three classes the curse of Ham is consummated. In Christian lands a man's life, if need be, is not too precious an exchange for a woman's. But, says M. Coillard, "among the Barotsi her value is

nil. . . . She passes from hand to hand, after a feud or the death of a chief. No marriage ceremony exists. Unions are formed and dissolved every day by mutual consent. No one but a chief desires children, or cares to preserve their life."

Strange to say, on the other hand, chieftainesses are not rare. While practically woman's life is degraded, theoretically a woman has equal rights with men. She may be a prophetess or a ruler, or may even lead an army, provided she can assert her authority sufficiently. Queen Mokwaë, the sister and (according to the old Barotsi tradition) the co-ruler with the king, valiantly maintains her privileges, exercising a right of veto on all his decisions, as he on hers. She is a woman of character. Scarcely one of her ten or eleven husbands has died a natural death. One of them, an important chief, she beheaded with her own hands in the presence of her slaves, who feared to do it at her bidding. She afterwards sent her crier round the village saying, "The Queen wishes you to know that she has removed a troublesome thorn from her foot."

Mokwaë, and Katoka (another chieftainess who used the "divining-bones" of witchcraft to get rid of the wife of another man whom she wished to marry), have adopted European dress, tight boots, and other habits of progress. But, while they both attend church regularly, they remain bigoted heathen. Some of their old vices have given place to another more civilised, but not less deadly, covetousness, "the yellow heart," as the natives call it.

On one occasion, Mokwaë brutally illused a Primitive Methodist missionary, a temporary resident in the

country. At last, on the urgent plea of M. Goy, her own missionary, she consented to let him go, but only on condition of a heavy ransom.

"But I have no money," protested the missionary, "only barter goods."

"How do you renew your supplies?" demanded the Queen, who is nothing if not business-like.

He answered that he sent cheques to Bulawayo, of which he briefly explained the nature and use.

"Cheques will do," was her response.

There is something grimly humorous in the contrast of Mokwaë's barbarities with her childish vanity and caprice. "The Queen of Hearts" shouting, "Off with his head!" in every emergency hits off Mokwaë to the life.

The history of the Merovingian dynasty in France portrays a state of society almost exactly resembling that of Barotsiland in the conflict of dawning Christianity with primitive passions. In time to come the stories of Katoka and Mokwaë may yield material for tragedy no less than those of Fredegonde and Brynhilda.

So much for the equality of the sexes. What of domestic slavery, that institution which some believe to be the ideal social state for Africa?



LESHOMA COUNTRY: METHOD OF MAKING TRACES FOR WAGGONS.

Strips of skin are cut concentrically from the ox-hide, thus obviating the necessity of joining the ends. Then they are hung over a branch, weighted with a large stone, and twisted and untwisted for hours, till they are quite soft and pliant.



THE ROYAL BARGE "NALIKUANDA."

This barge is built anew every year for the flood-time under the King's direction. He is a skilful craftsman. No woman may ever set foot in her, and she is manned entirely by chiefs.

"Picture thousands of Barotsi crouching in a circle before the king and the principal chiefs of the country. In the midst, huddled up together, are hundreds of these unfortunate prisoners. Not a single man among them; no young men. And for a very good reason. A man is never made prisoner; he is killed and disembowelled. There are not even any old women. What could they do with them? These are young women, the greater number with little children on their backs, and a multitude of children of all ages

and both sexes. See one band after another, who are made to approach and subjected to a minute inspection, amid the mirth and obscene remarks of the multitude, while thousands of eyes are fixed upon them with unabashed cupidity. The unweaned babe is left at its mother's breast. But all who can walk are so many domestic animals, which are distributed right and left. Poor children! no more father or mother for them. But they will get used to it; and one day they, too, like these men of to-day, will



QUEEN MORWÆ WITH THE MOKWE TUNGA (PRINCE CONSORT), CALLED "SON-IN-LAW OF THE NATION."

find their pleasure and their glory in making orphans.

"Here is a little child scarcely three years old, who is being snatched from a young woman's arms. He shrieks and kicks, wrenches himself free, and runs into the middle of the crowd, quite lost and crying for his mother, who has already been carried off. This unrehearsed effect is a capital joke for everybody. 'Knock him down!' they shouted laughingly to his master. He understood his own interests better than that, and soon recaptured the refractory little creature. And now it is the turn of another young mother. 'Take that baby away.' But she, heedless of the situation, seizes it and clutches it convulsively in her arms. Fire darts from her eyes, and from her lips a torrent of words, highly mirth-provoking to all around. They were already proceeding to violence, when Lewanika let himself be moved, and ordered them to leave her child to her. Fortunate warrior; two domestic animals instead of one! I could stand it no longer. I fled from these sickening scenes. O my God! how long!"

But is the Zambesian woman capable of better things? Is she not, after all, a mere animal, unfit for the higher responsibilities of wifehood and motherhood?

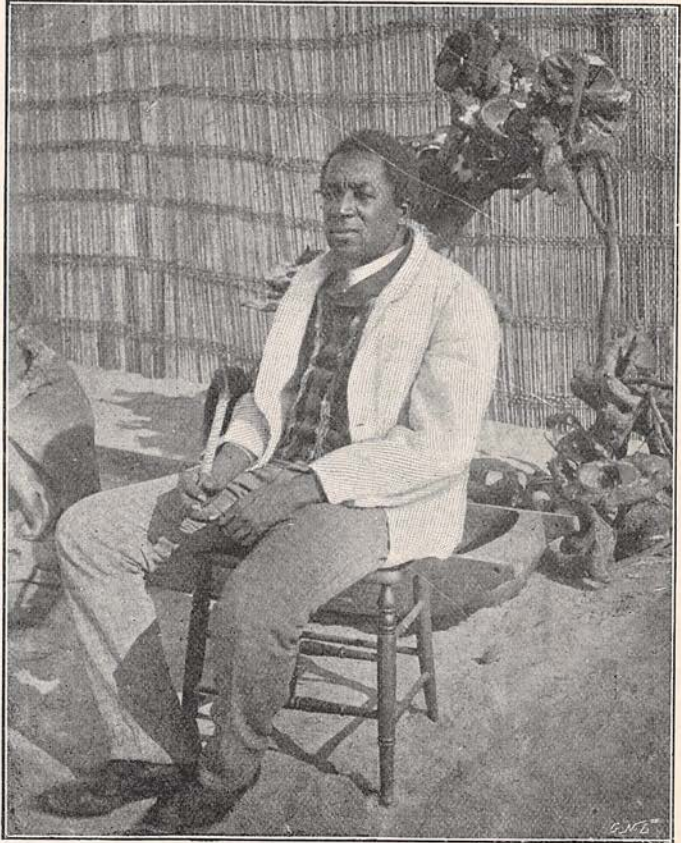
"The evangelisation of Zambesian women," wrote M. Coillard ten years ago, "is the hardest part of our work. We do not know how to reach them; they do not take an interest in anything, and one cannot make them do so. We are digging a very hard rock."

A year or two later he was preaching in the little mission church on the woman of Samaria. When he closed, a noisy

crowd filed out in the train of the king and queen. One remained behind, a poor slave woman. Scantly clad, she crouched, sobbing, on the bare mud floor; unlike the chieftain's women, she had no mat on which to kneel, no handkerchief even to cover her head.

"Why do you weep?" asked the pastor.

Her face was hidden in her hands. "Oh, *moruli* (missionary)," she answered,



KING LEWANIKA ON THE JUDGMENT SEAT.

The stump behind him is a "medicine-tree" hung with bones.

"you spoke of that poor creature whom the Saviour met beside the well. I am weeping because there is not one woman amongst us, *not one*, of whom He could not say the same."

She was no Christian, but the sense of sin and shame was dawning for the first time in a Barotsi woman's heart. Soon both she and another had found Him "who told them all things whatsoever they did," and, like their prototype, they "went to



SESHKI MISSION STATION: NATIVES BRINGING FOOD FOR SALE.

tell the men." But the results were less happy. They told their pitiful little tales to the missionary.

"Hold your tongue," said one group. "Have you ever seen the white man's God? Does your bread fall out of the sky when you pray?" "No one has ever seen God," answered the poor woman, "but He has made Himself known by His Son. And is it not really from the sky that we get our bread? Whence comes the dew? Whence the rain that makes our corn grow? And where shines the sun, pray, which makes it ripen?"

The other related that on her way to the preaching she had stopped to invite some men to go. "Be off!" they replied. "It seems it's no longer the missionaries, but these chits of women who must needs set us to rights. Go, and pretend to be a believer if you think they will give you beads and stuff." "Oh, my masters," she answered, "I am only a poor slave: I am nothing. But it is not stuffs I am seeking. What should I do with them? I have never worn anything but this apron of skin. But I am a great sinner, and what I am seeking is the pardon of my sins."

Here, as elsewhere, experience has proved that even in the darkest places God has His own elect souls who grope after the light. One of these was the mother of Stephen Semoinji, the son of a village chief, and now a devoted evangelist, who has spent two and a half years

me with the name of 'chrysalis' (or, as we should say in England, "tied to his mother's apron-string").

The moment she heard a missionary had come into the country, she persuaded her husband to send their child to him, and "be taught good." He broke away after two years, and went hunting with his father and their serfs in a remote district. There they were surprised by

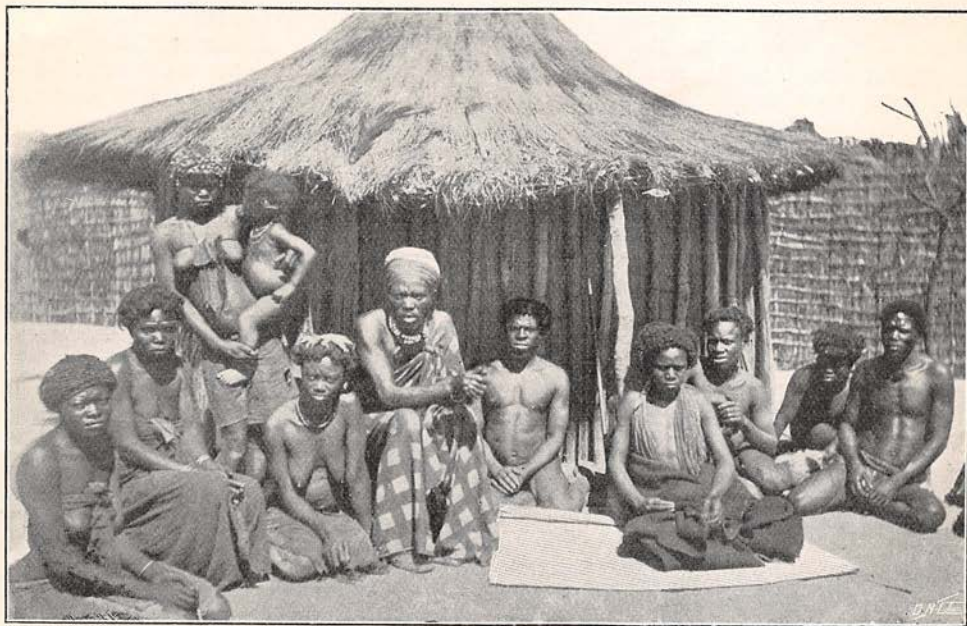


THE PRINCE LITIA, WITH HIS WIFE AND CHILD.

at Dr. Grattan Guinness's Training College (Harley House, Bow). "As for the abominations of the heathen," he said at his baptism, "I have known little of them. My mother guarded me from them. She always kept me within our own court, lest I should learn evil from the other children, so that they taunted

a hostile tribe, who, contrary to custom, fought with them all night. These opponents had firearms, while they themselves had only their hunting weapons with which to defend themselves. Little Semoinji, then only twelve, knowing that death or slavery awaited him if the battle went against them, prayed in agony, and for the first time, to the missionary's God. When morning dawned, the ground was seen to be strewn with the wasted ammunition of the enemy, who, having exhausted all their cartridges, had retreated, fearing a daylight assault from the spears

harem. Young, intelligent, and very attractive, she was too timid to approach the Europeans directly. She made friends with Norea, the wife of the Basuto evangelist, learned to read, and eagerly studied the things of God. Soon, *without the missionary's knowledge*, she confessed to the King that she could no longer resist the call of God, and begged permission to leave his seraglio. He granted her petition, and she was baptized by the name of Elizabetha. This was five years ago. She has since married a native evangelist, formerly a slave, and



SINDÉ: AN IMPORTANT CHIEF OF THE UPPER ZAMBESI.

His relation to Lewanika may be compared to that of the King of Saxony to the Kaiser, independent but not paramount.

of the hunting party. Scarcely one shot had told.

The little party hastened home, and then the mother besought her boy to go back to the *moruti* (missionary), and "follow the right way." He yielded, with what result we know. But she never saw him again. Probably she never heard the Gospel preached, though some vague echoes may have reached her. But we know that in every nation they that fear God and work righteousness are accepted of Him.

Such another was Nolianga, a daughter of the famous King Sepopa, and, as a relative of Lewanika, attached to his

both are devoted to the Lord's work. To appreciate all that this step involved, we must remember that Barotsiland is a country as large as Germany, and that the difference in a native's eyes between a born princess and a vassal is far greater than that between a European princess and the meanest of her subjects. "They are not human beings; they are dogs, beasts, *bontsu boo* (that black thing)," Queen Mokwaë would often say of the serfs. Therefore, when Elizabetha forsook her royal rank, and learned to support herself by menial work, her fellow-women could only think of an unworthy motive. "The hypocrite!"

they said. "She is only doing it to please Lewanika, so that she may be his sole wife when he declares himself a Christian."

That happy day has not yet dawned. Lewanika was once very near it. The atmosphere of Christianity attracted him strongly. "This is my home: I have no other," he said wistfully, one day, on leaving the missionary's house. "I have twenty-one wives, but no home." He would often ask for the hymn, "What a Friend we have in Jesus!" one day remarking, "It is a great thing to be the *friend of the King*; to have a great Friend on Whom to roll all one's burdens and sorrows."

Indeed, he was upon the point of "sweeping out his harem," but his head men took fright; they and old Narubutu, the Nestor of the nation, told him plainly that if he did so, and forsook the worship of his royal ancestors (the national religion), they would depose him. And he, having twice experienced the horrors of a revolution, drew back. The crucial moment passed, and since then he has drifted farther and farther away. The love of money has displaced all higher thoughts.

Travellers see the comparative advance, the nominal and to some extent actual abolition of abuses: beer-drinking, burning for witchcraft, the boiling-water ordeal, infanticide, and the slave trade; they see the cleanliness and order of his well-built

dwelling, and they congratulate the missionaries on the king's progress. All this is good; but those who seek the souls of men know that the world, even the moral, respectable world, may erect a more impassable barrier between the soul and God even than the flesh and the devil.

The hope of the Gospel's triumph rests on two Christian young men; Litia, the king's son, an important chief; and his friend and brother-in-law, Mokamba, whom the king recently appointed prime minister, in spite of his youth, over the heads of older men, "because" (he said) "he is a Christian whose mind will be open to every sort of progress."

"Take care, Mokamba," said one of his brother chiefs (also a Christian) at his installation, "you are the bull who leads the herd across the stream. Do not turn back, or you will drown us all."

God grant that he may indeed "lead the nation across the stream."

The Prince Litia, on his part, is doing his best in this direction. He has risked his popularity, and has successfully carried his chiefs with him, in the determined effort to stop infanticide. He has but one wife, and he lives with her, eating at the same table and taking her into his confidence as a true helpmeet, just like any European family.

On M. Coillard's return to the Zambesi last year, a veteran of over sixty, along with a party of missionaries, Litia gave them all a dinner party after their best style. It was a very solemn as well as a joyful festival for it followed upon the baptism of Litia and his wife. Before all their assembled people they, who had for years past given proof of their change of heart, confessed their faith, and dedicated their infant son and heir to Christ. May this event be the harbinger of good to Barotsiland and its people!



A MA-MBOË VILLAGE, A VASSAL TRIBE ON THE UPPER ZAMBESI, NORTH OF THE BAROTSI CAPITAL.