

Partners in Pioneering:  
Ludlow's Memoirs

© The Late Revd. R Nelson Ludlow

Comments or feedback to:  
<http://www.tonyludlow.net>

# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Ireland and beyond</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1	Introduction . . . . .	1
1.2	Dublin . . . . .	2
1.3	Transport . . . . .	3
1.4	Cycling across Ireland . . . . .	5
1.5	Holidays . . . . .	6
<b>2</b>	<b>Commitment</b>	<b>9</b>
2.1	Call to the Ministry . . . . .	9
2.2	1924: Candidates for the Ministry . . . . .	11
2.3	Journey to France . . . . .	13
2.4	Training and Ordination . . . . .	14
2.5	Working in the USA and Canada . . . . .	15
<b>3</b>	<b>First Tour</b>	<b>17</b>
3.1	Preparations . . . . .	17
3.2	First voyage . . . . .	20
3.3	Early Methodists in Nigeria . . . . .	23
3.4	Learning Yoruba in Igboora . . . . .	25
3.5	Ibadan . . . . .	27
<b>4</b>	<b>First circuit</b>	<b>29</b>
4.1	“The wood is for your coffin” . . . . .	29
4.2	Oyo . . . . .	30
4.3	Haircutting . . . . .	32
4.4	Trekking . . . . .	32
4.5	Baptisms in the Oyo Circuit . . . . .	34
4.6	Government officers . . . . .	35
4.7	Building works . . . . .	36
4.8	Tropical storms . . . . .	38
4.9	A plague of locusts . . . . .	38
4.10	The death sentence . . . . .	39
4.11	Returning home . . . . .	40

<b>5</b>	<b>Second Tour</b>	<b>41</b>
5.1	Moving to Ilesha . . . . .	41
5.2	Ilesha hospital . . . . .	42
5.3	A new partnership . . . . .	43
5.4	Running the circuit . . . . .	45
5.5	Preceded by drums . . . . .	46
5.6	Engagement . . . . .	47
5.7	The Owa of Ilesha . . . . .	48
5.8	Synod . . . . .	49
<b>6</b>	<b>Marriage</b>	<b>51</b>
6.1	Wedding preparations . . . . .	51
6.2	Honeymoon . . . . .	52
6.3	On 'leave' . . . . .	54
6.4	Return to Nigeria . . . . .	55
<b>7</b>	<b>A working partnership</b>	<b>57</b>
7.1	The new venture . . . . .	57
7.2	Our first mobile operating theatre . . . . .	58
7.3	House building . . . . .	60
7.4	Working together . . . . .	61
7.5	Schooling for girls . . . . .	62
7.6	Government administration . . . . .	64
7.7	Education . . . . .	65
7.8	Pupils . . . . .	66
<b>8</b>	<b>An adventurous life</b>	<b>69</b>
8.1	"Your car has been shot" . . . . .	69
8.2	An open door . . . . .	70
8.3	A network of dispensaries . . . . .	72
8.4	Animal pets . . . . .	74
8.5	Assisted schools . . . . .	75
8.6	Christmas . . . . .	76
<b>9</b>	<b>Personal stories</b>	<b>79</b>
9.1	Stephen . . . . .	79
9.2	Deborah Ajayi . . . . .	80
9.3	In church . . . . .	83
9.4	Gold rush . . . . .	84
9.5	The Methodist Missionary Society (MMS) . . . . .	85
9.6	The Emir of Ilorin . . . . .	88
9.7	Visitors from overseas . . . . .	88

<b>10 Making music</b>	<b>95</b>
10.1 Sunday services . . . . .	95
10.2 Making a wooden leg . . . . .	95
10.3 The baby Austin . . . . .	96
10.4 Infectious diseases . . . . .	99
10.5 Music and musical instruments . . . . .	100
10.6 The Ilesha brass band . . . . .	101
<b>11 The Road To The North</b>	<b>105</b>
11.1 The earliest Methodists in Nigeria . . . . .	105
11.2 Starting work in the north . . . . .	107
11.3 North to Kaiama . . . . .	109
11.4 On to Bussa and the river Niger . . . . .	112
<b>12 The war years</b>	<b>115</b>
12.1 1939: Peter is born . . . . .	115
12.2 Running the gauntlet of submarines . . . . .	116
12.3 Safe home in Ilesha . . . . .	117
12.4 1941: Don't risk the submarines . . . . .	119
12.5 Delays in moving north . . . . .	120
12.6 Hyenas and a sleepless night . . . . .	121
12.7 Contacting the neighbours . . . . .	123
12.8 An appeal from Owo . . . . .	123
12.9 A breakthrough in Bussa . . . . .	124
12.10 Troops preparing for the Burma campaign . . . . .	126
12.11 Financial independence for the Ilesha circuit . . . . .	128
<b>13 The peace</b>	<b>131</b>
13.1 First leave after the war . . . . .	131
13.2 Leaving the children in England . . . . .	134
13.3 Sailing to Nigeria . . . . .	136
13.4 Medical tour with Dr Chesterman . . . . .	137
13.5 A new house at Afon . . . . .	138
13.6 A new helper at Kaiama . . . . .	139
13.7 Stephen . . . . .	141
13.8 Crossing the Niger . . . . .	141
13.9 Anthony's return . . . . .	142
<b>14 Developments in the north</b>	<b>145</b>
14.1 Foundation of Offa Grammar School . . . . .	145
14.2 Requests from government . . . . .	147
14.3 Bandele Oyediran . . . . .	148
14.4 Changes at Bussa . . . . .	149
14.5 Fred Dodds . . . . .	150

<b>15 A harmonious leave</b>	<b>153</b>
15.1 1948: The second mobile operating theatre . . . . .	153
15.2 Learning Hausa . . . . .	155
15.3 Summoned by bells . . . . .	156
15.4 The harmonium workshop . . . . .	159
<b>16 Adventurous journeys</b>	<b>161</b>
16.1 My pulpit was a leopard . . . . .	161
16.2 Animals at home . . . . .	163
16.3 There's a donkey in the canoe . . . . .	164
16.4 A setback in the north . . . . .	166
16.5 Starting the Homecraft Centre . . . . .	167
16.6 More schools: Joseph Aremu . . . . .	168
16.7 Visit from the Medical Secretary . . . . .	170
<b>17 Mutual respect</b>	<b>171</b>
17.1 Friendly relations with Moslems . . . . .	171
17.2 The Ilorin midnight market . . . . .	173
17.3 Ologbondoroko . . . . .	173
17.4 Abraham Aiyedun . . . . .	174
17.4.1 Return in 1976 . . . . .	177
17.5 Lost in the bush . . . . .	177
17.6 West of Bussa: Crocs and elephant . . . . .	179
17.7 1949 Elizabeth born . . . . .	181
17.8 1950: Leave . . . . .	182
<b>18 The final tour</b>	<b>185</b>
18.1 Joseph Olaleye Fadahunsi . . . . .	185
18.2 Medical addenda . . . . .	187
18.3 Stephen . . . . .	192
18.4 Cine films . . . . .	193
18.5 Philip Jaiyesimi . . . . .	194
<b>19 A new life in England</b>	<b>197</b>
19.1 The Methodist Church in Ireland . . . . .	197
19.2 The 'Duologue': Partners in preaching . . . . .	198
19.3 Speaking in the Channel Islands . . . . .	200
19.4 Joyce awarded the MBE . . . . .	201
19.5 A new appointment in Devon . . . . .	203
19.6 Problems in the north: 1953 . . . . .	204
<b>20 Return visits</b>	<b>207</b>
20.1 1962 . . . . .	207
20.2 1976: Changes in Lagos . . . . .	209
20.3 A tour inland . . . . .	210
20.4 Visit to Offa . . . . .	212

*CONTENTS*

v

20.5 North to the new Bussa . . . . .	213
20.6 Then to Kaiama . . . . .	214
20.7 1993: The golden jubilee of Offa Grammar School . . . . .	215



# Preface

## Dates

The narrative has few dates, so the following key dates may help the reader.

Nelson Ludlow was born in Dublin on 12th April 1904 and died on 28th August 1999, aged 95.

He reached Nigeria in 1929 and Dr Joyce Woods arrived there in 1931. They married in 1933 and worked together in Nigeria until 1953. Nelson continued as a Methodist Minister in England until his retirement in 1967.

**Extract from *A Registry of Irish Methodist Ministers* compiled by Robin P. Roddie, archivist of the Wesley Historical Society (Ireland)**

<b>Richard Nelson LUDLOW</b>		
1924	Coleraine ( <i>Bushmills</i> )	1
1925	Dungannon	1
1926	MCB <i>Theological Hall (Edgehill)</i>	3
1929	WA, Nigeria	2
1931	Africa, Nigeria (Ibadan) FC	1
1932	Africa, Nigeria (Ilesha)	5
1937	Western Nigeria (Ilesha)	8
1945	W Nigeria (Ilesha) On Furlough	1
1946	W Nigeria (Ilesha)	2
1948	W Nigeria (Ilorin)	4
1952	W Nigeria Dt, On Furlough	1
1953	South Devon Mission <sup>1</sup>	3
1956	Margate	7
1963	Kent Mission (Ashford (Kent) '66)	5
1968	Margate (Birchington) <i>Sup</i>	17
1985	Bournemouth (Poole, Dorset) <i>Sup</i>	

b. Dublin 12 April 1904 son of David Ludlow (4.3.1854) and Isabella nee Hall (28.9.1865), br of D Hall Ludlow (qv) and Elsie Maud, MBE, SRN, MMS Medical Missionary in Africa for 32 years.

em ex Coleraine aet 20<sup>1</sup>/6

m. Brockley, London, 12 Apr 1933, Joyce Rewcastle Woods, MB, BS, FRCS on the medical staff of Ilesha Hospital, Nigeria (she b. 24.7.1905 Sidcup, Kent). She was awarded the MBE in 1952 in recognition of her medical work in Nigeria.

Issue: **Peter Woods** b. London, 20.8.68 MA (Oxon) MA (Cantab) Founder Director of Centre for European Policy Studies, Brussels m. 18.4.64 Margate, Carole Elizabeth Barfoot (b. 23.12.41), BA; and have children, Piers 29.8.68, Rachel 9.12.69, Ivan 9.11.72 (opera singer); **Anthony Richard** b. Lagos, 28.12.43, BSc, PhD m. Elizabeth Atkinson, BSc and have children, Frederick b. 24.12.82 and Alice b. 26.2.87; **Elizabeth Joyce** b. Ogbomosko, Nigeria, 15.7.49, SRN, SCN, m. William Brian Dalzell FCA and have children Amanda b. 15.2.73, Kirsty b. 12.6.75.

au: *Missionary work in Nigeria* ICA.30 p.411; *Methodist Centenary in Nigeria* ICA.43.1.1 p.2; His memoirs, *Partners in Pioneering*, privately published, 2001, by Tony Ludlow at [www.tonyludlow.net](http://www.tonyludlow.net), viii, 214pp.

d. 28 Aug 1999. Obit Eng Mins 2000, pp. 47/8

#### Abbreviations:

b.	born
c.	spiritual conversion
d.	died
m.	married
mms	manuscript
qv	quod vide = 'which see' - cross reference
s.	son
CD	Chairman of District
FC	Received into Full Connexion as a Methodist Preacher
HM	Home Mission station
ICA	Irish Christian Advocate (Irish Methodist weekly paper)
IM	Irish Mission station
MC	Methodist Church or Chapel
MCB	Methodist College Belfast
OT	Received On Trial as a probationary Methodist Preacher
PC	Presbyterian Church
Sup	Supernumerary Minister, i.e. Retired
TCD	Trinity College Dublin
WC	Wesleyan Chapel
WCD	Wesley College Dublin

## Places

Most of the places referred to in the text are too small to feature on a map of Nigeria. Roughly speaking they are all north of Lagos: Ibadan is 90 miles north; Ilesha is 180 miles north of Lagos; Imesi-Ile is 26 miles from Ilesha; Offa is 300 miles; Kaiama 400 and Bussa is 500 miles north of Lagos and is on the

river Niger which is almost a mile wide with almost 1000 miles before it reaches the sea.

## **Acknowledgements**

The web version of this book has been prepared using L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X2e and Tex4ht.

I am grateful to Ruth Smith, Frederick Ludlow and Stephanie Fewing for typing the manuscript into the computer.

The section headings were introduced for publication on the web and the text reviewed. Very few changes were made to my father's text but any errors are my responsibility.

Tony Ludlow  
31st December 2001



# Chapter 1

## Ireland and beyond

### 1.1 Introduction

The days of the Missionary are over we are told by the Secretary of a Missionary Society. Pioneering belongs to the past.

I wonder!

I agree that we smile at the early picture of a missionary as a man standing in the shade of a palm tree, further protecting himself from tropical sunshine with a topee, holding a large umbrella in one hand and clutching a Bible with the other. Or, of the lady, wearing a wide-brimmed hat and showing an inch of white petticoat below her dress, and labeled "Mish". I have seen both of these people, but it has all changed as the years have passed. Today, the missionary, still welcomed in many countries, goes out as a colleague and partner of nationals. Other missionary folk, now black or coloured come to our shores, also as equals and, I hope, are welcomed. For a missionary is one who is sent. Sent with a message. My dictionary does not introduce colour, nor confine missionary activity to the 18th and first half of the 19th century.

The Missionary is alive and well.

I accept the limitation of 'pioneering,' but then, I am largely ignorant of the vast interior of South America, for example. Possibly thrilling stories of pioneering have yet to be written, simply because the missionary work they will describe has yet to be undertaken.

Our story of pioneering may be part of an unfolding record or, if pessimistic, it could be the last to be written. So, in my memoirs I have put 'Partners in Pioneering' on paper. Doing so has given great pleasure as I recalled the days of long ago.

In his 'High road to China', Cleary writes: "The year 1920 is almost as remote as 1492 or 1066 to a lot of people. An old man's memory does not always recognise the calendar, but it does not alter the truth of what he experienced." An African gerontologist spoke of the death of an old person being like a library in flames.

If I did not record our story, soon it would be too late. The generation of large congregations who attentively listened will be silenced, and the story will be forgotten. So, without further delay, I have got on with writing, before all I remember could also, like the library, disappear in flames.

## 1.2 Dublin

I was born in Dublin while Orville and Wilbur Wright were still celebrating their success in being the first ever to make a controlled flight in a powered, heavier-than-air machine. The flight covered 852 feet. That is not very far, just the length from my house to the pillar box where I post my letters. Yet 852 feet is a long distance when I have left only one minute to catch the post. It also was a long distance for the Wright brothers - but they traveled by air.

At the same time, Henry, the son of an Irish farmer who had been forced to emigrate to the USA because of the potato famine which killed a million of his compatriots, founded the Ford Motor Company.

This was to lead to the automobile, still a commodity produced by specialists beginning with Daimler, becoming a less expensive, mass produced car. Ford made this possible by placing his engine at the front of the chassis instead of the less accessible engine underneath the floor boards, and his introduction of the production belt whereby a regular supply of vehicles was delivered to assembly gangs, each member of which performed his particular function in turn.

I am glad I was born at this time - the dawning of a new age of flying and motor transport. I have seen so many other wonders being developed and launched, spectacular inventions which made us gaze in awe in the early years of the century. Many are now so much taken for granted that wonder has ceased, but despite modernisation, they were born in my early days.

So, for a while I want to talk of life as I remember it in the first and second decades of the 20th century. Of horse drawn trams, replaced by steam engines pulling people and goods, replaced again by electric trams and trains. Of my first ride in a motor car and in a solid tyred char-a-banc with a door on either side of each seat. Of Cross channel steamers, and I mean steamers, not M/Vs and of liners with two or even three funnels. Of the first sighting of an airship, and of 1001 very common place modes of business and means of travel. Of the splendidly uniformed regiments - infantry - cavalry and hundreds of khaki clad cyclists silently riding in absolute precision.

This was all happening at that time. Of course I could not have believed that in the long life before me I would be privileged to see some seventy countries and travel round the world several times - to spend a year at sea, and of a missionary career in Africa for a quarter of a century.

Yet, so it was and that is the story that unfolds in this record of memoirs.

section Sounds of Dublin We had some pictures at home illustrating 'Cries of London'. I can so clearly remember some cries of Dublin.

There was the man who walked around the streets and roads with a pack on his back and cried "Umps to mend". He repaired umbrellas. Like him,

another man offered his services in repairing wicker work and reseating cane chairs. Then there was the curious two wheeled contraption with a wooden leg where the third wheel should be. The operator would lower the stump leg, then seat himself behind a large round sandstone, revolved by his pedals and would sharpen knives and scissors. My musical interest was aroused each Saturday morning when a familiar sound came from the front porch. There was the Dulcimer man striking his strings with a light hammer, as in the Xylophone. He rested his dulcimer on a tressel. Still on music, frequently a barrel-organ was wheeled into our road. It's loud organ and piano sounds came from a heavy paper roll the perforations of which passed over a row of tiny open ended organ tubes offering a selection of two or three octaves. This instrument was welcomed by young and old. A much simpler organ was played by its owner as it rested on a three foot pole. On the top of the organ sat a monkey. The poor animal was trained to go round with a can to collect the money, but he had such a lot of scratching to do that he often laid down the can.

Lastly there was Mary Coulter, the vegetable woman who carried on a door to door trade. She arrived, pushing a three wheeled wicker basket carrier, laden with a variety of greens, carrots, potatoes etc. Unfortunately, poor Mary had a drink problem. Often as she wended her homeward way having spent too much time and money in places that declare Guinness is good for you, she would burst into singing. It was always the same tune, but with altered words she would sing God save our gracious...Pope.

## 1.3 Transport

In the Ludlow household at the turn of the century(19th to 20th) the word 'Travel' was in regular use for my father was a commercial traveller and, apart from holiday intervals each Monday morning he set out for a different area in the south of Ireland, and was busily engaged there until Friday.

In those days, of course, travel was so different. Father always ordered a cab to take him to whichever railway terminus he would use for his itinerary. The Broadstone for the Great Western Railway or Kingsbridge for the Great Southern. No taxis, no cars, just the slow but reliable horse and cab. We did not have Hansom cabs with the driver at the rear - just a lofty seat in front, open upholstered square interior designed to carry four persons. The chassis was so constructed that a bar bearing a wheel at either end, projected slightly beyond the rear of the cab. This, unintentionally provided a seat for youths with tough posteriors. Often when a cab bore a non-paying passenger like this, a spoil-sport youth on the pavement would call the driver to "scut the whip" whereupon the driver would lash his whip over the top of the cab and catch the youth with a stinging flick. One of my sisters hired a cabby at a Station. He set out in the right direction and turned along the Quays. As the horse followed along the Liffey, an observant cabby driving in the other direction, noticed the strange position in which Elsie's driver sat. He immediately stopped his horse, ran over and also stopped the other. The old cabby was dead. He was a well

known driver and had several times won the Dublin Cabbies Derby.

A fresh cabby took over. Luggage was transferred and Elsie got home safely. The dead driver was removed and his horse and cab driven to the stable. This is the only time I have ever heard of someone dying at the reins.

Horse drawn vehicles were used for all sorts of transport. I have ridden a toast rack type of horse drawn tram, linking a town with the railway stations. Larger firms did all their deliveries by horse drawn vans, usually displaying advertising matter on the sides. Smaller shopkeepers had their deliveries carried by boys riding three wheeled cycles with a box-like container opening at the top, perhaps to give easier access. As one would expect the whole outfit was painted pillar box red and the riders were dressed with the official uniform.

I remember one Christmas Eve as two of my older brothers were home for the holiday, we were out for a walk. As we approached a canal bridge, we overtook a young lad pushing what appeared to be a heavy load up the hill. My brothers were sorry for him working so late on that evening. They stepped out and each put a hand to push the cycle van. Eventually they got it to the top of the bridge- the doors at the front opened and out jumped another youth of the same age. He called to his mate "Your turn now".

I have digressed from the commercial traveller. Having been away all week, one would think that Father had had enough travelling. Not so. Mother and he very frequently took us children for a Saturday treat. The venue was not always the same. Sometimes it would be Luean. This meant a tram ride into the city, a change to another line which took us out along the side of Phoenix park which, apart from being beautiful, covers three square miles and is twice the size of London's Hyde Park and Regents Park together. The tram ran on a separate strip of land alongside the road.

Our favourite venue was Howth Head. This again meant a tram to the city centre and then from the Great Northern Railway Station, a train to Sutton where we changed to an electric tram operated by the railway. This ran on railway lines and slowly climbed until we reached Howth Head. At the summit we always had a good tea, played games, walked along the cliffs or sat on the grass listening to the band. Then came the thrilling tram run down the steep route to Howth Station. The trolley was lowered and on our descent we relied entirely on the braking system. Dangerous perhaps, but I never heard of any accidents.

I must refer to the ancient steam-tram from the Dublin suburb Terenure to the Mexican sounding Poulaphouca where, some twenty miles away is the large reservoir safeguarding Dublin's water supply. The tram was hauled by an engine with a tall smoke stack. It had a couple of double deck carriages and, sometimes a goods van attached. It too, ran alongside the road with interesting villages - Templeogue, Tallaght, Blessington and then Poulaphouca. We always sat on the upper deck, shielding our faces and clothes from the engine smoke with newspapers. Delightful Saturdays they were - real family occasions.

Before leaving steam-trams, I must tell a true story of the line that ran between Portstewart and its railway station - a distance of two miles. Although antiquated, a regular service was maintained for each train arriving at or de-

parting from the station. After lunch one day, a lady visitor enquired how long she would have to wait at the station between the arrival of the steam-tram and the train. The conductor's reply was brief "From two to Two to Two two". Suitably amused the visitor then asked "Why on earth did they build the station so far from the town?" The conductor pushed his cap back, scratched his head and then said "I suppose they wanted to have it near the train".

The transport was changing. I can well remember standing watching as the occasional car came along. It had a long running board step, bearing a couple of spare wheels, lashed to the body of the car. Either a Klaxon or the good old rubber bulb honking horn was in evidence. All cars were open topped. Some had a canvas cover which could be pulled from behind the seat to give protection from rain. This protection took time for, into holes at the tops of doors, there could be fitted celluloid windows. Drivers always wore goggles.

Great was our excitement when the news spread that at our Church Bazaar, Mr. Seaton, one of the very few early owners of the motor car in Dublin, would give rides for a shilling a time in aid of Church funds. We entered the car, up steps at the back and sat on bench seats facing each other. We were actually driven for about a mile - our first ever motor ride.

Another travel interest at that bazaar was the competition for the best entry, the cost of which did not exceed a penny. All sorts of splendid efforts were submitted but the winner was Miss Burke who had a picture post card costing one halfpenny and stuck on it was a half penny stamp. It was addressed to her brother in Fiji. It seems incredible that in those days before the first World War, the postage for a letter to the South Pacific was one penny, while a postcard went for one halfpenny.

Sometimes my brother and I were allowed to accompany our father on his commercial travels. We thus got our early introduction to hotels and to journeys of more than local length.

## 1.4 Cycling across Ireland

Soon we had more imaginative ideas and plans. We discussed these with our parents and eventually set off on our cycles right across Ireland to Connemara and Galway. Then south to the Moher cliffs, on to Killarney and the Kerry extremities of the south west. Turning east, we reached Cork City, Youghaldn Waterford and up the East Coast to Wexford and Wicklow and thus home to Dublin once more. Such trips gave us a sense of independence as well as a lot of fun. We certainly learned a lot.

Next, there came a very big development in increasing circles. I was the youngest in our party of four who boarded the Isle of Man steamer and sailed out of Dublin Bay. Passing Howth Head, Lambay Island we entered Douglas harbour. We were booked into a holiday camp on Onghan Head, our first and very enjoyable experience out of Ireland. Our trips around, and across the island included stops at Port Erin, Peel, Ramsay and, of course, the Laxey Wheel and Snaefell.

Having been half way across the Irish Sea to the Isle of Man, obviously my next ambition must be to reach England. This hope was to be realised sooner than I had anticipated for, my eldest sister was Irish Secretary of the C.E. (Christian Endeavour movement for Young People.) The World Convention (the first post 1914-1918 war) was to be held in London and she was involved in organising the party from Ireland. I was delighted to be included. We set out on my biggest adventure - London. In those days we still had a twenty minute difference in times and had to change our watches en route.

The Convention was held in the Crystal Palace, that amazing building consisting entirely of glass and iron framework. Sir Joseph Paxton, architect and gardener had previous experience in designing large conservatories at Chatsworth and elsewhere, was appointed to erect a building for the Great exhibition of 1851. So the Crystal Palace was built in Hyde Park. Three years later it was moved to Sydenham, a suburb commanding a splendid view of London. Sadly, it was destroyed by fire in 1936.

I can still recall the sound of the mighty organ and see the Great Hall packed during our sessions. Areas were reserved as dormitories for women and men. It was quite an experience to settle down on my camp bed after the excitements of each day, but more surprising to awaken with acres of glass so high above us and to see the bright sunshine of the glass. It was strange to be amidst tall palm trees and large white figures from mythology, on their polished pedestals. It could have been easy to imagine we were in heaven were it not that some of the statues were not appropriately nor perhaps adequately garbed to qualify them for citizenship in the celestial sphere.

Dr. Clarke, founder of C.E. presided throughout. The opening session was addressed by Lloyd George, then in his closing days as Prime Minister.

I may not have been the youngest person present, but I can remember the impression made upon me of the bigness of the world and the problems of communication with visitors from so many countries. One day, perhaps I could visit other countries and learn other languages.

The afternoons gave us the opportunity to travel on London's open topped buses, with a strip of canvas hanging from the seat in front. This could be pulled and held over one in the event of rain. Sometimes we had the thrill of travel by underground trains - a maze of tunnels.

I can also remember being shocked by English prices. We went to Regents Street hotel for a cup of tea. A waiter bearing a large tray with silver teapot etc sandwiches and cakes, charged us 2/6d per head. We never went there again, we could not afford such blatant robbery. (2/6d =12.5p)

## 1.5 Holidays

Each year our parents rented a house in Skerries, a seaside resort north of Dublin. We had the whole month of August to enjoy it. Summer in those days was always sunshine - or was it that kink in a child's memory that makes one forget the less pleasant? Anyhow, one day on the sandy beach we heard the

noise of an engine. Then an extraordinary sight - an aeroplane flew past us. We could see the pilot clearly. As the plane flew over the cliffs at the end of the strand it appeared to dip suddenly. My brother and I raced to the headland and came in sight of Loughshinny and its tiny harbour. There lay the bi-plane, wings outspread on the water, and the floats (it was a sea plane) smashed, with pieces floating around. We got a piece as a souvenir. The pilot's name was Hawker, a respected name in the aircraft industry ever since. He was taking part in a race round the coast of Britain, promoted by an English newspaper.

The dangers of flying never worried either of us when, some years later we flew along the very same coast - our first flight, in a very similar plane. We sat in the open cock-pit, in basket chairs in a straight line behind the pilot. We were well strapped in, a very necessary precaution. We held on to the cock-pit for dear life particularly when turning corners. I learned later that the correct term for this operation is 'banked'. I forgot to mention that we had no cover, our heads and shoulders were above the sides of the plane, our hair blowing freely.

Pilots in those days were very rarely able to use a proper runway. Our pilot just circled while inspecting a possible landing place and came down safely in a grassy field. I remember being at Croydon Aerodrome (not then an Airport) when planes took off and landed on a grassy strip. There I watched the only tri-plane I had seen. This cumbersome aircraft with its three wings looked like a monster born with too many arms. A very much respected and respectable uncle of mine was bitten by the flying bug after his retirement. He had always been used to everything that was 'the very best' He flew as often as he could in the bi-planes of the day, but he considered the tri-planes more up his street!

'Kingsland Park' the Dublin Methodist Church we attended in my early days holds a variety of memories. The day I was sent out of Sunday School for eating a banana during prayers. I did not notice that the devout Superintendent was praying with one eye open. The church heating system was a large coke fire beneath the centre aisle. The aisle was covered by a iron grating. The Saturday before Harvest Festival was an exciting afternoon when helpers decorated the church with beautiful flowers and fruits of many colours. The first year I was considered to be old enough to help and not hinder, I was given the job of going to the local dairy for a jug of milk. Long before the introduction of bottles or cartons as milk containers. Looking forward to the helpers tea, I returned with my full, quart jug.

Now, our caretaker was Freddie Houlihan, He had gone to refill his buckets with coke, but unfortunately had left a section of the grating open. I did not see the gap and disappeared in to the hole, clutching my jug of milk. Helpers from all over the church rushed to rescue me and, still clutching a jugless handle, I emerged, white of face from the shock and white of clothing from a quart of milk. I had to have several stitches to close a wound behind one ear. Seventy years after I still retain the marks of the time I was old enough to help and not hinder the decorators.

Christian Endeavour was a strong, attractive Society within the church. Juniors and Seniors benefited and learned to discuss. In addition to weekly

meetings, we regularly had long walks up the mountains on Saturdays with an enjoyable tea at one of several farm houses high up and overlooking the city. The C.E. also had great influence in shaping the ministerial career of several youths.

Our minister, the Rev William B. Lumley gave me much help and one word of advice which I have never forgotten. When I told him of my call to the Ministry, he said "Remember, every time you preach, that for someone in your congregation, it may be the last sermon they will hear. Say something that will help them to see Jesus."

Before leaving school, it was becoming clearer that I wanted to study and offer as a candidate for the ministry. I could not then have realised that it would be through that decision that so many adventures and so much travelling would become possible.

Because of the title I have chosen, with emphases on travel, perhaps I have given the impression that, of my parents, my father was the very strong influence in my life. This is not intended. Ours was a very happy home and upbringing. Mother did not have a vote in political affairs until 1928 when women won enfranchisement on the same terms as men. But in our home parental equality was practised throughout the fifty years of happy married life.

From Monday to Friday we missed our father, during his weekly travels, but Mother efficiently coped with household duties and responsibilities. In those days it was not only possible to find, but to employ domestic assistants, living-in, who gallantly shared in the rearing of a family of eight. Mother also carried on our evening Family Prayers, which Father took over for Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

## Chapter 2

# Commitment

### 2.1 Call to the Ministry

To return to my call to the Ministry - My parents held the definite view that anyone choosing this career should avoid a course of uninterrupted academic preparation. He should gain experience of working with people so that a minister would know something of what different types of people do and of the problems faced by those who sit in the pew. I have always been grateful for the view. However, I do not underestimate the parallel fact that those who do continue an uninterrupted academic course gain experience of the problems and temptations known to the academic.

Perhaps a year or two in National Service was a good thing or, as that requirement no longer obtains, a year or two as a worker in Voluntary Service Overseas or in this country.

Neither of these outlets were thought of in my days so I had a year as a Junior clerk in a firm of storage contractors (office boy - but we did not have any tea breaks in those days so I was not required to include this in my programme). The company held shipments of grain, carbide and much else besides, straight from ships until collected for distribution. This gave me the advantage of moving amongst dockers and labourers in general. Then, for two years I worked with my father in wholesale boots and shoes, meeting a very different type of shop and office workers.

When my parents saw that I was still intent on my vocation, they arranged that I go to Wicklow where I studied Greek and general subjects under well qualified tutors. One day, a neighbour at home was talking to my mother and said "I have not seen your youngest son for some time - is he all right?" My Mother told the lady that I was away, studying for the Ministry. "Oh wasn't he getting on well in business?" was her reply.

Like me, my brother Day (David) had worked for several years after school in a well know insurance office and, being old enough he had served in the Royal Air Force towards the end of the first world war. Also, like me, he had heard

the call to the Ministry. In 1923 we both took up appointments in the far north of Ireland. He went to Portstewart, Co Londonderry, and I went to Bushmills, Co Antrim, two miles from the Giant's Causeway. As learners or assistants, we worked under the supervision of senior ministers.

The work was not easy for, apart from burning the midnight oil in order to study, I had responsibility for four churches. We had to use ordinary push cycles in those days and each Sunday morning, I pedalled to Castlecat - better known as Billy, I cannot say why. Then home for lunch (five miles return trip.) Then on alternate Sunday afternoons to Ballymoney (22 miles) one week and Ballycastle (24 miles) the next Sunday. To complete the Sunday I had to conduct a service at 8.0pm in my home town of Bushmills.

Monday was a holiday. I took up and enjoyed golf with my brother in Port-Stewart. The Golf Links, stretching along the seashore has nine holes. At one hole in particular, the wise golfer plays inland and out to the green, thus avoiding a narrow, rocky inlet of the sea. I decided to depart from this triangular approach one day. I got a good drive across the inlet but, I could not find my ball. This caused much laughter by all except me. Assuming my ball had joined many others in the sea, Day played on and gained the hole- he had played the safe course. He put his hand into the hole to withdraw his ball, but came out with two. We all examined the ball and were satisfied it was mine. I had holed out in one. (Bogey 3)

Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday required much more cycling than Sunday for I had afternoon visits and an evening meeting in each of my four churches. I could not possibly keep up enough preparation to give different addresses, so I used one throughout Sunday and a second for the four weeknights.

I had very comfortable lodgings in Bushmills. A small but adequate bedroom, a separate study with a fireplace. My landlady provided all food, services, laundry, light and heat. For all this I paid 25 shillings per week. She kindly did any mending I required out of her big profits!

Apart from our weekly golfing together, Day and I occasionally could get a local preacher to take a week-night service and we could get another free day. I could spend a night or two in Portstewart or he could come to me in Bushmills. During one of his visits to me, we cycled the twelve miles to my weeknight appointment and he kindly gave the address for me.

Now, amongst the members were two elderly sisters. They had invited Day to come with me and spend the night at their farm, two miles away. I had accepted the kind invitation. I had heard that one of their brothers was mentally ill and gave the sisters much trouble. I thought that our visit could be a bit of a let-up for them.

After the Service we walked home with them, pushing our cycles. They had gone to a lot of trouble assembling a large bed in their lounge, there also was a table with a very adequate cold meal set for five, the ladies, their second brother and us. After a good supper the table was cleared and we enjoyed some music. I played for well known hymns and songs. Then we sat round the fire. Day sat at one side while my chair, back to the door, faced the fire place. As we talked, we heard knocks and sounds of movement in the room above. The

older sister went to investigate and we could hear a gruff male voice complaining about something. On her return she glanced at her sister and indicated that he was coming down. I was relating some experience or other but no one was listening to me. Rather, all were riveted on the increased sounds above. I kept on, gallantly as the sounds were now on the stairs. I had been told that the man had been staying in his bed for the past six months. The door handle turned and I could see alarm in my brother's eyes and, as I too could see in the mirror over the fire the head and face, I too was alarmed. His hair was matted and no comb had been used for many a day, nor had a razor been used on his shaggy beard.

No one passed any comment as he drew up a chair and sat down beside me. He was silent for the rest of evening but did partake of a cup of tea with us all. When we had said good night to all, he withdrew and went upstairs again. Day and I spent much time in protection against any attack. We placed a heavy china basin on one window sill and the matching jug on the other. We then arranged chairs by the door and placed another heavy china object used at night (the alternative facility was the other side of the paved yard). This article we precariously balanced on top. If the door opened there would be a crash. We got into bed but did not sleep, anticipating the noise of crashing crockery. An hour later we thought the attack was about to start. Overhead noises, then again on the stairs. But all was well. We had the relief of hearing the front door being opened. The interspersed with the click of a ferruled stick, footsteps faded into the distance.

Next morning, we hurriedly removed the barricades, replaced the china objects and were in bed again in time to give a sleepy "come in" as our hostess arrived with a tray, complete with teapot, milk and cups. Soon after breakfast we left the farm, but now we shared the secret sorrow those sisters had held for so long.

## 2.2 1924: Candidates for the Ministry

In 1924 my brother and I together candidated for the Ministry of the Methodist Church in Ireland. We both passed all the examinations and interviews and were accepted. Because of the large number of successful candidates, the Training College could not cope with all at once. So Day, four years older than I was would have to wait one year whilst I must wait for two. He was then appointed to Enniscorthy in Co Wexford, whilst I would stay another year in Bushmills and then move to Dungannon, Co Tyrone for the second year before entering training college.

With the onset of winter and the increased number of hours I had to spend on the roads, trying to cycle into head winds, I often had to walk for miles because of gales blowing in from the north Atlantic. My eldest brother felt moved to do something about it. He bought me a light motor bike, a Sparkbrook two stroke. It was a real life saver avoiding those dreadful hours of pedaling and pushing. My predecessor in the job used to tell of how he had to walk against the storm

nearly the whole twelve miles to Ballycastle. Then, during the evening, the devil took hold of the tail of the wind and turned it round, with the result that he had to walk practically all of the way home again. This kind of experience, which I too had shared, was not conducive to study. I reckoned I must have four hours a day with my books.

The improvement in transport was not all sunshine. One night as I was homeward bound, the engine stopped. I was on a road I seldom used. I checked on the petrol etc and all seemed right according to my elementary knowledge of the engine and all its works. The kick-starter gave no sign of life, neither did my runs of a hundred yards, pushing the machine in gear. Fortunately I was near a farm house and, pushing the Sparkbrook I called at the door to ask permission to sleep in the barn at which I had had a glance as I passed. The farmer would not hear of it. I must come in and have something to eat first. Splendid news, for I was very hungry. Whilst eating, I noticed the farmer's wife several times left the room and each time she returned, shaking her head gently for the attention of her husband. Finally, as we sat round the fire, she again returned and this time nodded. He announced "We can do better than the barn and can give you a bed." I was taken to a child's room. The bed was warm and obviously had been occupied up to a very short time before. I then realised that the wife's frequent visits were to check the that the child was really asleep, and the final nod said "mission accomplished" - the sleeper had been carried to another room, probably the parents. I took his place. I went to sleep hoping that no other motor cyclist would come to the farm seeking a place to stop. The good Samaritan farmers would have had greater difficulty shifting me to a vacant spot.

Talking of good Samaritans brings back another incident connected with the Sparkbrook. I saw another motor cyclist by the roadside, staring helplessly at his bike. I stopped and offered to use my limited knowledge to diagnose his trouble. I found that his carburetter was clogged up, so I set to and cleaned it in and out. Within ten minutes, I had the engine running as usual. The rider was very grateful and I left him packing up his tools etc. About a mile further down I got a puncture. I got ready to repair it. Whilst thus engaged, I heard the chug of a machine and was not surprised to see it was my friend whom I had helped. I was surprised, however to see that he only slowed down, giving sufficient time to shout "Thanks again."

My thoughts? Well I would still prefer to be in the place of the Samaritan.

In the saga of my motor-cycling days, I graduated to a Douglas bicycle and sidecar and found added pleasure in the safety of a third wheel, greater power and being able to carry a passenger in comfort instead of on the pillion.

The Douglas had a rubber belt drive which normally functioned well, but along the north Antrim coast, conditions often were not normal. It was snowing hard one night as I drove past the ruins of Dunluce Castle and, as the snow beat into the exposed part of the coast I could not move forward. No one with any sense would be on the road on a night like this - perhaps that is why I was there. I got into the side car, wrapped up in whatever covering I carried and dimmed the carbide lamp, the only light on the bike. I dreaded the darkness

and loneliness of the hours until daylight would come. Perhaps a couple of hours later, the wind rose into a storm, the snow changed to hail and the hail to rain. Gradually beating into the rubber belt, the snow was washed off. Tremendously relieved, I decided to see if the Douglas would start. Thankfully it did and, an hour later, I was tucked up in my own bed instead of the discomfort and cold of the side car. This attachment to the bike is excellent when one is in a sitting position but definitely not designed for use as a bed.

## 2.3 Journey to France

During the two years of gaining experience in the towns mentioned while I awaited entrance to College, there came the opportunity to visit London again. This time the trip was to extend my geographical knowledge further than ever before. I visited France for a short time and enjoyed the novelty of buying French postage stamps to use on my postcards home.

I found the French language very different from my school boy lessons from a variety of French teachers. Nobody now asked me if I had seen my grandmother's spectacles nor expected me to reply as the text books tried to teach me. In fact, on a certain tram ride, there was a little English boy in great distress - he was lost. The conductor asked me if I were "Anglais". I said "Oui". In very speedy French he sought my help. Why do French people speak so quickly? I asked the boy for details of name, where he had boarded the tram, how his parents were dressed. When it came for me to pass on all this information I found that no matter how loudly I shouted my French, nor how much I waved my arms, the conductor, silly man, did not appear to understand. He thought I was speaking in English.

On my return to London I decided that I would like to see how the other half of mankind live and to gain experience through roughing it. I looked up 'Hostels' in the Telephone Directory, left my suitcase in the Left Luggage department at Euston taking with me only my pyjamas, tooth brush and razor wrapped in brown paper. I found my way to near-by Store Street, to the Salvation Army Mens' Hostel. I had an immediate set-back. I had French money but had forgotten to change it. The only English coin I had was a treasured golden half sovereign which had been given to me at the first wedding I had conducted. Reluctantly, I tendered the coin at Reception. The clerk looked at it, and me, suspiciously, help it up. examined it. He asked me where I had got it and how long I had had it. I was embarrassed, more, I was frightened that the police might be brought in. After deliberation, he put a tick opposite a bed number and gave the change. My bed, not yet seen, would cost six pence (old pence) Supper was next. I queued and for threepence got a big mug of tea and a thick slice of bread with jam on it. Then up several flights of clean stone steps - there was no lift. The large dormitory with about fifteen beds along either side had the same number in the middle. My number was right in the middle of the middle.

I unwrapped my parcel, donned my pyjamas and was somewhat embarrassed

by the glances in my direction. I was later to observe from new arrivals, as I pretended to be asleep, that pyjamas were an unusual luxury - I was in a world of men living much closer to nature.

Next morning my money was still safe beneath my pillow. I watched my neighbour deftly folding a square of rough cloth around each ankle to serve as socks. Breakfast was ready, tea, bread and a slice of bacon. This swelled the price to sixpence. As it was Sunday and I was going to church in Westminster Central Hall, I had my shoes polished by an obliging gentleman who carried on his practice on the pavement near Euston Station. This operation cost the same as my cooked breakfast.

That night I returned to Store Street, got the same bed, to my surprise and, to my further surprise I found it had clean sheets and pillow slip. I gained much useful experience that week-end and, ever since, have had a very high regard for the Salvation Army.

## 2.4 Training and Ordination

On completion of the two years 1924-26, I started on my training - mainly theological but also a course in education at Queen's University. I am not an academic and did find concentration on reading some subjects rather difficult. But as this is the record of Ludlow's Travels, I will not expand on what I was taught and my response thereto. I will include a few small items and three bigger records.

The week-end in college frequently was the occasion for an appointment in a village or town church where we filled vacancies due to illness or under-staffing problems. I valued these week-ends. Hospitality was provided in homes of great variety, from simple farm houses to much more luxurious residences. Being a week-end resident made me feel much more a part of the community when leading worship on Sunday. During these weekends I got to know some splendid people and had wonderful opportunities for conversation.

I have never taken much interest in flowers. I love colour, variety and perfume in a garden but, when I say that gardening and music were the two pastimes which helped to keep me sane during so much study, I regarded my work in the garden as the donkey work. In the big grounds that surrounded our college, the official gardener undertook all grass cutting and flower bed work. I organised some willing students in clearing, laying paths and steps etc and many a happy afternoon.

Music, as mentioned elsewhere, has been a great friend. The Principal's wife very kindly allowed me to use her piano. On wet afternoons and at other free times, I practised many hours. I was appointed Precentor and each morning at prayers, it was my job to decide on tunes to hymns selected by whoever was taking prayers that morning. My tuning fork came in as a useful check on the note on which I would raise the hymn. We had no musical instrument in the dining room where prayers were conducted.

Annually the Methodist Church ran a Missionary Summer School. It lasted

a week and was mostly held in Dublin, in one of our Boarding schools, during holidays. It was a well attended function, all young people availing of the opportunities for fun and frolic as well as listening to speakers on leave from overseas stations. For several years I was the musical director and played for those times when music was required, as well as organising the much enjoyed concerts when often new talent of worth was discovered.

The long three years in College, long to me, slowly passed. I do not think I have explained that six of our men who were accepted as candidates in 1924, had offered for service overseas. As a result, we were required to undertake three years in College instead of two. Our stations were announced Two to India, one Ceylon, one Rhodesia and two West Africa - Gold Coast and for me, Nigeria.

All six of us were ordained in Cork at the Conference of 1929. We had still two years of Probation to complete. These would be used in language study in the country to which we were designated.

## 2.5 Working in the USA and Canada

With Ordination, our Irish training was at an end but before turning to a new chapter, I will merely refer to a wonderful journey to the U.S.A and Canada and my work there for two months. The full story of this vacation travel is given in Part Two - World Travel. I will end this chapter with one final item of preparation.

I was thrilled when I learned that I was to serve in West Africa, the very centre of the iniquitous slave trade. Thankfully the capture and export of human flesh had ceased but this blot on mankind was not the only ugly fact associated with that part of the world.

West Africa was far from being a health resort. Consequently it was important that the missionary societies should give special training and preparation for volunteers. Medical aid was very sparsely spread over West Africa. In fact, apart from big towns, there was none excepting the occasional Mission station with limited facilities. In London, Livingstone College sought to make things easier for missionary candidates. They ran three month courses. I was sent to one of these and was launched into lectures galore, demonstrations and hospital rounds. To give confidence to defenceless sufferers in hospital and clinics which were horrible and shocking and then quietly informed that we would see much worse in Africa. The only difference out there would be that we would be completely on our own, no consultants, no advice. "o" said our lecturer "stick the knife in, the patient may die, but he'll die in any case if you don't." He was, of course, referring to nasty abscesses and the like.

We qualified as surgeons in ninety days! I did not keep record of how often I did actually stick the knife in, during the twenty five years out there nor how many were given extensions to their lives but, I do know that when I paid one of our return visits some thirty years later, one nice lady was still alive. It was she who recalled and perhaps over graphically described just what I had done for her and how I had done it. The Lord had been good to her. I also know that

in the still early days of my 'practice' I did something which not only proved to be the best possible solution to my faltering diagnoses and surgery, but also the commencement of a partnership in pioneering on the grand scale - I married a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons. But, of this, more later in its Correct chronological place in this record.

## Chapter 3

# First Tour

### 3.1 Preparations

I have covered the valuable assistance given by the Methodist Missionary Society (MMS) in preparation for probable medical work over seas. They also gave lists and advice to help in our general purchases and outfitting. Most of this advice was sound and practical. Some, looking back from half a century later, was rather humorous. The Scripture tells us to take no thought for the morrow, what we shall eat or drink and wherewithal we shall be clothed. However, certain dispensations were thought to be necessary for West Africa. We would live on the country as far as possible, but we ought to purchase stocks of what it did not produce in so far as a reasonable diet can demand.

The prepared list of indulgences resulted in adding some two or three dozen wooden cases to my baggage. Quantities would have to be sufficient for eighteen months, i.e. if I lived that long, for seventy eight weeks. There was no friendly corner shop to fill the gaps. The cases included flour, tea, coffee, sugar, tins of fruit, sardines, sausages, salmon (pink - only Government officials could afford red. I had to pay 7 1/2d for mine). Butter (allowing one pound per week). This was in sealed tins but, when it reached Nigeria it was in liquid form. On opening a tin, we washed the contents in filter water. It became a creamy substance which one served with a spoon), margarine (definitely for cooking only. Those were the days before polyunsaturates and cholesterol were talked about).

As to the wherewithal shall we be clothed. This list not only made recommendations but added tropical outfitters (in London) who could supply natty Palm Beach suits, khaki shorts and shirts, brightly coloured red green and blue umbrellas (for use between the sun dangerous hours of 8.30 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. As the number of expatriates decreased, these umbrellas became the in-thing for golfers), gents underclothing ( I am positive that even Solomon, in all his glory, was never arrayed in aertex combinations - three sets advised. I rebelled here and never bought nor wore coms. I looked up my dictionary for coms. The

word is not there but, in the place where I expected to find it is Comus 'the god of mirth, a revel.' This fitted my thoughts when I saw older missionaries who had supported aertex. I cannot think of anything funnier than a coms wearer attempting to wear them with khaki shorts), spine pads (which buttoned on to the back of shirts to protect from the sun which can do nasty things south of the neck which, for men was protected by an extended brim of the topee, and for ladies by a muslin veil hanging from the back of a rounder pith helmet, or a double terai - i.e. simply two thick wide brimmed felt hats), shorts (men only, of course. If worn must be long enough so that when sitting down with legs crossed one should be respectable but also to expose the minimum of leg above the knee to the tropical sun).

Those who did not already possess a black evening suit (silk lapels optional) had to buy one but, instead of a waistcoat, one wore a cummerbund. On board ship for a two or three weeks journey, every evening the Chief Steward would stand at the bottom of stairs entrance to the Dining Saloon and if a man dared approach and seek admission, clad in a lounge suit and tie, he would be told very politely that the Captain presents his compliments and requests you to return later, when properly dressed. Good habits last (if moth doesn't get there first) and, in later life, far away in the Bush, my wife and I had set occasions at least once a month, when we dressed in full evening wear for our dinner. I still think we were right, it is so easy to become casual.

Talking of dress I am reminded of an early colleague on board ship. When he went to or from his morning bath, if he should meet a lady, also clad in dressing gown, he would keep his eyes fixed upon the floor without even a gleam of recognition or greeting. Times have changed and so have the length of dressing gowns, if any.

In all my preparations I knew that there must be lonely times ahead, a sense of remoteness. Cats whisker radio sets were hopeless, mail would arrive once in three weeks; until I learned the language conversation would be very limited, a gramophone must be included. I invested in one of those marvellous new hand-wound portables. I have never been invited to share in Desert Island Discs, but I do know from experience the agony of deciding which records to select. Old 78s were so heavy and, compared with today's tapes played for such a short time, that I had to leave behind my then favourite Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto (four double side records) I chose Londonderry Air, Liebes traum, Massed Hymnsinging in Crystal Palace, Hascha Heifetz, Grieg, Rachmaninov and Chopin. Unhappily for the firm but a windfall for me a "Must sell entire stock" notice attracted my attention so I bought 'By the sleepy Lagoon' and other 10 inch records for 10d each.

I had often left home before - England, the Continent and America, but this was different. I was off for 1 1/2 years, health permitting, to the Dark Continent. Then too, there was Elsie, my sister who had finished her training as a nurse and had been designated by the Missionary Society to work in China. Would our furloughs ever overlap? Would we ever see each other again? I was starting a very long journey into the unknown. My parents, friends and I myself had all thought and spoken of West Africa as the white man's grave. Some of those

who came to the Station to see me off felt that perhaps this was the last time they might see me. About twenty or more of my Dublin Christian Endeavour friends were there and, as the train pulled out they sang "God be with you till we meet again". Nowadays this would be embarrassing for some to do. I was greatly supported with the knowledge that my parents were with me in the whole undertaking and though doubtless sad at parting, they were proud. The came with me as far as Liverpool.

I had travelled Cunard to the U.S.A. and knew a little of White Star and P&O. I had never heard of Elder Dempsters until sailing details had come. Later I found that by every traveller to West Africa, they were simply called E.Ds. We travelled so many times to and from West Africa and other destinations that we must have spent a whole year at sea.

E.Ds ships were named after West African ports and towns. The earlier vessels were coal fired - Aba, Abinsi, Appam and Ada. The later ships Apapa and Accra were some 9,000 instead of the older 7,000 ton forerunners. During the war, both the Apapa and the Accra were sunk. The names were continued when replacements became possible, their tonnage had increased to 11,500 tons. In 1948 we sailed home on the maiden voyage of the new Apapa. When available, the Mission House expected single men to travel 2nd class, couples always travelled 1st. This was in the interests of economy, so we, as a couple, travelled 2nd several times. On the new ships there was only 1st and 3rd class accommodation.

All the ships loaded up with as much cargo as possible. This meant a whole day in several of the ports whilst cocoa was taken on and disappeared into the Hold. When travelling 2nd, we used to join in the protest when, at the Canary Islands on the homewards journey, thousands of boxes of tomatoes not only filled any Hold space available, but were stacked on our part of the decks. This greatly limited our walking area. As the days got colder after the Canaries, we needed all the walking we could get in order to keep warm on deck and to shake down the big meals served. Rumour had it that the Captain got a personal perk of 1d per box of tomatoes. I have absolutely no proof of this, but if true it would explain the high stacks of boxes in our walking area.

I referred to big meals. The day started with morning tea to waken us. Then a cooked breakfast—Eleveses either of beef tea or ice cream, depending on our position north or south of Madeira—Lunch, fruit, fish, hot or cold meat etc. sweet and coffee—Tea tray on deck or in the saloons, again depending on our position and weather—Dinner was a much bigger and more varied menu than lunch—and, if we felt hungry, a plate of sandwiches.

We all, usually, ate more than was good for us. Unfortunately there were many on board whose cravings lay in other directions. They drank most of the day and, when in Madeira or the Islands, they went off in search of cheap wine (not hard to find) which they would carry back in the hopes of saving it for their cellars in West Africa. For some, it did not even get to the ship for, arriving at the gangway with difficulty, it was more than they could do to get themselves and their booze up the steep slope or steps and many an expensive stock dropped overside and quickly sank. One of these poor chaps was going

out to work as a miner on the Gold Coast. He was not aware than in the 1st class was a manager of his mine. He was drunk every day. On preparing to go ashore when we reached the Gold Coast, he got a nasty shock. He was handed a cheque, in lieu of notice, and a return ticket on the same boat and was told that his type was not welcomed.

I once travelled out on a Troopship which, of course was 'dry'. To me it was a happy trip , even though we slept in very cramped bunk conditions of probably 50 men to our area of the deck. I appreciate that for drinking men it must have been almost intolerable.

## 3.2 First voyage

I think I had arrived at Liverpool on my first journey when I digressed to details of ships and shipping, so I return to our departure from that once so busy port. With farewells said and painfully felt, we waved until the ship moved off.

On the 'Apapa' we had about 20, mostly new recruits to the work of the Methodist Missionary Society in West Africa. I already knew a few of these and we grouped together watching as we passed other ships in dock or ferries hurrying from one side of the Mersey to their destinations. As darkness increased our interest turned to lights on shore and afloat. Then a tour of inspection to learn the geography of the ship. The half hour warning call for dinner was a welcome interruption. We were excused dressing for this first dinner as no one had yet unpacked. We had now turned south from the Mersey and, after dinner, watched and tried to identify groups of lights on the Welsh coast. So passed our first evening afloat.

Next morning, we had already left the Irish Sea and were out of sight of any land. Then Ushant and later Finisterre and our old world had been left behind. A whole day in Madeira and another at Las Palmas, Canary Isles, but they were not like home. Then excitement rose, Cape Blanco - the first sign of Africa. For so long I had hoped, prayed and prepared to get to the great dark continent—it would not now be long before we would step ashore in The Gambia.

Other indications that we were entering the tropics included the change from navy blue uniforms of the crew to their spotless white as we basked in the sunshine in our comfortable deck chairs. Up went the heavy canvas awning, giving shade and comparative safety from the sun. Also the 20x12 feet canvas swimming pool was slung into position and filled with cool sea water. This gave much refreshment as well as fun.

The Gambia, what a cheeky little British possession of ten miles or so on either side of the river of the same name, completely surrounded by Senegal, so largely semi desert and held by France. We landed at Bathurst, as flat as a pancake, but proud of its several mountains. The explanation?

Groundnuts stacked in pyramids of sacks, awaiting export to our margarine and other oil handling factories on the Continent.

The trips ashore I have always found worth while on a long voyage, so much to see and learn as well as interesting people to talk with.

From the flats of the Gambia, our next port of call, Freetown, provided a contrast. Sierra Leone the loin shaped hills form a beautiful background as one looks from the ship, over Freetown itself. For those wanting to go ashore, we trans-ship to a ferry and thus to land. Following the abolition of slavery in 1833 Sierra Leone was the country to which many slaves were expatriated from America. They made full use of their freedom. Although their ancestors had been snatched from many different parts of West Africa and had tried to retain the use of their original languages, there had gradually evolved a common pidgin English, Creole tongue. As Alex Hadley illustrates in 'Roots', there remained in many a desire to trace their ancestors and, as I shall later record, there is evidence of the success of the more adventurous. But Freetown became the home of the Free, after generations of Slavery.

Fourah Bay College was later to become West Africa's first University College affiliated to Durham University. Thus Freetown became a focal point for higher education for the sons and, later, daughters of all those in the West African Colonies who could afford to send their children there. Others chose English universities because of the greater cultural background. The number able to afford this undertaking was very limited.

Several other interests in and around Freetown added to the enjoyment of our whole day visits. The cathedral, the market place and the Lumley Beach. This sandy beach was safe for bathing and provided a complete change in the traveller's pattern of life on board ship. Then, of course, there was Freetown Harbour. Its size and depth make it renowned amongst the harbours of the world. It could take a whole fleet. During war time, I have seen it contain a whole convoy and, even the great Queen Elizabeth when a troopship, safely anchored there.

In peace times, those who did not want to go ashore, had plenty of fun and enjoyment watching the African divers. These men were ready to run risks to earn the coins thrown to them. They would watch where a coin entered the water and the occupant of the small canoe nearest to the splash would dive. From the height of our deck we could see his progress and watch him turn and ascend. He would hold up his hand, revealing the recovered money as a form of receipt. Perhaps twelve or more little canoes would surround the ship. The senior, and therefore leader of these entertainers, was old John Brown. We knew him during years of visits. He wore a very old top hat, fly winged collar and bow tie then, apart from a very brief pair of briefs he was uncovered. He used to sing the first line of Jon Brown's body – hence his name. Treated with great respect by his juniors, none would dare poach on his patch. He would dive only for silver, he had an uncanny ability to distinguish silver from copper even at considerable distance. His first preparation was to remove his top hat and place it in the canoe, then he would dive and, on re-surfacing he would climb into his canoe, replace his top hat and then turn and acknowledge the coin. Some passengers used to call for risks like diving right under the ship and surfacing the other side or, get one of the divers to climb up a rope to the highest deck and dive from there. I would not encourage either of these risks. One day as we steamed into Plymouth, a young man attempted suicide

by throwing himself overboard. A very brave passenger, fully clothed, did this high dive and rescued the poor fellow. I took a more lenient view of the diving from heights at Freetown after that.

Our day at the Gold Coast, for several years, was to be spent lying offshore at Accra and Sekondi. Here the old mammy chair was in frequent use for officials and passengers who wanted to go ashore. We could sit in a flat-bottomed box construction with two seats facing each other. Four persons would then be swung upward and outwards and lowered overside to connect up with the waiting canoes. But the waves were so great that considerable skill was required of the ship's crew to assess the rise of the swell and the timing of the touch down. Despite their skill, I witnessed many a drenching. Lowering to or loading bundles of bags of cocoa from the canoes require equal skill. Each bundle of bags must have weighed nearly a ton. As each canoe was emptied, one of it's crew would climb the rope ladder, get his paper signed and then slide down a rope to his mates. So it was a whole day of entertainment, free of charge, but very noisy with shouting, especially if any unfortunate canoeman jumped the queue.

Sadly, all this is finished. A fine new harbour has been built at Takoradi and ships now simply dock and passengers descend the steps from deck to shore. Even there, one no longer walks through sandy tracks, but on a tar-mac road, where a car, or a passenger bus entices the lazy passenger. I know it has all meant progress, but I am sorry for the canoemen and that the old mammy chair is gone.

At Monrovia, the capital of Liberia, the whole navy came out to where we anchored. Both canoes were painted white and half a dozen paddlers on either side kept excellent time in a concerted effort to drive the boat through the surf and out on the heavy swell. My interest in Liberia, apart from its stamps, was the fact that it is a part of Africa which was never a colony of any of the European nations. I suppose, today, the main cause of hearing much of it is through her attempt to raise revenue by registering all sorts of shipping under the Liberian flag - a flag of convenience. President Tubman and his successors have been helped greatly by the U.S.A. Even before the Emancipation Act of 1833, America began off loading freed slaves. In 1847, the Republic of Liberia was proclaimed. A very correct name for the land of liberated slaves.

Although our ship would go on to Port Harcourt in Eastern Nigeria, Lagos was journey's end for us.

As we crossed the bar and entered the shelter of the long training walls we left behind the huge Atlantic rollers and the beauty of the surf breaking on the Victoria Beach Up the lagoon, flanked on one side by the dock and wharf of Apapa and on the other, the residence of the Governor, our own Mission compound and other buildings along the Marina and on to our own berthing place. Here, as we looked down from high decks, was a seething mass of people. Some awaiting friends, many labourers hopeful to pick up a headload of luggage and earn some money by carrying it to a car or into the town. Then there was an army of men, some old some young, hoping to find employment from a new arrival who would need the services of a cook, steward or 'small boy.' These

prospective ‘small boys’ could be any height, even over six feet, but they would be learners or understudy to a cook or steward, carrying out the more menial tasks. The more sophisticated of the cooks or stewards would wave aloft a sheaf of testimonials which would be pursued by a prospective employer. Often these were genuine and worthwhile guides as to ability and character, regrettably sometimes unfair jokes were carried out on the often illiterate hopeful e.g. the cook who proudly displayed, amongst others, the page which declared that “John had been my cook for three months. He now leaves for health reasons—mine.” Incidentally in the vocabulary of cooks and stewards, a testimonial is a ‘book’ and a good book can greatly increase the job prospects of its bearer.

To make the sorting of baggage easier on arrival, the shipping company issued supplies of large circular labels covering the whole alphabet. So when the boat was cleared of all luggage and the Customs Hall was declared well and truly open we were allowed ashore and made our way to the Hall where we went to the area of our initial, in my case ‘L’. I struggled to sort out what was mine. Many of the cases sent direct by the suppliers, I had not seen before and I had to check with invoices. All this took about half an hour. Respectably clad in Palm Beach suit collar and tie, it was unbearably hot. One passenger, as he examined a torn label wondered whether it was an ‘L’ or an ‘I’, said “Its like L”. After weeks of cool sea breezes it did suggest the other extreme.

One of our senior missionaries had decided to cut down the time usually taken at Customs. He had ordered ‘Z’ labels, counting on the small number the official at XYZ would have to cope with. He fondly hoped that even if the official did his worst, instead of the best with his sheaf of invoices, he would be smilingly off and on his way. However, there were two matters apparently overlooked. One there were many Greeks and Palestinians amongst the passengers, all of whom had names beginning with ‘Z’. Also, he knew that all the examining officials in those days were Europeans most of whom, to say the least, were non-churchgoers and were not likely to be moved in a missionary’s favour hence mistake number two. He wore a clerical collar.

True, the XYZ examiner did have fewer clients, but he also had more time and dealt very thoroughly with his Mediterranean friends. As I emerged from ‘L’, poor old Bill was still struggling to repack many opened cases and at the same time to retain his dignity as well as the pristine freshness of his natty suit.

### 3.3 Early Methodists in Nigeria

The Methodist Missionary Society was the first to arrive in what is now known as Nigeria. The renowned Thomas Birch Freeman had come over from the Gold Coast to investigate reports which the Society in London had received of the establishment of Christian work in and around Badagry. Freeman found that ‘preachers’ who were repatriated slaves, living in Sierra Leone, had taken to trading along the Coast. The most adventurous of these had travelled far and had reached Badagry.

They formed a little colony there and opened Methodist Societies. When

Freeman reported this to London the response was to appoint men to supervise and extend this new work. In 1842, our first men were stationed at Badagry.

Badagry and Lagos were the two main points for export of slaves. Up to and at the time of Freeman's visit, the Coast was patrolled by British warships, in their attempt to intercept slave ships and prevent their getting away with another cargo of captive human flesh. It was claimed that Freeman was critical of this British policy. He wanted to see troops occupying the offending ports and thus prevent such export. Twenty years later the patrol system was changed and a naval force was landed. King Kosoko, said to be the biggest slave trader on the Coast was routed and Akitoye, whom Kosoko had exiled, returned to power. He signed a treaty agreeing to abolish the slave trade and to encourage the work of missionaries. His son, in 1861, ceded Lagos and its dependent territory to the British Government. In 1886, Lagos and its hinterland was separated from the Gold Coast and became the Colony and Protectorate of Lagos, later to be known as the Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria, when in 1906 Lagos and the Southern area were amalgamated. It was not until 1914 that the Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria was amalgamated with the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria and the whole country became the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria. Sir Frederick (later Lord) Lugard became the first Governor General of Nigeria.

Some years after the Methodists, the Church Missionary Society arrived in Nigeria,, to be followed later by several other societies.

In Lagos, we were greatly privileged in the gift of a site for the Mission, adjoining the residence of the Governor right on the lagoon front now known as the Marina. It is a very large site and in my early days housed our Methodist Boys High School (MBHS) and our Girls High School together with the residence of the Chairman of our District Synod. The full value of the evening sea breeze was prized. The value of the site itself has appreciated to very great heights as the years passed.

Our District Synod met every January and lasted for three weeks. Comparative numbers of missionaries and laymen were small when I went out and it seems extravagant to say we 'assembled'. The small chapel of the MBHS with one small adjoining classroom, was sufficient for all entitled to attend. We slept in the school dormitories and the staff of both the Boys and Girls school shared the catering. Three weeks in Lagos each year was a real high-light. We could actually visit the one and only cold store in the country and buy an ice cream (for consumption on the premises) If parafin refrigerators were available in those early days, I certainly did not move in the circle where they could be afforded.

When time permitted, we went to the Victoria Beach. It was delightful to get in the cool water but we could not do much swimming for it was unwise to go out beyond the breakers. We let the surf beat on us instead, but was we sat getting wet, we had to dig feet well in to prevent being sucked out by the great backwash.

Many years later, we were able to go to the cinema—I may as well record this here, while writing about Synod. It was in the open air and wicker chairs were provided. January was dry season and there was no problem. With harmattan

wind blowing from the Sahara desert, the evenings were pleasant for sitting out. I do not know what the cinema proprietor did during the wet season, I suppose that rain often stopped play. We went to see 'Frozen Limits' with the Crazy Gang. It was one of the funniest films we had ever seen. For days after, our friends and we would rock with laughter as we recalled different parts of the film.

### 3.4 Learning Yoruba in Igboora

But all these joys and excitements were the special treats of Synod time. I saw none of them during those first days on arrival in Lagos. I was to travel up-country on the Kano train where I would be met by the Rev Edward G. Nightingale ('Nightie' as we all called him) and live in his house at Wesley College, Ibadan. I was to use the golden opportunity of being amongst so many intelligent young Yorubas that I would not only get a good foundation to my study of their language, but quickly learn to speak it. One important point however, had been overlooked or underestimated by the Stationing Committee making this arrangement. All those intelligent young Yorubas were keen to use every possible opportunity to improve their English. One day, to my sorrow, I read a notice pasted on the wall of the dining hall "Anyone heard speaking Yoruba will be fined at the rate of 1/2d per word." This, of course, was prepared by students, for students and without the knowledge of the staff. This led to a big change in my Yoruba studies.

Some years previously there had been a missionary with considerable medical skill. He had built a small one room dispensary at Igboora, a very large town in which he pioneered. In those days, it was a toss up as to whether the Wesley Guilds of England would build their first hospital in Ilesha, 100 miles further north, or at Igboora. The final decision favoured Ilesha, and when Mr Bond retired to England, the Igboora work was dropped.

Now it was agreed that I should live at Igboora and make the one room dispensary my home. It had a corrugated iron roof on its mud walls. Igboora had no English speakers except one who, under Mr Bond, had helped in an infant class.

I packed up all my loads—bedding—foodstuffs and personal effects and got on the train for Sanushi. Here I was met by carriers who would lead me in the twelve mile walk to Igboora. They divided my loads into fair headloads. We proceeded along narrow bush paths (there were no roads in those days apart from main thoroughfares) There was one accident en route. We came to a dry riverbed and one man carrying a tin trunk, fell as he was climbing down the bank. He said he was not hurt, but I was very worried about the contents of the trunk. When we reached Igboora, I quickly looked inside and found that the pick-up arm of my precious gramophone was completely severed. I was shattered – I could have done without so many of my possessions, but not my music. 2 1/2 months in that lonely place before I would get back to Ibadan appalled me. Fortunately my medical kit included a roll of adhesive dressing.

This aided in a Heath Robinson repair, but the gramophone worked.

Life was very interesting, not only in the dispensary and town, but in visits to outlying villages. The man who, years before, helped Mr Bond, was most helpful and was willing to walk many miles with me and act as interpreter.

I had a daily visitor, a little girl of perhaps six years of age, with an easy name Titi (pronounced Tee-tee) She used to come in and stand quietly, watching everything I did. Our sole conversations, at the beginning, were greetings and salutations, Yoruba is a tonal language and it is possible to have three words, with the same spelling but with three entirely different meanings. To a Yoruba speaker the meaning was quite clear because he would say one with a level tone, one with an upward tone and the third, downwards. The classical illustration is the word oko, which means a hoe a boat or a husband. It could be embarrassing if a woman went to market to buy a hoe and through the wrong tone asked for a husband.

Greetings and salutations were very easy for all started with the three lettered word 'Eku!' To this could be tacked an unending list of endings. 'Eku' means I salute you, followed by 'aro' for morning, equals our Good morning. It is easily seen why I stuck to greetings for so long. This wealth in salutations added to the friendliness of the Yoruba people. In English, we are limited to bidding the time of day, morning, afternoon evening etc., but the friendly Yoruba, can keep talking, even to a complete stranger, in salutations for working, singing, eating or a variety of ends to the prefix 'Eku.'

One morning little Titi waddled into my room with a large, two year old baby on her back, supported by a strip of home woven cloth. After the usual 'Ekuaro' I tried hard to recall the Yoruba word for load or burden. I said 'Ekueru' i.e. saluting her for carrying a burden. Titi was not amused. I had to get my dictionary to understand her reply. "Eru ko, aburo mi ni." "Its not a burden, he's my brother" What a lovely reply. I must have told that story in hundreds of addresses to children, third-world talks and Christian Aid sermons.

The only white man I saw during my 2 1/2 month stay in Igboora was the Chairman of our District Synod. It was a very special occasion for one holding his office to come so far off his usual rounds. In his honour, the local chief sent a horse to Shanusi station so that he could be led into the town. I was hot and tired after the twelve mile walk earlier that morning. We rested at the station during the heat of the day. When the train arrived and I had performed the welcome ceremony, the Chairman was enthroned on his horse and the procession started on the homeward twelve miles. I was surprised that although we stopped at intervals for a rest, our visitor never got off the horse. He completed the long journey. In the mud built dispensary, which he shared with me, there was of course no fire-place. I feel sure that if there were a fireplace, he would have chosen to take his meals standing in front of it rather than trying to sit down.

It was while at Igboora, and conscious of loneliness, that I received my first official communication from the M.M.S. in London. It was a cyclostyled copy of an official hand out to all missionaries:

Addition to Memorandum on Personal Allowances.

(19.A.) When a missionary in active work dies, funeral expenses up to 12 pounds will be paid, in case of need. This grant should be applied for by the nearest relative.

As I had done nothing to merit this grant, I was just happy to be still alive. Not long afterwards, I received a personal letter on official notepaper bearing the honoured names of C.W.Andrews, E.W.Thompson, W.J.Noble and G.E.Hickman Johnson.

We have been comparing information from various Districts with our records for Life Insurance and notice that although you have taken out a policy (possibly you may have other property), you do not appear to have made out a Will. Recent experience here has shown that a great deal of trouble is involved if a missionary dies on the field intestate. We are sending a form which will facilitate the making of a Will in the approved fashion.

I rejoice that I survived this early, cheerful bombardment. All of the statesman-like personalities mentioned above have long since passed on. I am glad to have happier memories of some of them.

I mentioned earlier that my sister had been designated to China. However, in the meanwhile there arose some kind of internal, political trouble which closed the China door for her. However, as the Wesley Guild Hospital at Ilesha had been re-opened by Dr Hunter, who travelled out with me for our first appointment, there was urgent need for a nursing sister to work with Stella Liony, the Matron. So my sister was switched from China to Nigeria. That first Christmas, I was her guest in Ilesha, a very unexpected re-union. We had a great time together.

It is interesting to note that those particular troubles in China did not last long and, the very next year Gladys Aylward, better known to some as the heroine in the film 'The Small Woman', was able to make her lonely way to and commence her work in China. My sister served for over thirty years, during most of which she was Matron. She was honoured with an M.B.E. for medical services.

### 3.5 Ibadan

After my period at Igboora I returned to Wesley College, Ibadan and whilst continuing my Yoruba study I was introduced to the work of helping to build the new college chapel. This was work I greatly enjoyed and it laid foundations for planning and building work both in Nigeria and England.

When the Nighties were married, they got a present of a piano, not new, but in good working order. They took it with them to Nigeria. Unfortunately, the method of swinging goods from the hold to the wharf were full of risks in those days. Two lashings of rope encircled the piano which slipped at the peak of it's swing. It landed on the wharf long before the ropes it had evaded. This is not

good for pianos and many of its working parts surrounded the case as the mess lay on the concrete. Nightie had no hope of a resurrection, but they decided to take the case to Ibadan. There it stood in silence as a piece of furniture. Of course they had no objection to my opening the lid and examining the mixed up contents. The little blocks of lead, one in each key, which had balanced the 'ivories' were all gone. The instrument which was overstrung had become a box of unattached hammers and, to make matters worse, moth had eaten their way into the felt on each hammer.

I gladly put all my spare time into the huge task of identification and sorting out the muddle and, with the aid of glue, saw item after item return to their original shape and size. I could not replace the lead weights which had fallen from each key but decided to try to restore balance by attaching a six inch nail to the vertical wire in front of each hammer. This worked, and now, on pressing the note the hammer did all it should and sprung back again on release of the pressure. It was amazing that none of the strings had been severed. If they had, I would have been in great trouble because I had no hope of getting steel wire. The six inch nails made an unpleasant noise, in fact, when I did get the instrument to work, people kindly suggested that the best place to listen was at the other side of the tennis court. By the time the sound reached there, the rattle of the nails could not be heard and they could recognise the tune. The pitch was far too low, but I dared not tune it to what my tuning fork asked, as I might well have snapped a string in the effort

Such was the Nighties pleasure that, when later I was transferred to Oyo, they gave the piano to me. I was not worried about extraneous noises, it worked and would help relieve the sense of loneliness when, once more, I was to be on my own.

Wesley College, Ibadan meant and still means a lot to me. The Nightingales and the Hodges, in both of whose homes I had lived—the joy of being able to engage in construction work of a manual nature in building—as well as the continuing study of the language—the many African friends I made, Mr Cole and a fellow tutor John Ajibola, as well as many students who later were on the staff, helped in the preparation I was making for a long missionary career.

## Chapter 4

# First circuit

### 4.1 “The wood is for your coffin”

When the time came to move out and to ‘run’ the Oyo Circuit, I was glad to put the value of my training to the test. The very first day I received a nasty shock. The Oyo Mission House had been the former residence of the Chairman of the District, the Rev Oliver J.Griffin. His official duties had required him to reside in Lagos and there had not been any resident to remedy deterioration of the property. This was all too obvious on my arrival.

The only person to welcome me was the compound labourer. His job was to keep the grass clear around the house, to lessen danger from bush fires sweeping up to the house and also, to lessen the danger of snakes getting into the house. He kept the paths swept and did a bit of gardening. He spoke no English and, as yet, my use of Yoruba was limited. The house was square. Downstairs consisted of storerooms, a dispensary, A WC.(really an EC for earth took the place of water) and a garage, complete with real rick-shaw, the only one I ever saw in Nigeria. Upstairs was a main living room, two bedrooms, a bathroom (tin bath but no water laid on), a very small office and all along the front of the area was a wide verandah. There was a stairway at both back and front, the former giving easy access to the separate kitchen. This had to be separate from the house because of smoke from the wood fire.

On that first day, I climbed the rear stairs but was alarmed at the rot and unsteadiness of the construction. On the landing were several quite large holes which, in the dark could be even a higher danger than in daylight. Urgent repairs were a priority. It was well past lunchtime so I sat in the living room and opened my sandwiches. As I sat at the table, my eyes were constantly at work. There was no ceilings, only rafters to which a ceiling could be fixed. But, of far greater interest to me was what I could hardly believe—on the rafters lay a nest pile of six planks cut to about six feet and nicely smoothed.

As soon as the labourer returned from his break, I beckoned to him. He came upstairs and I asked for his help in going up and handing down the planks. He

did not understand my Yoruba fully, but thought for a while and then shook his head. It was my turn not to be able to understand what he said. I was annoyed by his disobedience. Soon after three o'clock the young teacher, who had just closed school, came to welcome me. Nathaniel Salako spoke English very well. I told him of my trouble with the labourer and he said he would find out the reason for his disobedience. They talked, and then came the answer. "The man says he cannot touch those planks because they are for white man's coffin". Apparently there was an unwritten rule that, in all up-country mission houses there must always be kept a sufficient supply of planks so that immediate burial could follow the death of a resident.

I decided I was going to walk on those planks and not be encased with them. Down they came and that very afternoon I laid them over the dangerous holes and prepared to cut them to shape and repair the patches properly and reinforce the stairs. However the force of the necessity for that rule was indelibly written on my mind later the same day. I was reading the contents of the small steel safe in the office and came across a list, written by my predecessor. There were eight names, including his. It gave a date in March of the year when they arrived in Nigeria. Although representing several different missionary societies, they had all travelled on the same boat and had dispersed to several different parts of the country. After the column of names there was another column with dates. My predecessor was the only one who had no date. I was shocked when I realised that of those eight men who arrived together, he, alone saw the light of Christmas Day that same year. Within that year, seven mission houses had tragically to yield up their store of prepared planks and seven homes in the United Kingdom had mourned a loved-one stricken down by Yellow Fever, Blackwater or other fevers. 'The White Man's Grave' was not the thought of a writer of fiction. It was a reality.

Around the house was a row of earthen pots, just beneath the places where rain water would fill them. They were filled with Crotans and other decorative plants. But, they had not always been a garden. Once they were the water storage pots from which water was drawn for domestic purposes. That was in the days before Sir Ronald Ross identified the mosquito as the carrier of malaria. My predecessor had been tossing in bed with a high fever for several days when a European rider came into the compound with a dispatch. It informed all and sundry of Ross's discovery and gave clear directions as to water storage and the necessity to see that all possible holes, where water could lie should be filled up and thus prevent mosquito larvae from developing and adding to the malaria hazard. Sick and weak as he was, Griffin got out of bed, came downstairs, got a hammer and went round the house cracking every water pot and denied the larvae the use of their breeding place as the water gushed out.

## 4.2 Oyo

I referred earlier to Nathaniel, the young teacher in our Oyo School. It was my pleasure, years later, to bring him forward as a candidate for the Ministry. Very

many years later he was elected President of the Methodist Church in Nigeria. He was the second to hold this highest office, but after an all too short time, illness overtook him and his remaining months were few. He died whilst in office. So Oyo, for me, had its joys and sorrows, its ups and downs.

From the front verandah there was a delightful view of the compound. A wide road led to a gate on our boundary. Here, the road narrowed to a bush path to Oyo Town. The wide road was lined with aloes which bear flowers at the tip of a long polelike stem. These flowers are only produced occasionally, and years apart. Fortunately I saw the whole spectacle. Then at regular intervals, coconut palms had been planted on either side of the road. On a bright moonlit night, not only was it possible to read by moonlight, but the sight of the moon through the palms was beautiful and gave a romantic setting. Often I listened to my desert island discs on the verandah whilst watching the shadow of the palm fronds weaving patterns on the sand of the road. 'The Kerry Dance' sung by Peter Dawson took me back to Co Kerry and I could see those deserted dancing floors at remote cross roads, once the regular meeting place of the youth of that day who had gone to the cities or emigrated.

I did have some visitors, complete strangers, who had heard of the lovely orchid which had made its home in one of my orange trees. So near to my bedroom window that I could almost lean out to touch it or to pick a green orange. I did mean green, for, if an orange on a tree was orange, it was too ripe to eat.

Doris and Eric Hodges came from Wesley College to spend a week-end with me. During their stay, I apologised that in my bachelor establishment, I could not offer them small knives for cheese or fruit. Doris immediately said that they had had a surplus of this commodity amongst their wedding presents and that they would gladly let me have a box of six. I was very grateful. My sister, Elsie, was due for local leave from the hospital, and the arrangement was that she would spend some days with the Hodges in Ibadan and that I would run in from Oyo to Ibadan on Saturday and pick her up to spend the rest of her leave with me.

By this time, I had become the proud owner of my first car, a Fiat two seater with a canvas roof and an uncovered dicky seat in the boot. I had paid 50 pounds for it, the price allowed for its rather worn and run down condition. Any-how the engine worked. On that particular Saturday, I drove into the Wesley College grounds and stopped at Hodges house. We all had lunch together and sat on the verandah for coffee. Whilst we sat, Jacob, the steward emerged from Elsie's room, his hands behind his back. Walking up to Doris Hodges, he held out the little case of six knives which Doris had remembered to give Elsie for me, He almost shouted as he displayed his find "Found this in strangers room." I still do not think he understood our roar of laughter nor that he was ever convinced of my sister's honesty. By the way, it was usual to refer to the temporary use of the spare room by visitors, to call it strangers room.

### 4.3 Haircutting

In those days it was customary to employ a cook and a steward in each house. The cook went to market, saw to tree trunks to maintain his fire, did all the cooking, serving-up and clearing up and keeping tidy all his utensils. The steward did all the work in the house, including the preparation of the table for meals and serving same. For economy reasons this was the limit of personnel in mission circles. If the cook wanted a small boy to do the menial work, usually such services were obtained by the payment of his school fees, or other arrangement. Government and commercial Europeans often had quite a large staff.

I went to the other extreme and employed a cook/steward, in other words Jacob Osinuga was to do the lot. He did, however, suggest that in return for school fees, his son Michael would be the small boy. This worked well and we were a happy household with an absence of grumbling. As the sole employee, perhaps I expected Jacob to include extras. One of these was haircutting. He had said that he had had experience in this art. I decided to give him a trial. There was one complication. I had been advised to include in my preparations the purchase of a good hairdresser's clippers. Jacob had never used this implement before. I demonstrated how it worked. He ran it up the back of my neck, but didn't cut any hair. I explained that he was not digging the prongs in hard enough. Now this was an error on my part for, on Jacob's second attempt to take off, he did exactly as I said but dug more deeply than I intended. He held a mirror so that I could see the result. It was awful. I had a deep furrow, quite bald, from collar level to the crown of my head. It took some time, but nature is a wonderful healer. Gradually the offending area began to look more normal. I was reminded on a later occasion, when in England, a barber asked me how I would like it cut. I told him to leave it nice to brush. Now, either he was deaf or I spoke indistinctly. He left it like a brush.

Jacob and I remained good friends and it was a pleasure to help young Michael in his studies. In due course he went to College and still later, he entered the Methodist Ministry and has faithfully served in his several circuits.

### 4.4 Trekking

Trekking was exciting—preparations to ensure that none of the necessities of life were forgotten, foodstuffs, bedding all had to be carried with me. A filter too, so that water, after boiling, could be poured into the upper of two compartments of a cylindrical container. Water would then slowly pass through a 'candle' and drip into the lower compartment. This had a little tap which gave the required supply of ready-to-drink- water. Water borne diseases were many and varied and it would be an extremely foolish man who would travel without a filter.

Most camp beds had a simple scaffolding arrangement which fitted into four sockets. This made the erection of a mosquito net easy. Such a net protected against multitudes of mosquitoes and other flying insects attracted by the light in ones room. Close to the equator, day and night last for twelve hours so, every

night we had to have artificial light.

Going on trek was quite an undertaking and must have been a frightful bore to our African colleagues who had become immune to many sicknesses and ready to take risks and accept conditions beyond our limits. To give an example, I never got used to sleeping on planks or mud floors, my bone structure rebelled every time hence the camp bed on every tour despite Paul's advice to "endure hardness".

On all the treks one came to the conclusion that Africa is not a quiet place to live, even in the bush. When a string of people, walking along a bush path in single file, want to talk to one another, there is no chance of being heard unless one shouts, or at least talks loudly. Number five, or six in such a file of people must have a good pair of lungs to cope with a headwind and yet get his message across.

Carriers needed a rest so, some shady place, preferably near a stream or river was sought and there we would all regain our breath and strength before emerging once more into the hot sunshine. For this reason, we tried to make an early start, before or no later than daylight. And, if the journey spilled over half a day, we made a break from one to three o'clock.

A retired missionary friend from our Calabar area, told me of one of his long treks. He broke his journey at the house of Mary Slessor "The white queen of Okoyong", an extremely forthright and independent lady. He wanted to make an early start next morning and worried about awaking in time "Don't worry" said his hostess "I will see you are up in time". She fetched a large cock from its roosting place and tied one of its legs to the leg of his bed. At cock crow, the whole house was awake and he did get away in time for his long day's walk.

On arrival at our destination we would find a place to live. It might be a vestry, or even the church itself, or it might be on the wide verandah of the chief's house. This ensured a reasonably good mud floor. In our later pioneering travels we would select a good tree in the market place where we could hang our large mosquito net and where we lived and moved and had our being, much to the interest and amusement of dozens of spectators who had an absolutely uninterrupted view. At the end of a twenty mile walk I admit I was ready for a sit down and an orange or lime drink with water more than tepid after being exposed to the sun.

Oranges and other citrus fruits were fairly easy to come by. In those days I could buy forty for one penny, Bananas were about the same price, but for me this fact held no joy. In my student days I had been foolish enough to enter a competition to see who could eat the greatest number of bananas at one sitting. I won. I forget what prize for, at that stage I had passed beyond taking any interest in prizes and in fact, for the next three days my life, so to speak, hung on a banana. I could think, with disgust, of nothing else. It was my theme song, accompanied with loud internal rumblings. So for many years of cheap bananas, with bananas growing right outside my office door, I passed by on the other side. But, before I digressed into the world of bananas, I was on the subject of treks.

It is amazing how the Scriptures came alive in all sorts of ways in Africa.

For example, I am reminded of the query that arose out of the story of the man who had completed a journey. Was he likely to invite his domestic staff first to sit down and have a good meal, then late, they could attend to his own needs? No, first he would expect to have his appetite satisfied and then, if he cared or took any interest in such matters, the staff could see to their own needs. After twenty or twenty five miles walking I fear I pleaded guilty. I expected the cook to produce, as quickly as he could, what he had planned for my meal. I always was amazed at the cheerful manner in which the staff fulfilled their function. In next to no time, they had spread a cloth on the old flat topped tin trunk which normally contained a store of tins or food. Sometimes there would be an embarrassing silence if I asked for some mustard. It had been forgotten as it lay in the trunk which was now my table. Off would come dishes, cutlery and the cloth itself, while the cook dived into the larder and produced the mustard tin. The table would be restored to normal and the meal would proceed. Then, double embarrassment when the sliced oranges for the second course were really bitter and I suggested that a little sugar would sweeten the occasion. Off would come the dishes, cutlery and etc., whilst once more a hand was inserted into the trunk for the sugar tin. Annoying? No, I looked on it that intervals in a meal, when one is alone, aid digestion.

All this is years ago, but I have never forgotten the solid loyalty of cooks and stewards. I must have given cause for much complaint and, probably provided the topic which they may have discussed out of my hearing when the staff had retired 'downstairs'. I would now welcome the opportunity of seeing them again to apologise for my impatience and inconsistency. I would even upgrade some of the testimonials I have written. They really were a grand band of colleagues even if their work was different.

## 4.5 Baptisms in the Oyo Circuit

Because of the absence of a resident minister in Oyo there had accumulated quite a back log of work. Particularly had it been difficult to arrange for baptisms. So it came about that, on one of my treks to a more remote station I found that no adults nor children had been baptised, even though the catechists had faithfully carried out their work of preparation. In addition to adults, whom I carefully examined and sorted in to those ready for baptism, and others who were advised to work on for a further few months, I was presented with a list of parents who wanted to have their children baptised. Again, I sorted out those who were obviously sincere and understood their parental responsibilities.

Adults seeking baptism are expected to be able to read the Scriptures, with the exception of those unable to learn because of age or disability. The ability of some is limited and the test is always a simple passage without hard words. They are expected to repeat the Lord's Prayer from memory, and to show simple understanding of the Commandments. They must have a good record of character and their interest in and attendance at Church. We rely on the local catechist to carry through their preparations and the baptising minister satisfies

himself that each candidate has a simple understanding of his or her faith.

When I had completed the examination of the adult group and counselled the twenty parents of the children to be baptised, I announced that in three weeks I hoped to return and the baptisms would take place. I rearranged my programme so as to keep this important promise and on the Saturday, once more my cook and I moved in readiness for the big day, Sunday. The catechist gave me the list which I checked with mine. This time, he had put in the new name chosen by each adult. We agreed that the children would be taken before the adults. When he gave me their list of names, they were correct with mine but, I got the very big surprise that while twenty parents were there, the total number of children would be forty four, some of the parents presenting two or even three children. I have stressed the importance of preparation of parents, but had not enquired if they had more than one infant or child each. It was too late now to be overwhelmed by thoughts of a mass baptism, but I awaited the dawn of the new day, Sunday, with a certain anxiety.

It certainly was a unique experience when in the service I announced the time for their baptism had come and asked the parents, with children to come forward. Row after row filled the width of the narrow church. I have often told anxious parents that they must not be too concerned if the baby cries— “It will not worry me and I do not want you to let it worry you.” That is all right with one infant, in this country but, the mass choir in that little church far exceeded my expectations. Many of the little ones had remarkable lung power and, of course, there was evidence of a chain reaction. Fortunately the roof of the church was thatch. This helped a lot in absorbing the noise. I must confess, however, that it was very hard to preserve a sense of reverence whilst presiding over such a situation. We completed the programme for both those children and the adults. I had however, learned a lesson and never since have I examined parents for the baptism of their children without having a list in advance of the actual numbers.

## 4.6 Government officers

The undertakings of government in Nigeria were divided into departments, as happens in most countries. All the heads of those departments and, indeed most of the senior positions, in my early days, were held by Europeans. There did not appear to be any shortage of staff but because of problems in communication, there were often big delays in correspondence and in maintaining supplies from the U.K. and elsewhere.

The Public Works Department was responsible for roads, i.e. trunk roads. Any community wanting to have a road to connect up with a trunk road, had to take full responsibility for same. Some help might be given by the Native Administration but no funds were to be expected from Government. The result was, very few roads. The first fifty miles of the road from Lagos to the North was actually tarred. The width of the tar allowed for single traffic only, but there was a fairly wide shoulder of natural laterite to provide for the passing

of vehicles. Each would keep the off side wheel on the strip and the on side on the laterite. This rule was abused often by the road hog, resulting in a near miss or, in too many cases the overturning of the evading vehicle through going over the edge of the road. After the fifty miles of tar, it became like driving over corrugated iron. Cars shuddered, were hard to steer and drivers divided into two schools. One held that a slow speed should be maintained throughout, rather like climbing down one side of the corrugation and then up the other. The second school held that the only way was speed and thus ride on the top of the ridges. I found that this latter procedure was supported by those who drove government or company cars. We had to pay all our own expenses and, on the whole, were slower drivers.

Our District Officer and one of our Mission doctors in Ilesha should both have had Jehu somewhere in their names. One day, travelling at speed in opposite directions, they had a very narrow escape on a corner. Each felt guilty, stopped and quickly reversed with the same intention, to apologise to the other. However, in reversing too quickly, they collided and both had to face wing repairs.

The Public Works Department (PWD) was responsible for all building construction, water supplies where wells could be sunk or dams built to provide reservoirs for domestic use or in generating schemes which were planned later.

The Posts and Telegraph Department saw to all communications and post offices. They were constantly extending their activities. In Oyo, we had a Post Office alone, but then news came through that the telegraph line from Lagos to Ibadan would be extended to Oyo. The more educated of the public marvelled that it would be possible to send and receive telegrams. The opening day arrived. A friend of mine who lived three miles out, thought he would celebrate the new wonder by sending a wire to someone in Lagos. He hurriedly wrote out a message, sent his steward to walk the three miles. At the Post Office, a long queue was in front of him. His turn came. The Postmaster gave him back his shilling and the message, with this note. "Dear Sir, You can have twelve words for one shilling As you only used nine words, I return you telegram so that you can add three more". Having blown about four hours of his stewards time, he became less interested in the First Day of operation.

## 4.7 Building works

The manual work to which I referred while living at Wesley College was to help supervise the building of the College Chapel. I greatly enjoyed the preparation of the wood which eventually would bear the weight of the wide arch over the chancel. Under Nightie's skilled guidance, I also had to see to the making of the moulds for the blocks which would form that arch, and then the key stone fitted correctly and in due time it was safe to remove the wooden frame. To the best of my knowledge, that arch still stands the strain after sixty years.

There was another problem to be solved. The plan showed that a covered six foot foot way was to be made on both sides of the chapel. The covered roof would be concrete and on to it there would be heavy dripping of water anytime

it rained. Nightie was opposed to the purchase and fitting of galvanised pipes to carry of this rain water from the high roof. He wanted to think how he could leave a hole right through the concrete pillars which, at ten foot intervals, would bear the weight of the concrete covering. We easily made the shuttering into which the concrete for each pillar would be poured, but the hole? Entire credit goes to him for thinking of the banana. The trunk of what my dictionary describes as a gigantic tree-like herbaceous plant bearing fruit, i.e. the banana. I will call it the trunk. From five to fifteen feet long, usually it is possible to cut eight feet from the straight part. This can be unpeeled like corrugated packing paper to any thickness. We peeled off until about four inches in diameter and made sure that when pouring the concrete mixture into the mould, this banana trunk stayed in the centre. When the concrete in the pillars was dry, we removed the casing knowing that water and the heat of the sun would eventually rot the banana trunk. It did rot and the student helpers watched during each storm and reported the outflow of water through the hole and the gradual floating away of banana remains. Doubtless an architect would have coped differently, adding to the cost of the chapel, Nightie's idea worked just as well, left no danger of rust from metal pipes, and cost nothing more than the labour of cutting the lengths of banana trunks. It is further evidence of how the missionary learned to face up to situations, simply because there were no better informed persons available. Those efforts most often worked, even if they took more time.

Success, or at least enthusiasm shown in construction work, led to the next request by Nightie. Even though I had moved to live in Oyo, he was still my superintendent. He had drawn plans for building a large church at Fiditi to replace one which was too small. This was only eight miles from Oyo and I was in charge of work there. I was to supervise the voluntary workers and see to the proper mixture of sand, stone and cement for the foundations. The windows were to be Norman in shape and the roof trusses, which we had to make, were to be of a new type designed by Taffy Jones, a very helpful PWD engineer.

The following is recorded by Findlay & Holdsworth.

Travelling with the missionary party (1888) was a woman who, twenty years earlier had been carried off into slavery. In Lagos she had found freedom and now sought the relatives from whom she had been torn. One day she was making enquiries from a man we had met on the road. Presently she found that she was talking to her own father. The mother was not far away, and on that same day she was restored to both he parents. This happened at Fiditi, a town which greatly attracted Halligey, though it was not effectively occupied then.

This was the Fiditi where the church was too small for its congregation, and where I was to supervise the building of a larger centre for worship.

## 4.8 Tropical storms

I was interested to note the almost daily tropical storms of that season. The storm seemed to wait until the intense heat of the day passed. I learned that if I were to be back to Oyo by 5.0 p.m., there was no need to take protective clothing, but if I left it later, I was in danger of a drenching. The trouble with protective clothing was that one sweated so much under same, one became just as wet as the outside of the Mac. During the dry season, from November to February we usually got one and only one storm. Strangely enough, it often came on Christmas Day - a kindly present from above. Every place was so parched and streams and even river beds became dusty tracks. People longed for water, so when the rain came it was lovely to see the sheer joy of the younger generation as they shed any garments and ran out, disporting their shiny bodies in the ecstasy of getting drenched. Any available calabash or container was placed beneath the roof drips. Strategic positioning could save long walks to the nearest water hole.

When I mention thatch, I am not describing the wayside cottage roof most people like to see in England. Thatching with grass is difficult in a forest. So thatch can mean interwoven leaves. As they dry and tend to curl, the owner of a roof simply climbs up and stuffs any gaps with a bunch of fresh leaves. Most householders keep a supply in readiness. But this type of roof was more liable to house snakes, there were so many projecting ends and pieces on to which a snake could coil. I remember one Sunday I was conducting morning service in a small village church which had a leaf roof. As we sang the first hymn, I saw a large snake emerge from behind the leaves. Fortunately a steward on door duty, also spotted it. He left his post, ran home and returned with a long barrel blunderbuss (not the short barrel type), down the barrel of which he had rammed any old nails or metal bits and pieces available. We continued to sing, only to be interrupted by a loud bang, The snake fell into the aisle, and we resumed the verse of the hymn.

## 4.9 A plague of locusts

In many of the colonies it is surprising that there was little success or perhaps, attempt made to keep a register of births and deaths. This certainly was true of Nigeria in general. In Lagos, the Capital, organisation was better and earlier attempts were made. The average African either lacked interest or had no storage place where papers could be preserved. The enemy was the white ant inhabiting most dwelling places. It devoured any paper it could find. In my house in Oyo, my predecessor had left some quite interesting books on a shelf, but in the interregnum, termites had got there before me and only the stiff covers had withstood the onslaught. I could at least tell the author's name and the title of the book. Incidentally, termites work in the dark and will leave outer covers but devour completely all inner pages.

In the Protectorate, all the land outside the small Colony of Lagos, there

were no such records. If I enquired to the age of an adult, I would probably be informed that he or she was a child at the time of the great plague. This meant 1918 when, all over the world, the influenza epidemic carried off millions of old and young.

Another date in local areas was 1930/31. That was the year of the locust. Such complete destruction of any growing plants or crops resulted, that a state of emergency came about. The total harvest of corn and even the vines of root crops disappeared in a few hours. Locusts were everywhere. Driving through the clouds of them was a hazard. The cloud descended and did not fly again until everything green had been eaten. In the meantime, millions of females had dropped little beanlike containers of eggs, so the flight of the swarm did not mean the end of trouble for the farmer. In addition to having lost one harvest, the new generation of baby locusts could soon be expected and they would clear any sign of returning green leaves.

In 1930/31 aerial spraying was unknown and the new generations began to hop around. They could not yet fly. Manual onslaught on the 'hoppers' was the only answer. Government seconded staff to advise and organise farmers into companies of 'Beaters.' I helped in this exercise. Rough trenches were dug, into these the hoppers were driven or swept and when an area was cleared, kerosene was sprinkled and fire consumed the contents of the trench. There was, of course, a Department of Agriculture, but in any emergency such as the locusts brought about, no single department could adequately cope alone. Many officials trained to administer justice became assistants in the battle of the locusts.

## 4.10 The death sentence

The huge number of different languages, estimated at 250 in Nigeria alone, was a tremendous problem in the administration of justice. One morning, I attended a Court in Ibadan and listened to the hearing of a poor chap charged with murder. All legal work was conducted in English, so I could follow every step. The greatest danger to the real justice of the court, lay in the fact that the accused understood and spoke his own little-known language only. Every question asked by the judge or answered by accused had to pass through two interpreters. The first understood good English. He also understood and spoke the language of the second interpreter who then translated for the accused. So, all evidence given and answers given depended on those two interpreters. So the case proceeded. My great anxiety was how fully these two men could be relied upon. Intertribal bitterness could produce bias. Doubtless the judge had an interpreter whose character he would defend. What about the second interpreter? This became all the more alarming when at the end of a long hearing the judge donned the black cap and pronounced the prisoner guilty and the punishment, death by hanging. I had never heard these words announced before. With all the other people present, I stood, dumbfounded, as the judge left the hall. Then we silently walked out into the sunshine.

One other experience must be recorded here. The Principal of Wesley College was also a Prison Chaplain. I helped him occasionally by conducting an early Sunday morning Service for the prisoners. While he was away, I stood in for him in his weekly round visiting the cells. During one period, I had a terrible experience. I had had the responsibility of ministering to a poor man in the condemned cell who had only one more night of life, then at daybreak, he would be led to the gallows. What was I to say to him, and through an interpreter. It was real agony. I tried to bring comfort through explaining the love of God and of our right to claim forgiveness—the assurance of the life to come for all believers. I tried to bring him to accept this. I felt there was nothing further I could say—Next morning he died on the gallows.

## 4.11 Returning home

The length of our tour of service in West Africa was shorter than anywhere else in the world. Men stayed for eighteen months, followed by six months away from the Coast. This included more than a month at sea in passages to and fro. Women were asked to do a fifteen month tour. Now, as my sister Elsie had arrived in Nigeria three months after me, we were both ready for leave at the same time.

We had a pleasant and relaxing voyage but were glad to reach Plymouth, where we watched the off-loading of most of our fellow travellers. The remainder, from the North of England, Scotland and all from Ireland stayed another day on board and were landed in Liverpool. From there we got a boat to Dublin.

It was great to be home again. We had to undertake official deputation appointments with lots of weeknight meetings and worship on Sundays. Then, too we had much shopping to do, laying in stocks for the next eighteen months. Any spare time was used amongst relatives and friends. One of my big purchases was a second hand Morris Cowley Saloon car. I had already sold my Fiat out in Nigeria. The saloon cost me 100 pounds. It served well at home and, later abroad.

Elsie's leave came to an end first and we saw her off. A few weeks later my time was up. Mother and Father were both healthy but were showing signs of their increasing years. I feared parting lest it should be for the last time.

Then I again set out for Liverpool and Nigeria.

## Chapter 5

# Second Tour

### 5.1 Moving to Ilesha

On the voyage back to Nigeria, after leave, I shared a cabin with a very fine missionary. Harold Stacey, an educationalist, was Supervisor of all our Nigerian schools. He was blest with a very keen sense of humour. This, my third voyage was the best so far.

As usual, there were many new recruits to our staff and we played the same tricks on them as had been played upon us earlier. For example—The Tsetse Belt was a belt of land where the Tsetse flies abounded—a very dangerous area. Bites could cause Sleeping Sickness. Each recruit would be asked if he or she had their tsetse belts ready. Some became alarmed and wondered why no one had warned them nor told them where they could buy these belts.

On arrival at Lagos I was told of my promotion to be a Superintendent Minister. I was to transfer to and take charge of the large Ilesha Circuit, some 200 miles inland. In the Ilesha Circuit there were four other ministers, and about one-hundred-strong staff of catechists and teachers. I would be manager of many schools, some earning Government grant. There were forty five churches, some big and some small. There also was a hospital run by the Wesley Guilds in Britain. My only responsibility there would be chaplaincy work. As I had only completed my seven years of training that year, it meant diving in at the deep end.

Elsewhere I describe my large mud house within the town boundary. The hospital was a quarter of a mile away, just outside the boundary. The population of Ilesha was then estimated at 50–60,000. The word Ilesha really meant Ile (house) Orisha (of the gods). It is the capital of the Ijesha Tribe—a very friendly, happy people who appreciated the work of the church and the hospital.

I followed the Rev Stuart Treleavan as Superintendent. He had spent only a few years there. Through matters entirely beyond his control, he had run up against two problems.

There was an urge amongst the Ijesha people for a Grammar School but

they had lacked the know-how and the personnel for management. The Trelevans were both well versed in educational matters and were approached to take over a scheme and start a Methodist Grammar School. There would not be any financial problem. An ad-hoc committee of our church met in Lagos. Unfortunately, they felt there would be too great a strain on our output of qualified teachers, so the invitation was turned down. The same people turned down a later scheme of which I will write. Both these schemes could have weakened the supply of staff in the South, but the opposers had little interest in the great loss their vote would be to the extension of our work further north. This Ilesha rebuff was a serious blow to our church. Several years later, The Progressive Union in Ilesha did start a Grammar School. It is now a huge success but has no connection with the church.

The second big problem Trelevan had to face was the rise of a 'prophet'. Joseph Babalola believed that he was called by God to go out amongst his people not only to preach the Gospel but also to commence a 'healing ministry'. Claims of his remarkable powers spread far and wide and people of different faiths and none, flocked to his open air meetings. Those seeking healing brought their bottles to be filled with water which he had blest. Rumours ran riot. It was said that Nigerian Railways put on extra trains to cope with the rush. I never had any proof of this but Joseph Babalola became famous.

Another rumour told of our Ilesha Hospital staff standing idle whilst patients went to Joseph for 'proper', instant healing. I do know that in actual fact the hospital became busier with disappointed hopefuls. Now, the last thing I would want to do would be to cast doubt or scorn upon any revival movement. I believe it is true that God moves in mysterious ways. However, the churches in Ilesha took a very critical view of the whole movement and opposed it. They regarded Joseph as an intrusion and were quick to condemn anything that savoured of Ju-ju.

All this happened before my arrival in Ilesha. It explains however, the uncharitable attitude of the church towards those who followed Babalola. We tried to break down this opposition, particularly when the movement gained support of the Apostolic Church in England and their first missionary, his wife and child, arrived. We befriended them, action which was not fully approved by our people. On the other side, it was not approved by the Babalola people who strongly objected to our own use of medicines and, of course, our large hospital. They did not know that their own Apostolic missionary and family, regularly took the recommended dose of quinine. Gradually happier, or at least more tolerable relations grew.

## 5.2 Ilesha hospital

Back to our hospital at the time I arrived in Ilesha. This had been started by Dr Stephen's. Regrettably, problems had arisen amongst the European staff and it was decided to close the hospital. In 1929, Dr Edward Hunter was sent out to re-open the work. He travelled out with me, both on our first tour. His

one and only assistant was Stella Liony, the Matron. She was of mixed parents, African and English, and had worked from 1920 until the closing, but had now come out again as Matron with Dr Hunter. She was a wonderful person and had served a total of twenty three years when she died. Three months after the re-opening, Sister Elsie Ludlow arrived from Ireland (my own sister).

The African staff consisted of five very new and young African girls, nurses in training. With the reluctance of parents to send girls to school the output at the end of elementary schools was small and hospital had great difficulty in getting the right kind of girl, even with a minimum of education. Three male members completed the hospital staff. Jacob who was interpreter at all interviews, Solomon the untrained dispenser, was gaining experience under the watchful eye of the doctor and Michael, the untrained night nurse. No one would risk leaving a girl on duty through the night, so, Michael slept through daylight hours and, probably a lot of the night in addition. Then there was the band of labourers employed for grass cutting and maintenance work on paths, drainage work and, of course sanitation. We had no septic tanks in those days and the old bucket system constantly required attention. Neither had we any running water. This need was met by collecting rainfall water from the corrugated iron roofing into concrete tanks which had to be kept under lock and key.

The work grew and a third Nursing Sister, Elsie Moody, was appointed to the staff. The Mission authorities had urgent need to find another doctor to take over responsibility for running the hospital when Dr Hunter would go on his six months leave at the end of eighteen months. They appointed a young candidate who had her M.B, B.S. qualifications. Dr Joyce Woods, however was working hard of her F.R.C.S and would not be ready at the time required. One evening at her London Hospital, The Royal Free, there was a dance. As she danced with another young doctor, she told her of her appointment to Nigeria, but because of he pending F.R.C.S exams, she would have to try to find a substitute who could fill in the months of Dr Hunter's leave. Helena Gambrell immediately said "I will go". She did and arrived in time for Edward's leave and until; Joyce Woods came, when she had added this prized qualification to her successes.

There happened that at that very time, there was a young Government Agricultural office called Jim Pudney, in Ilesha. Helena and Jim became friends, good friends, very good friends, and although Helena had returned to England, it was not long before their engagement was announced. So Dr Gambrell did return to Nigeria as Dr Pudney.

### 5.3 A new partnership

The addition of Dr Woods to the staff was of great importance, a woman doctor and one so highly qualified. She had arrived in July while I was still on leave. When I was transferred to Ilesha in October, there were five Europeans at the hospital. During his first tour, Dr Hunter could rarely leave Ilesha. He had no relief and was on call for night duty as well as the arduous tasks of every day. The arrival of Dr Woods changed this a lot for, in addition to responsibilities

as a surgeon, she shared the other work of the hospital. Another development became possible. The new doctor wanted to get out to visit the villages. Many people were still afraid to come to the hospital and she felt strongly the need to get to the patients, where possible instead of waiting for the arrival of extremely sick persons at the hospital gate.

The name of Nightingale appears often in the record. Nightie, as we called him, was not only a senior missionary but was also Secretary of our District Synod. He visited Ilesha on one occasion soon after the arrival of Dr Woods. She had had a very busy morning in the operating theatre and, at lunch, was telling Nightie all the patients should have had attention long before they could become so serious. She admitted that at one stage she wondered if she had bitten off more than she could chew. "Oh" said Nightie "is that the way you do it?". Again, it is often the fact in missionary work where one has to tackle problems without any consultation.

As soon as I got settled in and had explored the work in Ilesha itself, I arranged a time-table for visitation to each of the four ministerial colleagues and their surroundings. This meant walking many miles—my most remote colleague and his section of the circuit was twenty six miles. I could use the first six miles of trunk road and then walk the remaining twenty, or, by a different route which included other villages, I would walk the whole twenty six.

On a recent return visit to Nigeria, I did the whole journey by car. This, I felt was not an improvement. In the early days, I naturally felt tired after the long walk, as did my carriers bearing my loads. I was glad to stay several days before starting out on the return journey. Meanwhile, I was able to spend much time in schools and churches, also to do quite a lot of pastoral visitation and to talk with the Chief. The people enjoyed this as well as I did. But now, the superintendent can get his car, travel the twenty six miles, conduct a church service and be back home again in Ilesha for lunch. I am sure I knew more of the individual members and their homes, and of the problems of staff in the schools than is possible for the modern haste. It is true that visits through shorter now and probably more frequent, may not include the time I gave in the marking out and supervision of buildings, such work is undertaken by men, much better able and more experienced in the erection of buildings.

The desire of the second doctor to get out into the villages, may not have met with the approval of all at the hospital, but it appealed to me and to the circuit ministers tremendously. I was always glad to send messages to my villages that they would have such a visit. Preparations would be made and lists of sick people were written in readiness for the forthcoming visit. Sometimes the sick people were written in readiness for the forthcoming visit. Sometimes the doctor would be accompanied by one of the nursing sisters, at other times, I was glad to arrange my visit to the village school and church on the same day.

On one occasion, when my sister was the travelling companion, there was a large ostrich strolling around the market where the medical work was in progress. My sister wanted to take a photo of the ostrich. The bird which my dictionary describes as "the biggest living bird in Africa, remarkable for its speed in running," took a long look at these strangely coloured women and in particular

became interested in the camera. As Elsie advanced to get a better picture, the ostrich also advanced and proved all the dictionary says of its size and athletic prowess. Elsie fled as the baskets of the trading women were scattered by the ostrich, she was joined by the women in their hasty exodus. The conclusion of the incident was peaceful, the bird which in Elsie's opinion was the largest in the whole of Africa, either became less interested or saw something more edible than the offending camera.

When the doctor's free day coincided with one of my visits to a village, accompanied by an interpreter, an African nurse and one of the domestic staff, we would engage in our respective jobs of medical advocacy and school or church work. We enjoyed these walks through the forests and the village fold certainly appreciated the work undertaken in their midst.

## 5.4 Running the circuit

Regarding the Circuit staff, I think that the fairest comment I can make on the senior African minister, the Rev J.A. Pearse is that he was a real Christian gentleman. I never knew him to be impatient or unkind. During my six months leave in alternate years, JAP as we affectionately called him, acted as superintendent. This was a very big responsibility as it meant quite a lot of book-keeping and seeing to the funds coming in from government grant, mission allowances and the income from forty five churches and all the school fees. None of the staff of one hundred, in church and schools was allowed to handle payment of salaries. All income had to be paid in to the central circuit account. JAP undertook all this work. I was not trained in accountancy, neither was he. I had had a very much better education in arithmetic, yet the task took very many hours each week.

One year, when I returned from leave and received the books and balance. I found that he was one penny out. He told me that he had had great difficulty in balancing the books. His solution was really easy, on the Income side, was one extra line - "Donation 1d". The books balanced, his conscience was clear and so was mine! Years later, it was JAP who baptised our first born, Peter, the only white child he had ever baptised.

Amos Solarin was another minister of the same lovable type. I remember his first sermon when he was transferred to Ilesha's big central church. "I am among you as one that serveth" and, my goodness he did serve. Nothing was too little nor too arduous for him to undertake. When troops were being enlisted for the Burma Campaign, he too enlisted as a chaplain and thus shared life with the commissioned officers. Many tributes came back to us of his character, humility and caring of all ranks. He was awarded the M.B.E. for services in Burma.

Other ministers were stationed at Imesi-ile, Oshogbo and Oshu sections. Each was responsible for the ten or so churches in his area. In addition were the smaller schools in which each minister, all of whom had passed through Teacher Training, was able to give advice and instruction to the staff. This did not include the government assisted schools. A senior and well trained headmaster

did all the correction or advice needed by his assistants and I, as manager, supervised these schools. Many of our trained staff were very willing to conduct services on Sundays and helped catechists in outlying villages.

Quarterly Meeting lasted from Tuesday to Friday. They included classes of instruction for preachers, sermon outlines were explained and distributed, accounts of every station were checked and money paid in. No items of expenditure were permitted in the stations but refunds of approved items were paid with the salary of each man. The four days of Quarterly Meeting gave men in lonely stations an opportunity to talk and enjoy some social life with their fellows.

Ministers, headmasters, sub-Pastors, catechists formed a fine band of men. Of course, there were the occasional misfits who, by their own action, or by mine, did not stay long. I remember one chap who had a chip on his shoulder. He was critical of our life style and talking one day, to Dr Woods and me, told us that we ought to be ashamed of ourselves, coming to his country to exploit the African. This was really funny because, despite the doctor's qualifications, she never received more than 3 pounds per week from the Missionary Society. He obviously was unaware that in those days, one's years of study and training were borne by one's parents and even post-graduate service was an unpaid privilege.

## 5.5 Preceded by drums

Sometime I was anxious to visit a school in the bush without warning, to check on rumour or lack of care in time keeping and cleanliness. I never succeeded in my quest. Either the rumours were untrue or else luck was on the side of the staff in the school in question. Every child was in place, the Register had been marked, even the compound had been swept. It was then I learned of the efficiency of the 'bush telegraph', in other words, the speaking drum. This was a specially constructed drum with skin on both ends but the two pieces of skin were linked or laced with leather thongs. When held beneath the arm and beaten with a hooked stick, the drummer, by squeezing the thongs, could lower or raise the pitch on a considerable scale. Now Yoruba is a tonal language and experienced drummers could broadcast messages which would be understood by listening drummers who were to be found in great numbers. So, unknown by me, many people knew that Oyinbo—the white man, was coming. This would be relayed, not by a pack of spies nor accomplices, but by men who had seen or heard something interesting and wanted to pass it on. Don't we all?

As the three months passed and there were opportunities for Dr Woods to visit villages more frequently, she travelled as often as possible with me. Not surprisingly, our friendship deepened. We swapped information about our family background and discovered many similarities. Her elder sister was married to a Methodist Minister. He was posted to take over the English church in Madras, South India, and her sister who was very clever at all sorts of needle work undertook training and other work in the Ikkadu Centre for Indian Women. She also had an open door manse, to welcome and entertain young men attending

the English Church. Then, the youngest member of the family had just qualified as a doctor and he was posted by the Methodist Missionary Society to a hospital in Yunan, South West China.

My sister Elsie was already one of the two Sisters at Ilesha Wesley Guild Hospital, and an elder brother of mine was an ordained minister of the Methodist Church in Ireland. That, so far, made it a draw—three all. Our homes were similar and very closely linked with the Church. Family prayers at home were a common feature. Music also had its place in common. Another strong tie was that both sets of parents were active in Temperance work, though movements like the Good Templars, Womens White Ribbon and, of course the Band of Hope. Happily, we were both like minded on pioneering and in the prospect of close relations between medical, evangelistic, and educational extension into areas where none such had yet been carried.

## 5.6 Engagement

With all this family background and common hopes for the future, it is not at all a surprise that a romance developed. I am reminded that when I eventually popped the question, I got a “Yes, provided you will see to the Tilley lamps”. Now this particular hanging lamp had a circular fuel tank rather like a lifebuoy. Three chains from this tank supported all the works, with a long, vertical vaporiser rod, which rose up in the middle and supported the mantle fitting. An essential part of the equipment was a little glass jar full of methylated spirit in which was kept a small clip with asbestos filling, which became moist with the spirit and when clipped on to the vaporiser and ignited, warmed the paraffin under pressure in the rod. When warm enough this lighted the mantle. All this has taken time to describe but it also took a long time to light and to keep the thing in order. You can now see Joyce’s point in making a conditional acceptance of my proposal, especially as they had electricity at the hospital. I knew anyhow that the lamp smoked a lot and occasionally sent out a spurt of flame. Anyhow, I agreed to her conditions. For portable lights, we used Coleman petrol lamps. These were very quick and bright when on trek and watching out for creepy crawlies. Eventually we discarded the old Tilley.

On my treks and indeed when in Ilesha too, I always had a very light lunch during the heat of the day, so dinner was always in the evening, after a bath and a change of clothing. We all invited friends to share this evening meal on occasions. On one special evening I invited all four of the hospital staff and, in preparation I discussed the menu with Ajayi, my cook. He got a very nice piece of meat in the market and served it up with a special gravy, which looked odd with lots of bits and pieces floating around the dish. I called him up to explain. He had looked through my store of tins and found one labelled “Mincemeat” and to enrich his gravy for this special occasion, he had added the contents. Oddly enough it tasted quite good, although rather sweet. It was still unusual to get sultanas and peel with the joint.

News of our engagement spread quickly and was generally welcomed by

European and our African friends. About this time in our Theological College, the Principal was endeavouring to give the correct interpretation in English of one's status youth, maiden, lady, woman, gentleman, man etc.). When he thought he had made it all plain, he asked if there were any questions. An unexpected query was raised. "Please sir, will Dr Woods still be a lady when she married Mr Ludlow?" The Principal hoped so. In Yoruba parlance, a lady becomes a woman on marriage so the idea of a married lady was new.

## 5.7 The Owa of Ilesha

The Owa of Ilesha was a very important man, referred to as the Oba or King. Appointments with him had to be made in advance and I always put on a Palm Beach suit for the visit, and also usually took a present. I would be received by his secretary, accompanied by an Olopa (policeman) and escorted to an inner verandah of his palace. In due time, the Owa would emerge and his chiefs in waiting would all lie prostrate as they shouted "kabyesi", which was a kingly salutation. The Owa would sit down and call for cola nuts. Breaking a nut into its five segments, he would offer them to me on his outstretched hand. I would touch his fingers and then reach for the back piece, that is the piece nearest him. He would take one of the remaining pieces and, silently, we would chew. This was an expression of peace and friendship then, after many expressions of good will and prayers for his health, I would get down to my request. This was most often for a piece of land on which to erect or extend a school or church. He would say that he would consider the matter and, either promise to let me know or, he would there and then call his chiefs into consultation in what was supposed to be an inaudible huddle with said chiefs. When he had got their opinion he would announce the result, usually approval.

The Owa and I became good friends and remained so during my sixteen years of superintendent of the Ilesha Circuit. Though never a Christian, several of his many wives were and their children by him, were in my schools. He invited me to have a Sunday afternoon Service, once a month, in the palace. He and many of his family attended. I much appreciated this gesture and printed this Service on our regular Preaching Plan. Several of his successors have been Christian and, because they were usually educated men, dealing with them would be much easier.

In the days of the old Owa, Romolaran 11., he was having quite a big social gathering at the palace. He sent an invitation to Dr Hunter at our hospital. Edward felt the Sisters ought to be invited as well, so he wrote a letter to the Owa. His secretary replied. "When the Owa invites a man to a party, he expects him to bring his wives as well". My predecessor used to tell of the time he visited the Owa and apparently gave offence by his open criticism of polygamy. The Owa was silent for a while and then said "You are here, your wife is here, but we never know how many wives you have at home in England."

## 5.8 Synod

I have referred to the annual Synod of our Church, held in Lagos and lasting three weeks. I had been appointed Assistant Secretary. This meant mainly that I had to type the Minutes and be general dogs-body to the secretary. Now this office was held by Edward Nightingale, who was not only an extremely hard worker, but also with some legal studies before he entered the Ministry. He was a very correct and accurate person. Joyce and I had fixed the date for our wedding, 12th April, which is also my birthday. As her tour ended in January, she could only attend Synod for part of the time before sailing for home. Nightie was very considerate and made my secretarial duties as light as possible up to the day she sailed, but part of his promise to her that he would look after me when she had gone, was that he would keep me busy, and he did. I had to catch up on pages and pages of minutes and letters and often would stagger to bed about three in the morning after five or more hours at the typewriter. His correctness and accuracy amounted to avoiding the shame of sending in a page, which had any correction on it. I recall how I made a silly mistake and typed “anti-natal” instead of “ante-natal” on the second line from the bottom of a foolscap (A5 in those days) page. He made me type the whole page again. I am sure that if he had let it pass, the authorities in London would know that I was not anti children, nor anything good for them, but no, the mistake would be above his signature as secretary. I was very much annoyed as I had set a target to get to bed before 2.30a.m. Still, he had promised Joyce that he would keep me busy.

It is extraordinary the difference in saying good-bye, even for a limited period can make. Somehow, the ice cream tasted less interesting. However, the Minutes had to be done correctly, five copies of every page. I welcomed the end of Synod. The remaining weeks until March passed and I began my long journey home.

One event in the week prior to my departure must be included here. I had a very good Young Mens Group in Ilesha, all spoke English fluently. They invited me to a farewell function. Several members spoke of their appreciation of the group and of what they had learned as well as the help it had given in English. Then, to mark the occasion of my forthcoming marriage, they presented me with a copy of ‘Foxes Book of Martyrs’.



## Chapter 6

# Marriage

### 6.1 Wedding preparations

Joyce met me at Plymouth and we travelled by train to London. The Guard must have been observant, or suspicious, for, although it was broad daylight, he pulled down the blinds in our compartment, ensuring we could have an uninterrupted chance to talk. I was in a generous mood and his thoughtfulness cost me two shillings.

I forgot to mention that, as I had sailed for Africa twice, each time in the month of September, I had no warm clothing with me, so Joyce had posted out a warm, but rather large tweed overcoat. I did appreciate this on those March days on board ship, but I also knew it could have been a better fit. On arrival at Paddington, her brother met us in the family car and dropped us in Piccadilly where our first call was to Simpsons or Austin Reeds. I bought a complete new outfit including an overcoat. That evening, when the brother, Charles came in he obviously described me to his fiancé as having red hair and that she was not marrying him for his good looks. Her later reply to him (nice girl) was that I had not got red hair and I was quite good looking. To this Charles said “well he’s not the same man she had with her when I met them at Paddington”. Despite this, Charles and I have remained good friends through the years.

After a couple of days in London where evidently I had been accepted, I went to Dublin, where Joyce joined me, feeling like something ‘on approval’. She knew of the hundreds of relations in the Ludlow clan, but of course had time to meet only a score or so. All got on happily together.

In London, at the family church we were married on 12th April. My brother, Day married us and one of our presents was a cine film of the occasion. We later brought a 16mm camera and a Kodak ‘E’ type projector so that we could see the wedding film and the many others we were to take. This projector had two drives. One, electric mains with a transformer when we used a 100 volt lamp, the other, a 12 volt lamp, when we turned the handle for showing when a 12 volt battery was our only source of power. This was to be of very great value

during the following years, as will be recorded.

## 6.2 Honeymoon

We had decided to spend our honeymoon in Switzerland but this, including the fact that we would catch the 4.15 from Writham, Kent, was all hush hush. There appears, on such occasions, to be a determination in some next of kin to follow the newly weds. Thus it was that having changed into less formal garb, we set off in one of McCullaugh's cars (a local firm) with McCullaugh himself driving. We were closely followed by Joyce's two brothers and my own, who had married us. In his effort to shake them off, McCullaugh twisted and turned through a maze of suburban London roads and streets, new to us but our driver was familiar with them all, that is, except the last one. It was a cul-de-sac. We came to an embarrassing halt, whereupon the kindly gentlemen in a car behind us emerged, still in very fine clothing, obviously they have been to a wedding, and, doffing their grey silk toppers, enquired if they could help us.

Risking further interception, McCullaugh stopped at a telephone box and gave instructions to one of his drivers to proceed at once to a certain station and await us there at the arrival side for trains from London. Our followers, like us, were unaware of the conversation the driver had held. So the two cars moved off again. We arrived at Hither Green station, but at the entrance to the platform for passengers London bound. Clever old McCullaugh, had remembered that this entrance was also a cul-de-sac. Carrying our suitcases, he triumphantly led us through the connecting passage under the railway lines, "Pedestrians Only". By the time our followers had got round to the other side, we were already in a fine new car, no confetti, and on our way to the next station, where we joined our train to Folkestone.

Our hotel had a garden, at the end of which there must be a road, for we faced a large advertisement showing a large tin of baked beans and the caption, "The joy of living - 4d a day". Our honeymoon in Switzerland was a package, for which I had fully paid. We could have saved such a lot if I had known of this joy of living on 4d a day.

Our tour operators, the Polytechnic, offered a choice of two hotels in Lucerne. We did not want the attraction of the bigger, with its swimming pool, dance band and late hours, so we chose the smaller, lakeside abode at Hermitage. We were pleased to find that only two other members of the party also chose the smaller hotel. From Calais we journeyed by train to Paris and by coach to our one night stop-over. This hotel was very clean and good, but it was also very quaint. We had a Louis XIV four poster bed with heavy red curtains and a very puffed up duvet. Fortunately the mattress was post 1643-1715, possible Louis XV or even from the ill fated XVI years. Early next morning we were collected and got a train through to Lucerne.

At the Hermitage, we had a lovely room overlooking the Lake and Mt Pilatus with its snow-cap right across the lake. Lucerne is indeed a beautiful place with so much to interest visitors. Buildings ancient and modern, streets wide and

narrow and still, in those days, an abundance of horse drawn vehicles. We enjoyed sitting in the grounds of the Kursaal, listening to an orchestra as they performed in the open air.

As the waters of the lake narrowed into the Reuss, there stands the mid-river tower, adding its assistance in supporting the medieval-roofed wooden footbridge. This does not follow the usual way of bridges, giving the shortest and quickest passage from one side to the other, it is enhanced by having angular turns. With surely millions of other sightseers, we took snapshots of the bridge, and crossed it many times. Then there was the constant music of the lapping water in then lake as the busy ferryboats, so clean and brightly painted, darted hither and thither collecting and depositing their passengers.

Cuckoo clocks, musical boxes of all descriptions, carved fruit dishes, which played simple melodies as one lifted the dish and kept it aloft until the end of the tune or tunes. They made no sound of tin or tinkle but were surprisingly resonant and pleasing. We have one still in use and still playing after half a century. Then, of course, Swiss watches abounded, my wife gave me a present of a Rolex Oyster. It has been under water and stood up to tropical heat and intense cold, but still ticks. It is nice to see carved items which, unlike very many souvenirs, have not been exalted to the attic, but still give us thankfulness for beauty as well as happy memories. Much of this handiwork was patiently undertaken by folk confined to their chalets and snowbound through much of the winter.

On Sunday, morning and evening, we made our way to the English speaking church where I was glad to be of use in a musical capacity.

We did not sign up for day-tours with the Polytechnic crowd but much preferred to explore on our own. A visit to the Altdorf Valley and the William Tell country with its statues of the probably mythical archer and the apple. We booked for a coach tour to Grindelwald, but we never got there to see the glaciers and “one of the most beautiful scenes of the Bernese Oberland”. I will explain why not.

We arrived in time but found that the coach would not depart because we were the only passengers. Instead we were to travel in the owner’s private Cadillac, with a liveried chauffeur. We set off in great style. The snow was deep as we crossed high ground. We stopped at a Café to have some tea. This was served in glass tumblers, a tea bag in each and filled with hot water, definitely off the boil. However, because of the cold, we consumed the pale amber liquid and continued our journey. In Interlaken, as we progressed along a main road, there suddenly emerged from a minor road a large limousine, which could not stop in time and bashed our running board and doors. Our driver and I were on the off side, Joyce on the on side got the fuller effect of the impact and was thrown to the floor. The battery, carried on the running board, was ripped open. Helpful residents rushed out to see what they could do and very soon, coffee was served on a tray. The car at fault had three or four very official looking gentlemen. They were very full of apologies and intent on seeing that Joyce was comfortable in the taxi they called. We were driven to a luxurious hotel for a clean-up and an excellent lunch and later driven to the railway station where

we were given first class tickets to Lucerne. This was the first cog-wheel train we had travelled in. We scaled the highest parts of the journey without danger of slipping back on the rails, which were thickly covered with snow. At Lucerne, we were met by the owner of the Cadillac and driven to our Hotel. Apart from being somewhat shaken, we were little the worse for the experience. The tour proprietor asked if we would be willing to give evidence in court. He fetched us and we each got the equivalent of 5 pounds for our appearance. For the rest of that day, we were his guests. He took us anywhere we wished to go. We didn't see Grindelwald, but we felt we had not been unfairly treated.

We joined a three country tour Switzerland, Germany and France. We went round Lake Constance and stopped at Friederichshafen with its two huge hangers at Graf Zeppelin works. One zeppelin was moored to its tall mast. Its passenger gondola was so small in proportion to the huge fabric covered construction of the dirigible.

I mentioned that two other members of the Polytechnic holiday folk stayed at the smaller hotel. They were school teachers and both spinsters. They joined all the outings with the group from the bigger hotel and we often did not see them apart from breakfast. I also have mentioned that Joyce and I had very similar homes and background. We had both been in the USA. My tour is already recorded and she, as a young doctor, had gone out with her parents, her mother having had a big operation recently. They were glad to have an informed companion. Her father held a high office in the Good Templar movement and they were attending a conference in Philadelphia. Another point which must be explained. When we were arranging details for our return to Nigeria as man and wife, we had agreed that we would retain the services of my cook, Ajayi, being the better of the two, but her steward Stephen would be retained for the same reason. They were both glad to receive a retainer fee during our absence on leave.

Well, the night before the Polytechnic holiday ended, the two ladies were at home for dinner and we, with the very charming hotel manageress sat around and joined in conversation. We talked of our experiences, of our treks to Africa, of our large mud house in Ilesha and of our cook and Stephen. We also spoke of our American travels, omitting the fact that our visits were a year apart, but we had followed much of the same trail, Washington, New York, Niagara, Toronto etc. We spoke not one untrue word. The ladies were astonished and obviously embarrassed as they confessed that they had decided we were on our honeymoon. Oh, said one of us, I wonder what gave you that impression.

Next morning we confided in the manageress that we were honeymooners and explained how all the otherwise compromising things we had said, were absolutely true.

### 6.3 On 'leave'

Absence from the West Coast for six months, after eighteen months of work suggests a very generous holiday. Not so, for the principal reason was to get

out of the tropics and to recuperate. Then, with the sea passages taking over two weeks each way, the total time at home was much less. Another very big factor is that the Missionary Society was always in great need to meet requests for visits from live missionaries for at least a Sunday or a weeknight meeting. Then, we were sent on 'deputation' tours, lasting a week or more. This would mean going to speak at afternoon or evening meetings from Monday to Friday with probably three Services to conduct on Sundays and a big Rally at a central church on Saturday evenings. This was always very interesting, meeting with so many different people as well as seeing various parts of England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. We had, in addition, two very happy visits to the Channel Isles, one in our French speaking Circuit and the other in the English work.

There had to be time given to buying in wholesale supplies of food for the next eighteen months. Plans and discussions on aid for future schemes had to be submitted to the authorities, these sometimes got ready backing but others met with a request for caution.

Health checks were a regular procedure and often were followed by treatment. Lots of injections were required. We went to the Burroughs Welcome Institute in London to have Yellow Fever inoculations. This was a very unpleasant session, we understood, consisting of a large injection in the stomach and the necessity of swallowing quantities of glucose liquid and tablets or sweets in preparation. We received what we thought was a preliminary shot in the arm, and, when we asked how long we would have to wait for the big injection, were informed that that was all. The latest achievement in research had resulted in a new treatment; in other words we were guinea pigs. Anyhow, we thankfully added to the success list and never had any trouble with the dreaded yellow fever.

The above paragraphs will show that the luxury of a whole free week during our leave, was never guaranteed. Apart from official arrangements, there were numerous invitations to address meetings organised by friends, or friends of friends. So, from the day of our return from our Swiss honeymoon, our time was not our own. There was an additional cause for concern. As recorded, Joyce had started her leave in January but I had not started mine until March. She was therefore under contract to be back in Nigeria in July. I could not get permission to cut short my leave, so we must sail back separately and endure separation for at least eight weeks.

## 6.4 Return to Nigeria

However, the eight weeks did pass, the slowest eight weeks on record. During the afternoon of the day, which I sailed from Liverpool, I went to a restaurant for tea. A young man came to share my table. During our conversation I told him that I would be sailing for West Africa in a couple of hours. He was very kind and regretted he could not come to see me off. I think he felt I must be lonely and would appreciate company. Incidentally the instrumental trio played "My future's just passed" but I did not disclose my real joy in getting on the boat. My future now more than ever before was to be in Africa.

I will not write more of the voyage, the arrival in Nigeria and our re-union. Then came the unpacking of the dozens of boxes of wedding presents and purchases. I will comment on one of these cases. Woolworths had an export drive. Anyone going overseas, who spent over 5 pounds could have their purchases packed and delivered on board ship at no extra cost. It was amazing what one could buy for 5 pounds, as nothing above sixpence was sold in Woolworths. This resulted in an array of at least two hundred items. We bought a great variety of glass pieces, tumblers, bowls, jugs, dishes, crockery, sundae glasses galore, even though we could not enjoy any iced sweets. We knew that the hospital folk would welcome any surplus goods we exported. Eventually we unpacked Woolworths' case. There was not one single article cracked nor broken. There is no doubt the Woolworth family had their millionaires, but I do not know how they did it.

The unpacking of wedding presents gave special joy. Friends had gone to a lot of trouble in selecting their gifts and we rejoiced in thermos flasks, they keep fluids cool as well as hot, richly coloured bowls, pots and vases added so much to the everlasting green of our forest surroundings. Tightly fitting lids to jars defeated the attempts of tropical insects to taste the contents. Our shop, in other words our food store that looked like a corner shop, was filled and kept under lock and key. The empty cases and boxes were in great demand by our carpenter although their life would not be long in a land inhabited by so many termites.

## Chapter 7

# A working partnership

### 7.1 The new venture

By the time Joyce had finished her contract and was freed from hospital timetables, a new doctor, Donald Beaugie had arrived from Guernsey. She was ready to, and did stand in for surgery emergencies when required. The time had now come for us to implement the development plans we had prayed about and decided upon. Wherever I went in my wide area in church and school work, and co-operation with the Chiefs in agricultural schemes, road making and the digging of wells and latrines, we would now add medical visitation and clinics in our attempt to break down the fear people had of taking the very ill relatives to hospital.

Often, because of the shame of being seen in a hammock (if a patient) or of bearing such a hammock (if a relative), led to a procession forming well after dark and arriving at the hospital before daylight. Unfortunately, often the patient was already moribund, or a maternity case which had gone badly wrong and made much worse by the interference of the witch doctor. Any onslaught we could make on ignorance, fear and superstition right out in the villages, could lead to hospital journeys being made earlier in an illness and many lives being saved.

In this onslaught, my catechists and teachers were encouraged to be the spearheads in the villages. On our part, a big step must be taken in the form of transport. We were running a Morris Cowley four seater saloon. Usually, Stephen accompanied us to help as needed with interpretation. This left reduced space for medical supplies and other loads. So, on our next leave in England we invested in a Morris Major, a six cylinder car very posh, 125 pounds). It had a chrome shutter arrangement which could be kept closed in cold weather, but, as we wanted to let all the breeze possible reach the radiator, we kept this shutter widely open. The carrying space was improved but even so, we still had to leave behind much that we wanted to carry in medicines and supplies. We worried a lot over this fact.

Suddenly, a brain wave. “Let’s build a trailer”. We saw a golden future having all we could want for use in the far bush stations. We constructed the trailer and the Provincial PWD Engineer kindly made and fixed a tow bar and provided ball and socket so we could hitch it to the car. We were thus enabled to take our cook in the car and overload the trailer. The six cylinder engine coped. We fixed the date and itinerary for the next trek and, when all was ready we were as excited as a pair of school kids about the extras all carried in the trailer. We had also made a hinged case, which opened like a book standing on end. This gave us two shelves on either side, each capable of containing rows, twelve at a time, of bottles concentrated mixtures. These bottles were not the modern plastic with screw caps but heavy glass with corks. Pills were not yet available, apart from Beechams, Carter’s little liver pills and aspirin tablets. I have already said we were excited, that excitement continued through the day’s drive until our arrival at our destination. We got out of the car; the trailer was not there. Our excitement went down quicker than a pricked balloon. I so remember that after the darkness set in, the car seemed to be running better. So, wearily we turned around and retraced miles of very rough dirt road, swinging the car from side to side in the hopes that our lights would pick out the precious trailer. We found it, turned upside down in the long grass. We put it on its wheels again and set about retrieving the contents. We opened the new medicine box and, to our amazement, not only were no glass bottles broken, but not one cork had come out. Everything was safely repacked in, we re-hitched the trailer to the car and triumphantly returned to our lodging place, the verandah of the chief’s mud house.

Now, despite the great satisfaction the improved capacity of the trailer gave, it was not long before, secretly, we hoped for something even better. In this record, the subject of transport will emerge several times. In fact, we began to have dreams of a covered kit-car, which would allow Joyce to see patients and to carry out operations under its roof.

## 7.2 Our first mobile operating theatre

When it became known that we were hoping to order a Chevrolet Kit-car and get the suppliers to cover in the truck section and make certain provision for the needs of our work, kind offers of help came in from a wide company of interested friends at home. The Chev agents in Lagos acted on our outline. They bolted to the chassis six upright timbers; three each side and made a roof to fit these. But, instead of fixing the roof to the six uprights, they also fixed six pieces of the same size to the roof. These latter pieces were grooved so that when they slide down over the other upright pieces, bolts, with thumbscrews could be tightened at the desired height to enable us to walk around without stooping.

The raising and lowering of the roof was done with a ‘tommy bar jack’. This really was a four-foot long tube which, when turned around, projected a support from the top and bottom and raised the roof the required extra two feet. Then the central jack was removed, after the thumbscrews had been tightly fixed. It

was a relief from having to move as a round shouldered dwarf.

Along one side of the room thus provided, we had two medicine cupboards, one of which housed rows of bottles of Joyce's mysterious potions, the second was full of dressings, surgical instruments, a primus stove and containers for sterilising. On the opposite side, above the passengers bench seat, was a wide shelf folded to the sides of the truck. This could be folded down on the rests which were also folded back to the sides of the truck. The result was a narrow table, which we used for minor operations. It was all plain wood and frequently scrubbed and kept as clean as possible.

The final visit to the agent was to check all his work and to give instructions for the painting of the kit-car. It was dark green in its bodywork, so we chose to have the exterior of the wooden additions painted black, while the entire interior would be white. It was a Bank Holiday weekend, so instructions were passed on to a painter who was also acting as watchman. He was to finish the job by Monday. On Tuesday morning, we called to take delivery of the Chev. To our horror, the whole woodwork, outside and inside was painted in black. The manager was equally surprised and horrified. He gave immediate instructions for the complete stripping of the black interior and its colour changed to white, as ordered. The thing looked more suitable for use as a hearse than a vehicle of hope. A week later we accepted the transformed kit-car.

In the above details, I omitted one useful provision. When the roof was extended, each opening could be covered from rain by unrolling tarpaulin blinds attached to the roofing. These buttoned down in the event of rain beating in.

This kit-car served well for many years in the expanding work over a wide area in our dual occupation. The floor space in the truck section was clear, apart from the side seat for staff or passengers. We were thus able to carry camp beds, food boxes, filter and so much equipment for use in the places at which we stopped, but also the head-load sized pieces which would be required at the end of our walking when we reached our destination and started work.

One white Government officer, watching us busily engaged in our various tasks, Joyce seeing the queue of patients whilst I was at school, was impressed by the usefulness of the kit-car and said, "You know, for some time I have been wondering what it is that is missing from the vehicle. Now I know. You should have painted along both sides, LUDLOW (BUTCHER)". Despite the humorous jibe at the surgeon, that kit-car was the means of restoring life to many a sufferer.

I may as well complete the saga of the Chevrolet kit-car. It must have been about ten years later, after covering thousands of miles along dirt roads, and driving across the grasslands where there was no road at all. It had slowly climbed down riverbanks and across the beds where, in the wet season water rushed by, but now there was no water to be seen. It had then clambered up the opposite bank. One time it stuck while half way across a very rough tree trunk bridge, one rear wheel going right through so that the kit-car rested on its axle. We discovered, too late, that one of the trunks had rotted. So continues its tale, until one afternoon we were going north. I was driving a very heavy load. In front, beside me sat Joyce with our son Peter on her lap, the remaining

space was occupied by another missionary on a visit. In the rear, I had packed furniture for a new house we had built for a teacher and, on top of this, all our camp equipment, food and personal loads. I had left room for a plank across on which would sit our cook and Deborah; a little girl aged approximately fifteen, but very small because of deformity resulting from Rickets.

Some eighty miles out and about half way to our destination we would have to cross a bridge with a long, narrow approach of sandy track. This was very dry and I got into a dry skid. We slipped over the side of the road, turned a somersault or two and came to rest with our wheels in the air. Eric, our passenger, could open his door and flop out. I, at the other side was flung out and happily, the wheels stayed up on top and the van did not roll over on top of me. We got Peter out but the seat had wedged itself up against the steering column and Joyce was wedged with it. To make matters worse, the battery, which was housed under the seat, started to leak and acid spilled through on her. One at each door, Eric and I managed to free Joyce.

We all rushed to the back, to help the cook and Deborah. He had already managed to free himself and with only minor injuries, we turned our attention to Deborah. She had been fast asleep when it happened and, now upside-down, she was still fast asleep. We wakened her. She could have thought she was in Australia, as she was suspended upside-down. But, as Deborah had never been to school, she knew nothing of these things. Within ten minutes, we were sitting on the bank, drinking hot tea from unbroken thermos flasks.

We had passed the only Mission station on the journey, a mile or two back. So I decided to walk there and summon help. The Seventh Day Adventist folk (SDA) did all they could for us and we were able to despatch messages by a runner. There were no phones of course, so we had to wait as patiently as we could until our own hospital folk could receive the message and reach us. They did this and had also summoned a very pro-missionary engineer. We are grateful to the SDA staff, for their hospitality and to our rescuers. The kit-car was eventually towed to Lagos, over 200 miles away.

### 7.3 House building

The buildings were all built of mud, or, more correctly with laterite earth. This is dug out, well watered and then trodden by men and women until they are in a filthy state, but the 'mud' has reached a consistency in which it can be hand rolled into balls about the size of a football. This is flung to the builder who has already dug shallow trenches for his foundations, and he slams down each football into the trench. He completes the whole round of the building and then may either decide to complete his first course of some eighteen inches, or, depending on the size of the house and the readiness of sufficient mud to continue going round and round until a course is finished. This is left for a few days until dry, then the same process again for another eighteen-inch course and so on until about six feet high.

The roofing material will be branches of trees, or prepared sticks and poles,

lashed together with strips of bark. Usually houses are rectangular and are roofed according to the wealth of the owner. In towns the material would be corrugated iron, nailed to properly sawn timbers, but village constructions will be thatch, either thatched with grass, where available, or large leaves.

In town houses, doors and windows will be entirely according to taste and the ability of the owner to buy materials. In villages, usually one door and a limited number of windows can be of bamboo or even of mats woven locally from grass or other materials.

Getting back to mud walls. When completely dry, they would be rubbed or plastered with a sandy mud mixture, which dries and gives a better finish to the appearance of external or even internal walls. Plumb lines were a problem, especially to those blessed with a straight eye. Concaves, and convexes abounded and of course the former was very clear in time by the accumulation of dust that settled in.

This is where my friend Ben Fagbemi comes into my story.

Ben was a builder and had a staff of young men, none of whom could use building aids. Their idea of plumb and level fell short of my standards. I gave them many jobs of cutting and filling walls, making them ready for cement plastering. This had to be done under strict supervision. Poor old Ben must have been furious with me many times because of my fanatical insistence on a straight line and a level surface, but patiently he bore with me and went over and over the same patch until I accepted it.

I tried to get Ben to draw an outline plan for a proposed building so that he could estimate the cost, in fairness to himself as well as to me. One day, he handed me his drawing of a church. He had even included the seating within its rectangular walls. One area was labelled "Warblers pews" access to these and the pulpit was via the two 'corridors'. I think I was able to help Ben in a few things connected with building. I also think that Ben taught me a lot about patience.

## 7.4 Working together

As time passed I came to value the advantages of having a partner in the work more and more. The transformation of the big Mission House from a bachelor dwelling was appreciated even by the domestic staff. They learned to pay much more attention to detail as well as in the preparation and serving of meals. They were a good pair and young and eager enough to learn new methods and menus. We all got on very well together.

The second vast difference and benefit was in having a medical partner for, with the scheme for village dispensaries and regular visits to them, my work in the church and school, and amongst the chiefs had an added dimension with limitless possibilities. The doctor's presence was never isolated from, but blended into our attempt to improve standards.

I was taught as much as was necessary about anaesthetics to enable me to enter into a new experience of putting people to sleep. But Joyce reminded me

that I had had that opportunity twice every Sunday for a long time, but this kind of putting people to sleep was different. I worked at the head end of the patient whilst she gave any necessary instruction, advice or warning, while she wielded a scalpel or other appropriate instrument of torture. I must confess that it was always a great relief when my victim awoke and, when permitted to do so, sat up.

There was, of course, the unkind comment concerning the marriage of a parson to a surgeon (“he can always bury her mistakes”). He didn’t have to, nor did she have to rescue a single patient from the clutches of her anaesthetist.

## 7.5 Schooling for girls

Yet another big advantage of our marriage was that education of girls and young women who have never been to school, received new attention. There had been great reluctance on the part of fathers to send their daughters to school. Education for boys was different, this was an investment, and boys of that day would become the breadwinner as teacher or through other professions. Then they would look after the needs of the old folk, but, they argued, “why should I send girls to school? When they grow up they are only going to get married” and, like the New Testament story, “seeing that all hope of further gain had gone”, that would be the end of any advantage in having an educated daughter.

So we strove afresh to set a higher value of schooling for girls. An interesting fact in a polygamous household, it fell to the responsibility of each childbearing wife to pay the school fee money for her own children. This could, and did involve them in much work. In our early days with oranges and banana selling at one penny for forty, it took many journeys from farm to carry sufficient head loads to meet the few shillings required by the school. Yams also (the staple diet of the people) made very heavy headloads.

We appreciated the reluctance of pay out hard-earned cash on anything with such a long-term value as education. It is not surprising to read in a report from a Northern Education Officer, which states that in his schools, only two per cent of girls of school age were receiving any schooling. So, a very large proportion of the young women and all the older women were illiterate. A few exceptions were to be found where parents had let girls complete their ‘infant’ classes or, where women in preparation for baptism had been persuaded to lean to read, as was required by the church amongst those who seemed able to cope with trying in their early adulthood.

This vast difference between boys and girls, young men and young women, led to the degrading of women and to an increased inflation of the importance, and superiority of the male. One illustration comes to mind out of that chapter in the growth of the nation.

I had picked one member of the staff as the best fitted for promotion to a vacant position. This meant transferring him with his family and loads of personal effects. I admit that his new residence was not well equipped with

furniture, nor indeed in good repair, but was surprised to overhear his remarks to his colleagues at the next quarterly meeting. He told them of the lack of this and that, and went on, "Do you know, there was only one bed in the house, my wife had to sleep on the floor".

Joyce was very keen to do something, especially for the teenage girls who had missed out on schooling. We put her plans before the Government Lady Education Officer and to the local church members and gained their approval and co-operation. Then we made an appointment to see the Owa of Ilesha. He said it pleased him. I pointed out that it would mean asking for an extension of our compound as it was essential to have an establishment for girls boarders under Joyce's direct supervision. We produced a layout plan. After some time for consideration and discussion with his chiefs and the families concerned in our hope for requisition of land, we got permission to go ahead with his blessing.

We lost no time in going ahead. Our boundary wall was extended so that normal access would be through our own mission house gate. We built two bungalows for the boarders; each house had a section for a resident lady teacher. Then we built an open plan school and craft room, with a large kitchen at one end, providing cooking facilities for the girls but also for Domestic Science needs.

We were fortunate to get one of our own young women who had been trained in Normal Teaching and also Domestic Science. Suitably named Hope Orioye made the commencement of this venture a hope. She lived up to her name and the Methodist Homecraft Centre (MHC) became widely known and highly respected.

In addition to Domestic Science subjects, we naturally placed great stress on the three Rs and on subjects appropriate in an Iyawo Home (marriage preparation). A later development became possible through the invention by a Belgian Priest of a new, simple type loom. We visited his Centre in Ibadan and were allowed to copy his loom, so, armed with measurements, we returned and I worked with our circuit carpenter in producing our own copy. We made several looms before starting the class.

Hitherto, our men could weave long strips of narrow cloth, some five or six inches wide. Our women very often had very simple frames made of bamboo, on the verandahs of their houses. In order to work their looms, they sat on the mud floor, with their feet in a hole, dug for comfort, and laboriously threaded home ginned and spun cotton through a needle-like stick, thus laying layer after layer of weft through alternate threads of the warp. Banging down each layer they could produce a six to eight foot length of up to twenty four-inch broadcloth.

Now, our loom had two pedals and the weft, carefully prepared and wound on a shuttle, was shot through the correct spaces. Pressure on the other pedal opened the alternate spaces and, very quickly a broadcloth of any length was produced. This became popular because of its simplicity and speed of operation once the warp had been set up.

The M.H.C. grew. Of course there were misfits who caused arguments and sometimes fights in the school. Fortunately the parents were very keen on discipline and often came to thank the staff for punishing their daughter. Quite a number of our male teachers found their life partners, products of the Homecraft

Centre, girls who had missed out on ordinary schooling.

## 7.6 Government administration

The NA or, Native Administration was the official title of the system bound into the Constitution of Nigeria, for Indirect Rule through the native chiefs. It was recognised in the early days that native rulers were not necessarily ready to assume independent control of the areas agreed in 1914 for the setting up of The Colony roughly boundaries of the old Colony of Lagos and the Southern and Northern Provinces (the boundaries of the former Protectorates of Southern and of Northern Nigeria))

Until the native chiefs were 'educated' and ready to assume authority they would be under the supervision of an administrative staff. This policy recognised more favourably the Emirs of the North, usually men of great ability and often regal in their bearing. In the half of the Northern Provinces occupied by the large Pagan tribes and in the south because of the multiplicity of petty kinglets, much greater and longer education in indirect rule had to be undertaken.

During this period, Direct Rule by the Government was unavoidable. So, the Governor, with a Lieutenant Governor in each of the three areas (Colony, Southern and Northern) filled the two top grades. In each Province, there was a Resident Magistrate and under him many District Officers and Assistant District Officers. These were all Europeans, as the white man was generally called. They were the advisors to the Chiefs in the maintenance of justice, law and order.

The Governor and his Lieutenant Governors were rarely seen up country, apart from official visits or occasions when they rode or were driven, in the splendour of their uniform and long feather plumed helmets. On arrival in Lagos after leave, or on a visit, missionaries, traders and others were expected to call on His Excellency. No, not for coffee, but simply to sign his visitors book which was lodged in a sentry box just inside the gate and under the watchful eye of a policeman.

The Resident Magistrates were more approachable, by appointment of course. The District Officer and more particularly his Assistant District Officers had to be approachable and use less starch in their dress and manner. The DO (District Officer) was the one who had to bear the brunt of mistakes or negligence. He usually managed to get his assistant to bear a big share in any blame.

When the Prince of Wales visited Nigeria, great preparations were made in all the places he would see (by careful planning). Ground was swept, old ruins were demolished, flags, banners and bunting abounded. One large banner across a road read

God save the King  
 God bless the Prince of Wales  
 God protect the Governor  
 God help the D.O.

On the very infrequent visits of the Governor, or even his Lieutenant Governor to our town, Ilesha, he would give a dinner for all the Europeans. It was a full evening dress occasion when office or appointment and seniority therein were strictly taken into account in arranging table placements. An Agriculture Officer for example, would occupy a higher seat than a Sanitary Inspector. I recall one such dinner when two lower rank officials were having a heated discussion. The Steward brought round the savoury dish, a cheese, onion and I know not what concoction. As one of these guests was being served, he was so busy talking that he failed to notice that the supply was strictly limited to one croquette each. Our friend took two. At first the steward whispered "put one back" but, as no notice was taken he spoke more clearly and, in a final effort to retrieve the morsel, he almost made the demand in a shout. By this time, His Excellency and all the guests were watching pending developments. There was a silence until realising his intrusion into the Governor's hospitality allowance, he blushing put one back. Conversation resumed and the other hopeful, waiting guests saw their turn come, and the multitude were fed.

The many departments of Government worked on a nation-wide basis. Education with which I had most to do, had Provincial Offices through which all contact with our school was organised. Every school had to be registered and we had to complete numerous forms, always in triplicate, when making application for the opening of a new school. If the Provincial Superintendent of Education was satisfied, we did not have to go any further.

## 7.7 Education

The Nigerian Handbook published the following figures when I arrived. In the Southern Provinces including the Colony of Lagos, there were 48 Government schools, but 3,578 Mission schools, of these 192 were given a government grant. In contrast with the South, at the same time the Northern Provinces had 69 Government schools and 133 Mission, largely on the Plateau area, inhabited by Pagan worshippers amongst whom missionaries were allowed to work. The rest of the north was regarded strictly as Moslem territory. There were 29,383 Mohammedan schools. In such schools the time of the pupils was occupied in learning by heart and writing in Arabic, portions of the Koran. The exceptions would be a small number where simple rules of arithmetic were taught. Passers-by these schools, often on the verandahs of houses would hear the teacher's voice as he read a sentence and then the thunder of one hundred voices as the children repeated each after him.

There were some exceptions to these Moslem schools. Little groups of traders from the south, could get permission to hold classes, or even have one of their own Christian teachers to conduct a reasonable curriculum, including Religious Instruction if confined to the offspring of Christian parents.

Lagos had one secondary school for boys and a newly formed secondary school where "Girls are taught those things necessary for them to know as the wives of English speaking Africans".

It is not surprising that there was no University in Nigeria for many years afterwards. Sufficiently wealthy African parents, were able to send their fortunate sons to an English University. In the Missions, we sometimes aided young men to go to Freetown, Sierra Leone where Fourah Bay College was affiliated with Durham University. This was the sole centre in the whole of West Africa where a degree could be obtained. So, from infant schools to a university training, it will be seen clearly the tremendous impact of the work of the Christian Church in the education and enlightenment of the sons, and later the daughters of West Africa.

When I became superintendent of the Ilesha Circuit we had four government-assisted schools. A high standard had to be reached before grant could be received and the standard had to be maintained to the satisfaction of the Department. There was an annual inspection carried through by a European officer and we received a very full report. I have already commented on the requirement of answers in triplicate to the very many forms sent out from the Provincial office. On one occasion, I received a large bunch of documents which, to keep them together, the sender had tied round with a piece of red tape. I could not resist the temptation so I wrote a separate letter: "Dear Sir, I return the variety of papers you have sent. I also return the red tape as I feel it will be of greater use in your office than in mine".

In addition to the four assisted schools, I had twenty-five others with anything from 25-100 pupils. I used much time in going from compound to compound to beg for at least one boy from each in order to enable us to reach the minimum required for opening a village school.

This is the way most mission schools began and it was no wonder that our numbers of schools so far exceeded Government efforts, the personal touch and the interest in and knowledge of the local parents, made such results possible. But, our success was also much easier in the training of teachers. We were very well served in Methodism by our big Training College in Ibadan. In this seat of learning we catered for the training not only of school teachers, but also of Sub Pastors and for Ministers. Well staffed by Europeans and Africans with good qualifications, we drew our material for training from all areas of our work.

Each year a selection examination was held and each circuit sent forward its brightest pupil teachers. They not only sat for the papers but each also had an interview. Yoruba youth had a non-deflectable confidence in ability and, many times has a youth, shocked that his name did not appear in the list of accepted candidates, begged me to write to the Principal to recheck what was an obvious omission.

## 7.8 Pupils

It is very interesting to note that academic knowledge of the type required for teaching was evidently no indication of the true potentiality of a candidate in other professions. There are two classic examples. Although Awolowo failed in his attempt to enter for training, the Principal was sorry for he had been

impressed by something in the lad. On request, he gladly gave the lad a job as the college office boy. This is where I first met him. He did well in his work and later, became interested in politics and shone in this field. He became one of the early Prime Ministers of the Southern Parliament.

Another disappointed one in the entrance examination was back teaching in my leading school. Obviously unhappy in his work, he asked whether I could help him to get a job in commerce. I spoke to the Swiss representative of the United Trading Co, under the Basle Mission. He got the job, developed a transport company to convey the cocoa he bought to Lagos for export, rose to great heights including Chairman of the Cocoa Marketing Board, Chairman of Nigerian Airways and ended up with the top job of Governor of the Southern Provinces. He was knighted by the Queen on her visit to Nigeria.

Happily our training work was not confined to boys. Very much later, the slower growth in readiness of parents to spare their girls for schooling, developed and the Church Missionary Society joined with the Methodists in opening a United Missionary College in Ibandan for the training of women teachers. There was always a full queue for entrance and, at the end of their training there was no difficulty in finding appointments for them in our schools. Many served for years before marriage, others, in smaller numbers seemed to prefer a professional life without marriage. This was an extraordinary position in a country where the thought of being childless was anathema.



## Chapter 8

# An adventurous life

### 8.1 “Your car has been shot”

Much depended on the enthusiasm of a village head and his people for the cutting and construction of a road to link up with the nearest main road. It sometimes happened that a scheme was quickly commenced but proved to be harder work than originally imagined and, after a mile or so, a new connection from a main road would suddenly end and the only way to reach the village was to leave the car facing the dead end and walk through the forest.

We came to such a dead end one afternoon and, with the help of carriers, we off-loaded and, leaving the car, walked the few miles into the village. Next morning a man came running into the village shouting “Your car has been shot”. I immediately set out and walked to the car and, true enough, it had been shot and had lots of holes in the radiator, windscreen, lamps and wings. It was a sorry sight. The radiator was drained dry. We concluded our work in the village as quickly as possible and walked back to Ilesha. At the enquiry which followed, the chief had tracked down a hunter who graphically described how, with lamp attached to his cap he was walking in the forest when suddenly he saw the outline of the biggest animal he had ever seen, with two very large eyes. Fortunately he had rammed many old nails and bits of metal down the barrel of his gun. He took aim and fired. He denied any suggestion that he had been drinking palm wine. He was just very frightened.

The insurance company dealt very sympathetically with the matter. Our Mission Accountant in Lagos handled the claim. Now he was a man who rode everywhere on a very elderly BSA motorbike and sidecar. When he wrote to inform me that the insurance was OK, he added this footnote. “Please supply sufficient palm wine to a hunter to make him think an old BSA is a wild hyena”. I never heard of any repeat claim on the insurance company, but do know that Bill, the accountant, soon graduated to a car. As for me, probably mine was the first and only car that had been shot.

The necessity for leaving a car at the end of the cleared end of a stretch of

road, reminds me of another incident. As a bachelor, I had often thought of what I would do if I became ill in the distant bush villages. Then I had a nasty night with a pain in the kidney region and decided I must get back to civilisation as quickly as possible. Fortunately I set out early next morning and painfully walked twelve miles to my car. On arrival in Ibadan, I was immediately rushed to hospital, where I had to spend a week.

Things were different now that I had a doctor wife. We had left our car at the road end and walked the remaining ten miles through the forest. Again at night, the same pain got hold of Joyce and I, diagnosing the trouble, ordered an immediate return to Ilesha. However, I just could not face those ten miles to walk, so she organised a team of carriers. By lashing two long bamboo poles along either side of my folding camp bed I was as comfortable as possible. It was a strange world when I was raised by the four carriers, each now bearing an end of the bamboo pole on his head. If I had enough interest, I could now study the forest trees above me. We could often hear monkeys but rarely saw any because of the dense forest, now I could have a better view. But, I didn't want to study the forest, nor see the monkeys, I wanted to get to our hospital.

As we set out, our companion Stephen, plucked some flowers from bush shrubs and laid them on my chest. Joyce immediately removed them saying, "No Stephen. Not yet". We reached the car safely and Joyce drove straight to the hospital where she could get some medicine as was best.

## 8.2 An open door

It has given both of us much pleasure to keep a house with the door wide open to visitors. We enjoyed having members of staff and of the Churches to join us at a meal. As well as conversation and, perhaps, some music to follow, this gave some of our African friends the opportunity to grow more accustomed to some of the strange dishes, which make a European lunch or dinner. On the departure of our guests, they usually summed up in one single word what we try to convey in our spoken thanks for a meal. Their word was always the simple salutation 'Ekunawo', which being interpreted means I salute you for spending money. There were of course other and different ways of showing that they had had sufficient. A little food left on the plate, for example would indicate that there was no more room left. One of our important friends in the North had an even more expressive way of showing how adequate had been our hospitality: he made a loud sound which we normally associate with relief of indigestion. On hearing this, we knew that he had reached the limit of his capacity.

I had been moved to insert this memoir here because, last Sunday, we were taking services in the Methodist Church, Blandford, Dorset. After morning service, a lady came into the vestry and asked me if I had ever heard of a namesake, David Ludlow. Now, I well remembered that my elder brother had enlisted in the RAF on his eighteenth birthday and had been sent to Blandford Camp. He had attended that very church and here was a lady in whose home my brother had been entertained. She had remembered this when she was a young

girl, sixty-seven years ago. I told her that he was indeed my brother, and, to the evening service she brought an old autograph book and displayed the page on which he had written. "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers." Modern versions put it now as "Remember to show hospitality." What an amount of joy and fun has been added to life through our guests of many nationalities, colours, languages and ages.

In both our homes, as we grew up our parents invited folk in church to join us for Sunday dinner and tea. Several week-day evenings were similarly used. In Dublin, my early home was less than a mile from a military barracks and our church was the official centre for the O.Ds (The Anglican attended worship in the Garrison Chapel, all other denominations came to our Kingsland Park Church). The sight and sound of the Brass Band leading some two hundred, red coated soldiers was always a thrill. Many of the men came also to evening worship and to the social hour, which always followed. A lot of our visitors at home were these soldiers. I can remember those evenings, long before the first world war. Our hallstand would have a variety of glossy peaked caps of the red-coated regiment and of course, the distinctive head gear of Hussar Victor Gedes. He wore a tight fitting jacket in blue with gold braid across his chest at each button level. All the colours disappeared when the 1914-1918 war came. Khaki was everywhere. Puttees, originally introduced to protect the legs from undergrowth scratches, replaced long trousers and leggings. Useful of course but never objects of beauty.

This was the uniform of Harry Staples, a pianist who also often relieved our organist. He inspired me to the extent that I still play a certain classical tune, I never think of it as the work of the composer but always as the Staples tune. Then there was a friend, Swallow, who sang funny songs. "When poor father laid the carpet down the stairs" had a sad ending to the last verse, it related humorously what happened "When the carpet laid poor father down the stairs". An encore could be about the golden kippers. "Those golden kippers to the door I led, the Tom cat smelled them and he dropped down dead." This for a ten-year old resulted in shrieks of laughter.

Strangers have entertained us as we entertained strangers. We have done exactly as that girl in Blandford did 67 years ago. She knew her parents guests by name and the names remain, whether in an autograph book or not. We are thankful for our parents who remembered to show hospitality and taught their children by example.

Hospitality is usually two way and in adult life many times we too have been invited out for meals in both African and European homes. A reference like this does not call for details of food provided. Variety depended on a cook's expertise. We had to depend on the local market and on what was left in the way of tins in our larders.

Generally speaking, missionary homes had a time for dinner and tried to stick to it or close to it. In government officials' homes, time was no particular object. One of the big causes of this difference was that our missionary homes provided no alcoholic beverages. Soft drinks were usually consumed in ten to fifteen minutes and we then sat down for the meal. With traders and government

folk, drinks in variety and quantity took up an hour or even two hours before our hosts would enquire if the cook was ready. Many times we have been invited for 8.00pm but not been asked to sit at the dinner table until 10.00 or 10.30pm. By this time, we used to be ready and wanting to go home. Our two or three orange drinks did not really fill the aching void. Added to this was the tendency to fidget, instead of relaxing. Another difference was our concern to let the cook and steward get to their own home and meal in reasonable time, instead of in the early hours of the morning.

I know that one tends to generalise, but the following incident is probably not unique. In Kano, we were invited out to lunch at 1.00pm. We arrived and sat round talking and wondering when the lunch would be ready. About 2.00pm we were horrified to hear the cook arrive and then the unmistakable noise of a chicken departing this life. In desperation, we resigned ourselves to one and a half hours more before any declaration could be expected. We endured.

Then there was the evening when a former colleague of ours invited us to have dinner with them at a Lagos hotel. We sat and happily talked of old times and then took our places at a reserved table. We noticed that there was no alternative to Table d'hôte, we also noticed with concern, the bill our African ministerial host would have to meet. The minimum, plus cover and service charges, when multiplied by four, was a lot. With no outward sign of alarm, he politely asked to be excused the soup. He was away about fifteen minutes whilst either he got home and back, or somehow arranged a mortgage. The excellent meal then continued without a hitch.

On another occasion we arrived at the bungalow we sought. It was built up on a metal frame, perhaps an effort to spot any intruding termites before they decided to make this their home. Now, in order to reach the stairs, we had to pass under part of this framework. One girder was very clearly marked "Mind your head". I didn't, surely a timely warning.

### 8.3 A network of dispensaries

The medical work in the Circuit had grown to the extent of meeting the need for a resident nurse in the more remote stations where dispensaries were planned. It was difficult to obtain the services of girls as the hospital badly needed all their trainee nurses to meet hospital requirements. However, we went ahead in faith, and built our first dispensary as planned at Imesi-ile. We also built a small house for a nurse to live in, What we have so often proved of faith and preparation, the way did open up to enable us to get Nurse Bernice Faley to accept the position as the first African nurse in history of the Mission, a single girl, to go out twenty six miles from home and live amongst strangers. Bernice had never been more than a mile or so away from a road. Now she would have to walk twenty of the twenty six miles to Imesi-ile, a frightening thought. There was great rejoicing in Imesi. The Chief assured us that they would look after the girl and her young sister who would cook and clean for her. They did look after them and the dispensary began to prove its use, not to Imesi alone but to

the many smaller villages around. School children were checked regularly and women began to come for ante-natal examination, advice and medicine.

One dark night, while Imesi slept, there was a knock on Bernice's door. It was opened to a man, carrying a storm lantern and a stick. He begged the nurse to accompany him to Ilare, five miles through the forest, where his wife had been in labour for some time but had not responded to the efforts of the local medicine man (witch doctor). Bernice fought with and overcame her fears and agreed to set out with this stranger that night. They reached Ilare safely and, what the man had said was true. The trained midwife/nurse got to work immediately and safely delivered the woman. Two lives would have been lost but for the courage as well as the ability of an African girl on that hilltop Imesi-ile dispensary.

The circuit doctor, my wife, whose inspiration and perseverance had made all this possible, became all the more determined to press on with her schemes. The hospital was still suffering through the small number of suitable and sufficiently educated girls offering as candidates for nurses in training and, consequently the problem of maintaining the required number of their nursing staff. What could be done? Unfortunately the London Mission House was not able to offer any help. The Medical Secretary of those days felt that we should not take on the work of village dispensaries because, he argued, what guarantee was there of continuity. I could be transferred elsewhere and without the travelling doctor, the work would collapse. So, unaided officially or financially, we carried on.

To speak of the apparent reluctance of the hospital to supply nurses for our village dispensaries may sound like criticism. This is not intended.

Could the answer be found in accepting a lower grade of nurse? It was understandable that Dr Hunter would not depart from his present minimum of a Standard VI pass together with success in the hospital entrance examination.

Through our visits over the Northern Border, a story yet to be told, we developed a friendship with Mildred Earl who was in a Government hospital in Ilorin and directly engaged in midwifery training. Her minimum for acceptance of candidates was Standard IV pass. She was very willing to include as one of her candidates our Wendy Awoseyi, a girl our own hospital had rejected because she failed to get her standard VI pass. This scheme worked well and, in two years, Wendy was ready for appointment in our dispensary staff. She was a girl of considerable ability, she could and did pick up the necessary treatment of outpatient work in addition to her midwifery qualification.

We were able to send further applicants to Miss Earl and, in this way, it became possible to open up more dispensaries in long waiting villages in the Circuit and later, in the Northern Provinces.

Infant mortality figures were appallingly high. From her own experience, Joyce found that the death rate in the first five years reached 70 could have another child. She enquired how many babies they already had had. One woman answered "Eleven". Joyce commented that surely she ought to be satisfied, but the woman said "I have only one alive".

In the light of such figures, despite the Mission House's inability to help in village dispensaries, we simply could not do other than go to the towns and

villages to fight the conditions of darkness and disease which contributed to this frightening infant mortality rate.

We were reminded of our East African saying, "Dirt and Darkness were married to each other and had two children, Disease and Death. Ignorance and Superstition were guests at the wedding and followed the children all their days."

In due course, the official attitude changed and a missionary doctor was appointed with special responsibility for outreach/

When Dr David Morley was appointed to the Ilesha Hospital, he gave maximum time to the whole problem of infant mortality. He chose to make our first adventure into village dispensary work, Imesi-ile, for the beginning of his Under Fives plan. Every child under five in Imesi was given measles vaccination and regularly checked. Record cards were introduced and complete details of each check were entered.

The World Health Organisation took up David Morley's plan enthusiastically and very many countries have adopted it. Measles vaccination was urged all over the world for the under fives where there was no immunity. One of the greatest killers of children would itself be slain.

We are proud to think that our Imesi-ile was the birthplace for all this, even though we could provide no guaranteed continuity.

## 8.4 Animal pets

So far, I have divided my memoirs of Africa into chapters largely based on each Tour of two years (including furlough). I find, however, so often in order to complete a story, I have had to dive into the future, and this may become confusing. So, I will depart from that division and will only introduce dates as required by the special events recorded.

From childhood days, I have been interested in animals, with monkeys as a first choice. They are so nearly human. As already reported, I often regretted, as we walked for mile to mile through the dense forest of West Africa that we could only hear monkeys chattering happily up in the towering tree tops but very rarely were we able to see them.

Much to my disgust, hunters often succeeded in shooting them and monkey meat could be bought in some markets. The story is told of a young assistant district officer who was invited to dinner one evening. Although the meat was new to him, it tasted good and he enquired what it was. On being told it was monkey, he made a wild dash for the door and thus into the garden. He later returned, very white in the face, and apologised for his hasty retreat. Snake cutlet is sometimes served. We have never offered monkey nor snake to our guests nor have we eaten either knowingly.

Occasionally, a hunter would come to our door wanting to sell a small baby monkey. I could never resist befriending the tiny creatures. I did insist, however, that they lived a free life amongst us and, if they wanted to go away, that was their decision and they were free to do so. Several of my monkeys would eat

what was provided for them and then would go, swinging from branch to branch but would return later. I had one particularly well-covered monkey, not bare around its sit-upon, as is the coiffure design of some of the species. This animal was fond of us and we were of him. Now the top of our dining table was two or three inches wider than the frame to which it was screwed. So, out of view, we had hung a little bell within easy reach of Joyce. She could then indicate to the steward when we were ready for the next course etc. My friend the monkey caught on to this and sometimes long before lunchtime he would swing his way through the trees, run upstairs and tinkle the bell. We were so amused at this human trick that he often got a morsel to eat. If unsuccessful, the naughty animal has been known to pinch a banana from the fruit dish.

One of our monkeys became very friendly with our kitten. They went everywhere together and even slept in the same basket. He must have been a bit of a nuisance to the kitten for, when the latter wanted to go down the garden, the monkey walked close beside with one arm round the kitten's neck. One day when we visited the Cairo Zoo we found that in a number of monkey's cages, there was a kitten. The keeper spoke of the value of companionship for these two animals while small.

Unfortunately, like all the species, monkeys tend to be destructive and wasteful. They will root up a yam or start on a nice ripe banana, take one or two bites and throw the rest away. Also, they can walk unashamedly away, having broken a vase or bowl by knocking it on the floor. Joyce put up with this behaviour problem for a long time, but when our first born, Peter, arrived she declared war. "You have now got a little monkey of your own, so that puts an end to the freedom of the house to your pets". Pity, I still do like the hairy type.

A friend of ours also had a pet monkey. Like most beds in the tropics, the mosquito net is supported by tapes to a frame rising from the four corners of the bed, to a height of four or five feet. Our friend's monkey was also with us in his one room apartment and objected to being given a gentle smack because of some misbehaviour. The monkey hopped away and seizing a tube of toothpaste it climbed up and sat on the top of the mosquito frame, unscrewed the cap of the paste and, squeezing the contents out, sent a jet of toothpaste all over us. I really felt the monkey laughed as much as we did, yet retained his solemn appearance.

In my college days, we had one student who had a very long thin face. He was appointed to take a Young People's Service. Several of us went to support him. He had a special address for the younger children. As he waxed eloquent with his story and endeavoured to get his point home, he wondered why there was sudden laughter in the wrong place. He had leaned out of the pulpit and exclaimed "Do you see the point of my tale?"

## 8.5 Assisted schools

We had four assisted schools in the circuit. One in each of the four sections where we had a resident minister. Government required not only a high standard of

efficiency, but also a good proportion of qualified teachers, before agreeing to give grants. Once a school was fortunate to get on to the assisted list, every possible effort was made by the manager and the headmaster to keep it there. We took the regular inspection seriously and anxiously awaited the Education Officer's report.

As a spur to high standards, we introduced an annual competitive event in these four schools. Meeting each year in a different school, we had sports events and choir competitions. We always invited some local chief, or an important visitor to chair the closing events of the day and to present the prizes. This annual effort was much appreciated and provided a lot of fun as well as determination to bring glory to one's school, with a pardonable amount of personal fame. It also gave the three visiting headmasters an opportunity to see the methods and work of their colleague in the fourth school.

These inter-school competitions always came around Christmas time. We could then be sure of dry weather. Harvesting was over and farm work, in which the children took their share, was greatly reduced until the end of Harmattan. This was that dry wind which bore quantities of fine sand from the Sahara Desert and covered all our houses, and the contents, with white dust. It was possible to write one's name in the dust on a table, even within a few hours of cleaning.

## 8.6 Christmas

Christmas was a great festival and, with so many Christians and Churches, Nativity plays and carol singing were popular and enjoyed. In our Yoruba Hymnbook the translators wisely had omitted "In the bleak mid winter, snow on snow" etc. Strangely enough, the New Year was an even bigger festival, to the extent that while Christmas was called *Odun Kekere* (little year) the New Year was *Odun nla* (the great year or festival). The Watchnight Services in our churches were tremendous occasions and lasted for hours, with several sermons and much singing. There were the solemn moments too, when the slow reading of the names of many who had died during the year were read, often accompanied by loud sobbing in different parts of the congregation. This ceremony was followed by the solemn warning that none of us could tell whether our names might be read at the next Watchnight.

Europeans, as at home, took every opportunity to get together for the Christmas holiday. Our mission house and the doctors and sisters' houses at the hospital usually had many visitors from Lagos and other centres who enjoyed being able to see a bit of life up country. The sisters usually arranged a big gathering for all the Ilesha expatriates. After morning service, they put on a marvellous Christmas dinner, exchanged presents, played tennis in the afternoon and had tea and real Christmas cake. This was usually followed by party games and records.

Sister Elsie Moody comes to mind. She had great joy in a parcel from her Huddersfield home. It included a Kodak box camera. Now, Elsie never had

a camera before and she asked me to instruct her in its preparation and use. I stressed the importance of the viewfinder and of getting the person or the important subject central and, if a group, then to see that all were clearly in the viewfinder. Apart from this, of course, the importance of holding the camera steadily and, when all was in order, to press the release without altering her hold on the camera. I could not think of any hidden tricks other than these in a Kodak box camera. She could not wait until dinner was finished, she must get a family group of the whole party. We obliged and, when positioned, she looked in the viewfinder. Then, frantically sweeping her hand out to the left, she shouted "You'll all have to move over a bit this way". I had forgotten to instruct her that in such a situation, she must move the camera and not expect a dozen or more people to shift.



## Chapter 9

# Personal stories

### 9.1 Stephen

I have already mentioned the name of Stephen. His full name is Stephen Oshibuje and it will appear again many times in this story. If I tell of his early days now, it will not be necessary to refer back when he comes in.

Stephen was a Kukuruku, a tribe dwelling near the lower reaches of the river Niger. As a boy, his education was only for two years in a Roman Catholic School. He was baptised in their church. In his later teens he came to Ilesha in search of employment and got a job as a compound labourer in our Wesley Guild Hospital. He was an honest, hard worker in whom Sister Stela Liony took a special interest. When the young Doctor Joyce Woods arrived in 1931, there was an opening for a bright, clean youth as houseboy for the doctor. A cook was already selected and that completed the domestic staff. Stephen was a good leaner. In addition to his native tongue Kururuku he had acquired a knowledge of Yoruba as spoken in Ilesha and by some four million Yorubas. Now he tackled English and was often observed as he made notes and later asked the doctor to explain the meaning of words he had written down phonetically. He did well in his job, seemed very happy to attend services in the Methodist Church and became a real friend.

When we were planning for our marriage, Joyce and I agreed that my cook was better than hers, he would be offered the job. But, as to steward, there was no hesitation in engaging Stephen. He quickly adjusted to the new roving type of life and was excellent not only in preparing for our many journeys but in his contact with our people in the wide area we covered. He also became very useful as an interpreter. Naturally we were each able to cope with our own working vocabulary: Joyce knew the medical jargon which was like a foreign language to me. I could leave her behind in my 'church' vocabulary. Stephen learned them both and became efficient more quickly than either of us.

Back in Kukuruku land, there was a girl selected and ready for marriage with Stephen as soon as he had established himself. We gave him leave gladly,

so that he could go home. He returned and proudly presented his wife. She had an unpronounceable name. She also set herself to learn Yoruba and, in due time, Stephen taught her the requirements of baptism. As the great day arrived, I was greatly relieved to know that she had chosen the name Comfort, no pronunciation problem.

As well as translation ability, Stephen showed that he had a great interest in the medical cases being discussed in the doctor's surgery. He often helped in dressing very nasty ulcers and sores. It soon became obvious that he wanted to add to his already wide knowledge. One evening he spoke to Joyce. He wanted to keep on his work as steward in the house but, could she also teach him the medical work? On being asked why he wanted this, he said "One day the doctor will return to her homeland and not come back again. If I knew more about medical work I could be more useful". He did not say useful as we say it, he put it in three syllables u-se-ful. And as the name Stephen comes again and again in this record, each time it is an illustration of the use-ful man he became.

## 9.2 Deborah Ajayi

It is fitting that the introduction of Deborah Ajayi should follow the above paragraphs on Stephen.

Deborah Ajayi comes from Ilare, the village to which Nurse Bernice took that midnight walk through the forest with the strange man who appealed for her help. Deborah could not walk, her arms and both legs were like the letter 'S' as the result of Ricketse. When we saw her she was sitting outside her house, playing with lumps of mud and was filthy with little mud stains all over her naked body. We contacted her parents. Their names were both on the Church Roll but the father had not attended worship for some time and, indeed had a bad name in the town because of drink. Joyce examined the child carefully and recommended that she should come to our compound in Ilesha to give opportunity for observation if there were any improvement with proper feeding as well as medicine. Finally, but reluctantly, the parents agreed to let her come to Ilesha.

It did not take long to prove that all we could do was not going to be enough. Deborah needed thorough X-Ray examination and we had no such facility in our, nor any other up country hospital. Joyce decided it would be worthwhile getting the child to an English hospital but, we could not afford the fare and, in any case, it would mean a big fight to get the parents permission. Joyce wrote to Elder Dempsters, (E.Ds) the shipping company and put the whole case before them. We made up our minds that if the reply was favourable and did not cost more than 20 pounds, we would take her when we next went on leave. Meanwhile we began talks with the parents and eventually talked them into accepting the opportunity, if E.Ds reply was helpful.

Our prayers were answered. The reply from Lagos came. In view of the nature of our request they would carry the girl free of charge. Greatly relieved, we went back to the parents and in the presence of the Chief, our African

Minister and the Headmaster of the Imesi-ile school, they put their marks to a document we had already drawn up. So we had permission to take her to England, and were exonerated from any blame if through surgical operation or other cause the worst should happen.

E.Ds included in their offer, provision of a cot-bed but required Joyce to give any attention the child might need. It occurred to use that as we had been ready to spend even up to 20 pounds for Deborah's fare, if he were willing we would also take Stephen with us. He was now a married man with children of his own and would be a great help in looking after the child. Stephen jumped at the idea of seeing England. Since his start as a steward in Joyce's household he had become used to our varied life and in serving the type of food we enjoyed and doubtless the cook and he had often shared what was left over after a meal. So there was no hidden horror of strange food. Rice was a great favourite, but he would miss his gari. This was a very useful cereal, which did not require cooking. When thrown into the water, it swelled and when swallowed, it continued to swell and gave that great comfort of making one feel full. He would also miss the warmth of his red peppers. We told him to take a quantity of each. He did so, and we all prepared for the long journey.

The advantage of having Stephen was fully realised from the start of the voyage. We were able to fix Deborah's cot by his third class bunk enabling him to tend to her needs through the night if required. I omitted to mention that E.Ds had a special rate for members of domestic staff accompanying European travellers. This included a third class bunk plus food and cost 10 pounds for the return journey.

Our first day out was spent loading cocoa at a Gold Coast port. We went for a walk ashore and on our return to the boat Stephen found that his bag of gari had been stolen. We were very troubled but, with all the coming and going of passengers and carriers, there was no hope of finding it and no good whatsoever in reporting the loss. Stephen took it all philosophically. The food served for African passengers was very suitable, a lot of kedgeree type (fish or minced meat in rice). It was not usual in up country meals to have more than one course. E.Ds provided a cup of tea with each meal. At home, the basic food was boiled yam and, according to financial ability, the soup into which the family would all dip their yam pieces, would vary from a vegetable preparation to one in which pieces of meat were to be found.

Stephen never replaced his gari. He so enjoyed joining round the family table and sharing our food that when he returned to Nigeria, his load included the bag of peppers, which he had not opened.

Our plans for this furlough were changed a lot by the sad news we received at the end of the journey, of the death of Joyce's father. We got home only in time for the funeral. Deborah did get into hospital and Stephen, through the kindness of Roy and Nellie Gooding, went to stay with them in their branch of the National Children's Home at Congleton. He happily applied himself to learning a lot about handicrafts.

But, back to Deborah. A surgeon who was her chief when Joyce got her Fellowship, took great interest in the twisted limbs of the little African girl.

She was admitted to the Paddington Green Hospital. Before admission, while Stephen was still with us, Joyce took the pair of them for one of the pre-admission visits to the hospital. I was not present as I was somewhere on deputation, so Joyce braved the Underground, carrying Deborah while Stephen, bewildered by all he was seeing, followed behind. They arrived at a ticket machine and Joyce put her money in. Out shot the ticket. Stephen was amazed and in a typically African expression of wonderment asked "Ah, is there a man inside?" Then came the descent on his first escalator. Joyce told Stephen how to walk on to the moving stairway. He hesitated, then to the obvious amusement of passengers ascending the next escalator, in his floppy overcoat, he took a high jump and landed safely on the steps.

The work on Deborah's legs and arms was very successful. Each leg had to be broken in several places and re-set in the nearest to a straight line. Then followed the long wait until the plaster could be removed. When we were due to sail back to West Africa, Deborah was ready and for the first time, could use her limbs for their natural mobility and use.

On the ship, one of the outstanding passengers was a very important northern chief, the Emir of Katsina. This was a very large Emirate close to the Sahara Desert. He took great interest in Deborah and in what had been done and why we had bothered to do so much of the little one. He frequently pocketed an extra apple after his meal in the Dining Saloon and would present it to Deborah as she carefully manoeuvred her legs to cope with the ship's sway. Deborah became passionately fond of apples.

Deborah did not understand anything the Emir said to her for he spoke Hausa, indeed while she did pick up some English while in hospital and Joyce's old home, very easily she seemed to forget a lot of her own native Yoruba. When she got back to Nigeria there was the ridiculous situation where we had to help her by translating some of the questions put to her in her own native tongue.

I still have the official passenger list in its glossy cover and, the very first name in First Class is Miss Deborah Ajayi. Now, advance lists are available in E.Ds Lagos office, and in those days the Nigerian Times made a lot of news of any Nigerians returning home. Details of who they were, what they had been doing in England, in studies or on business used up spare columns in issues following the fortnightly arrival of mail boats. So, a journalist sought out this Miss Deborah Ajayi, of very special interest for up to that time, single young ladies very rarely appeared in the First Class list. She must be of wealthy parentage and well worth an interview. He got details but Deborah declined an interview!

Like our friend Stephen, the name of Deborah Ajayi does not disappear from these memoirs. We will meet her again. In fact, one more recent reference has already got in as I was anxious to wind up the story of our famous kit-car and told of her part at its demise.

### 9.3 In church

There was no written rule but generally the women in the church tended to sit together. Punctuality was not a strong point and a small congregation at the beginning of a Service could well increase into a completely full church before the sermon. In our area, families rarely came together and certainly did not sit together, yet there was great loyalty to the Church by all the family. On arrival, the men would lay their slippers, or flippers on the wide plastered area between the entrance doors. A couple of hundred pairs of footwear took up a lot of room and called for quick spotting of the right pair as the owners left. Many of the women carried a baby on their back. This resulted in a lot of coming and going during the service but added to the comfort of the babies and doubtless to their mothers also. Strangely, one got so used to the fairly constant movement that it ceased to be a worry. Perhaps it was because of this process that the men segregated themselves.

Where umbrellas were used as protection from the sun, it was always father's privilege to carry and use this article while mother, perhaps many minutes later, complete with baby on back, bore a load of hymnbooks and Bibles on her head. These would be distributed to the fathers concerned. Well-known hymns were usually chosen. This gave the illiterates a chance to join in singing from memory. I cannot remember an up-country church, which had a stock of hymnbooks "For the use of visitors". In Lagos, of course, better organisation and larger collections allowed more generous provision to be made.

Singing generally was very hearty, particularly when a lyric was introduced. This usually called for clapping. In prayers, corporate approval of requests was indicated by loud "Amin". Our people believed in prayer and in their homes, family prayers were common. In Church, folk showed their attention in participation.

There was great interest in the Notices or Announcements, probably because there was no other means of giving publicity to coming events or the need for prayer in individual sickness or bereavement. There was natural regret shown when news of a death was given. Very rarely could notice of time of a funeral be announced for, in tropical countries it is usually the practice to have the funeral on the very day of death.

All stood for the Benediction, closing the service. In Ilesha, our church at Oko-ese was smaller than at our main-town church and was about a mile away. As the service would be much shorter, we have often seen men leave quickly after the Benediction and rush to Otapete so that they could be in time for the Benediction there also. A kind of double blessing.

During the week, church doors were left open, sometimes because the church was needed to house additional classes not accommodated in the school, sometimes because there was no separate school room and sometimes so that passers could enter for quiet and prayer.

In the villages where the church floor was still of mud, women would attend to the weekly dunging of the floor. The preparation used was a watery mixture of animal dung. It was a deterrent to nasty little insects, which could and did

literally bore their way into the human foot. The smell of the dung was so common in house and church that no one noticed it.

On Sunday mornings the many 'house classes' began at about 6.00am, led by one of the full members of the church appointed to that position. They marked the Class book in which the status of each person was shown opposite their name. F.M. is Full Member, B.A. is Baptised Adherent referring to those who have become polygamists and C is for Catechumen, preparing for baptism. In the course of each week there would be at least one early morning Prayer Meeting. This is in the church and usually led by the minister or catechist himself. It begins around 5.30am, still allowing for an early start for the farmers who, naturally, liked to get the bulk of their work done before the great heat of the day.

There was increasing evidence of the election of Christian men, and much later, women to become chiefs or consultants. Sometimes certain practices, associated with heathen beliefs, made it impossible for Christians to accept such appointments. Happily this cause for rejecting appointment is dying out and, in general, there is a much greater reliance by the chiefs on the churches for their support. Now, all this would suggest a live church and the cause for much encouragement. While this is true in many places, there are disappointing reports from other places. Churches which too obviously have ceased to maintain the faith and vision which was dear to their founders.

## 9.4 Gold rush

Iyemogun was not a large village but, years before I was appointed to the Ilesha Circuit, well-meaning Christians had decided that they needed a bigger and better church building. Enthusiasm caused them to build far too big a place of worship, it could seat every single person who had a home there. The excitement decreased as the amount of labour in erecting the walls increased and, when it was time to buy enough iron sheets for the corrugated roofing, the spirit of Christian adventure was nearly killed. A door had been screwed on but no windows covered the apertures. Cattle could not get in but determined goats could and did jump through the spaces. They left much universally recognised evidence of their successful entry.

In one corner of the church was a large bell, intended for suspension in the belfry. Iyemogen belfry had never been built and now the really large, once costly bell was badly cracked and pathetically was balanced upside down on some stones in the corner. Every Sunday a faithful member banged its clapper against the bell and made a loud noise, unpleasing to the musical ear. I had fears of the ringer's hearing as he must have damaged his eardrums. In response a handful of people came for worship.

I tried my best to encourage the village to renew its interest and gave some aid in sand plastering the walls. The village children helped us in laying out a little garden and fenced it with bamboo strips to keep out hungry animals. But all efforts brought little improvement in the lethargy, until an extraordinary

new chapter opened in Iyemogun.

Gold was discovered in the small river nearby. A gold rush started. Syrian and Lebanese traders from Ibadan and a few English men marked out claims and set about digging and panning. Labourers from far and wide flocked to the new goldfield.

One day a 'Prophet' came. He declared that the whole population were sinners, and urged them to repent while there was still time for, in one month, Iyemogun would be struck by God and fire would consume every house. The people listened to this message and the following Sunday the church was packed to the doors. Repentance was the theme and the catechist did his best. The weeks passed and the people waited anxiously. Fire did not come. Gradually Sunday congregation dwindled and the prophet, concerned that his prophecy had gone wrong, quietly removed from the village. The bell ringer continued to call the people to worship but only the original handful came. The Sunday collection returned to a few pence.

It is a sad story. We did try to help the people but failed. The goldrush ended soon after and Iyemogun has once more become the quiet lethargic village as of yore, and the goats once more scale the mud window sill and use the church as their overnight sleeping place. The people's newly stirred interest obviously, was in fire insurance rather than repentance.

## 9.5 The Methodist Missionary Society (MMS)

The overseas work of the Methodist Church is organised and supervised by the Methodist Missionary Society in London. Each division is the responsibility of a secretary (Africa and the West Indies, India and Ceylon, Burma and China, Europe and a secretary for Home Organisation) the Women's Department and medical work were each attended to by their own secretaries. For interest, I have quoted the official divisions of the 1920-1930 period. Our headquarters at this time were in Bishopsgate, London. In 1939 the fine new premises in Marylebone Road were opened and in 1985 the Women's Department was joined with the General Department work. The areas then were grouped into Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Caribbean, the Americas and Europe. It is encouraging to see progress in that two of the three groups are now in the hands of nationals of their area. So many of our hospitals are now run by the Governments of the countries concerned, that our medical work is in the care of a part-time Medical officer.

In our early days, wives did not count in any official lists or appointments and, if a woman worker had the misfortune to marry a missionary, she was removed from the official list. The Society of course continued to arrange and pay for her ship's transit. Many of us married males would gladly claim that our life partner did as much and often more than we did for the Kingdom of God, but Bishopsgate would have none of these things.

To carry matters further, each overseas District Synod had its own Missionary's Meeting. This was one which, amongst other properly minuted business,

included a report on the condition of each residence, its repairs, furnishings and need for improvements. But the missionary's wife was not a member and was not permitted to attend. This was very sad and frustrating. Happily, however, according to our Prayer Manual, enlightenment touched Bishopsgate and Marylebone Road and the emancipation of women became fact, at least in the inclusion of distinct qualification of the wife (doctor or nurse etc) with her husband's qualification (pastoral, agricultural etc). I have not followed the progress made in the personnel of the Missionary's meeting, and can only hope that a wife is permitted to attend when discussion on residences takes place.

The Mission House Secretaries had very responsible jobs which they held for longer or shorter periods depending on health, suitability, transfer to another department or retirement. Each would endeavour, as often as possible, to visit his or her 'field', get to know the missionaries and the very varied types of work in which they were engaged. As with government ministers they would be responsible for dealing with all matters relating to their field and be the spokesperson for some at the Officers' Meeting and the General Committee which controlled the total work of the MMS subject only to the Annual Conference of the Methodist Church in Great Britain.

This visiting secretary was held in awe by the young missionary who breathed a great sigh of relief when the visitor went to the next circuit. Older men did not suffer from any sense of awe but were glad to discuss and share matters of concern and probably underline the need for a grant for this or that worthy cause.

It was a pleasure to entertain most of these visitors. Their district itinerary was arranged by the chairman of the district. The visitor usually started on the Coast and worked steadily inland. This meant that my circuit was usually last. Each superintendent would be responsible for all arrangements within his own area. The secretary would make copious notes, perhaps illustrations for his own addresses back home. We hoped they were for his report and action in increased concern, if not increased grant in aid.

I used to get fed up with the window dressing that went on in some circuits, prior to a secretarial visit. Every minute was planned in advance, full churches were guaranteed for that day, all school uniforms must be washed the day before and woe betide any girl who failed to have her hair freshly done in the pattern for the week. An assured result, of course, was a big write up in the secretarial report.

I rebelled against this kind of carry on and determined that the next official visit would enable the visitor to see things exactly as they were. Consequently, when we were to have a lady secretary as well as the ministerial secretary for Africa, no one knew of their visit in advance. So, Joyce and I welcomed Alice Walton and George Ayre. We gave them a good meal, probably ground nut stew, and enjoyed a good chat with them. Before going to bed I told them that we would be going to the 5.30am Prayer Meeting. They would be very welcome if they felt it was not too early. We arranged a cup of tea at 5.00am. We walked to the church and into a well attended meeting. There was no welcome addresses but, before the meeting closed, I told the folk who our visitors were.

Then breakfast and a series of school visits and in the afternoon again a well attended Women's Meeting. Saturday was the opportunity for the visitors to see the hospital, and be entertained by the staff. We had told the staff, of course, of the visitors and they had made their preparations.

I outlined our plans for Sunday. We would attend morning service in a little country church. We travelled there in our kit-car and left it on the roadside at the nearest bush path into the village. On our walk we came to a wide flooded area. There was no alternative to at least one of us wading through the water. Now, I knew this and had dressed in khaki shirt and shorts, which may have surprised my respectably palm beach suited companion and of course the ladies always looked so suitably garbed. There was a man by the waters edge having a bath but he would have been rather slippery even if I had decided to invite his aid and he had agreed. So with shoes and stockings removed and shorts rolled up to their shortest, I gave Alice Walton a piggyback in safety to the other side. Then it was George Ayres turn. I got him up safely but in the deepest part I stopped and, pretending to drop him in asked; "Now, what about increasing that grant we asked for by, shall we say 100 pounds?" He agreed: anything so long as I landed him safe on Canaan's side. I forget whether I gave Joyce a piggy back, probably not, she was enjoying the spectacle so much that she probably endured getting wet. It has a cooling effect anyhow.

We laboured up the hill to Iyere and were probably spotted, or perhaps the gentleman had finished his bath and while I did multiple crossing he had nipped home and spread the news. Anyhow, before we got there, the first bell had been rung. The bell, incidentally, was a two foot long piece of railway line, hung on the branch of a tree and it was struck by the long iron bolt. Women rushed to sweep in front of the church where we were glad to sit down in the shade of its leaf roof. The second bell was rung in about ten minutes instead of the usual half hour warning and the congregation began to arrive.

We all enjoyed that morning worship in Iyere, both our visitors gave short addresses and the members, regarding it as an honour to be selected for such a visit obviously completely overlooked the fact that they had had no notice in advance. After service, we all called at several houses and visits were enjoyed by all. Back home at lunch, the kindly secretaries spoke appreciatively of the novelty in our arrangement for Sunday. They had never been so close to the people in any other visit. We had only been too anxious to produce facts, without starch or spit and polish.

When a copy of their official report came through, it included countries on the West Coast and in Central and Southern Africa and said; "In all the circuits it has been our privilege to visit, conditions in Ilesha were the most rural we have seen on our African Tour". This report was 'Confidential', contents were not known by anyone and therefore gave no offence to anyone. With the passage of more than thirty years, I am able to include their comment here.

A year or two later, George Ayre was the principal speaker at the Irish Conference in Cork. I was sent over to the same missionary session. He told the story of the piggy back I had given in our visit to Iyere and of the treat I had uttered when in mid stream. He then turned towards me and asked, "By

the way, did you get that grant yet”? I shook my head. “Ah well, the wheels at Marylebone Road grind very slowly”!

## 9.6 The Emir of Ilorin

I will be writing later of another secretary who made an excellent impression. But, as already illustrated, relations with the Mission House can go down as well as up! When Joyce and I were enthusiastically thrusting into our new development in the Northern Provinces, we greatly appreciated the help given by the Emir of Ilorin. He made us welcome in our plans to reside there. He honoured us when he came to our little mission house in Afon for lunch. When the Secretary for Africa came to visit our pioneer area, we took him to see the Emir. He kindly told the Secretary of the good work we were doing for his people. On our next furlough, while we were living in London, the Emir of Ilorin also visited London. I wanted to show him over our fine Mission House in Marylebone Road and asked my cousin Sir Richard Ludlow if Lady Katherine and he would arrange a reception for the Emir at their Surrey home. They gladly agreed. I telephoned the Mission House to arrange the tour and was flattened to hear that they themselves invited and yesterday had received the Emir there. Obviously it had not occurred to them that I was solely responsible for the extension of our work into the north and that Joyce and I had built on our friendship with the Emir and had been allowed to proceed with several schemes because of that friendship. But, we had not been told nor invited to the party. With regret I telephoned Sir Richard and told him we had had to call off the proposed reception. Suitably humbled, I had to learn the hard way the great difference there can be in people even in the small matter of courtesy.

Often since that long ago incident, I have heartily laughed at how silly I was to feel so much hurt to my pride.

I went to end this chapter in dealings with the Mission House and Secretaries on a happy note in commenting on the kindness and help in many of the extensive travel we have undertaken since our retirement. Thank you Sidney Groves for your help as we planned the most recent of our visits to South Africa and our first to Zimbabwe since it became independent. Thank you Graeme Jackson (Asia) as we prepared for India, Nepal and Burma. The last time we met was on the road to Mandalay, actually the rail-road at Rangoon. Thank you Eric Birtles (Personnel Officer) for going the second mile and obtaining a quantity of visas for us in our World Tour.

## 9.7 Visitors from overseas

As mentioned above, since our retirement it has been possible to visit many countries and to see the Church at work. This has been made easier in this age of flight. It was a very different matter years ago, for, much as people may have longed to see the work overseas, it was just impossible to take long periods

off work to do so. Even a one day visit to Nigeria, if such an absurd plan had been in anyone's mind, would have meant over a month at sea in addition to the visit. Consequently, apart from the above mentioned secretarial visits from the Missionary officials, in nearly a quarter of a century, we had the pleasure of receiving visitors from the Homelands on four occasions only.

When we were told that a Mr and Mrs Lavender from the Midlands would like to include Ilesha in their tour, we were very glad and set to making tour plans for the days they would be with us. We decided to take them on trek, knowing this would be a new experience for them.

The Government and the Native Authority were responsible for trunk and main roads. For any spokes of the wheel to stretch out from a conurbation fortunate to be on a maintained road, the work must be undertaken by the people living in the area covered. I refer to this fact in other places but demand for routes to link villages with the main road grew. Farmers wanted to be able to convey their produce to market by lorry. They, or more correctly their wives, were weary of carrying heavy head-loads. Inevitably road construction all over the world has required the felling of valuable timber. But then, even the clearance for a farm extension has also meant timber loss. In burning or cutting down the trees, unwittingly, the urge for road or farm has all too often, in tropical countries, given rise to dust bowls and even desert encroachment. Another factor emerges. Chiefs and often Native Authority officials had amongst their numbers, men who were not averse to having their palms oiled (bribes or, shall we say 'gifts') as to where permission, or grant should be given.

This is where our Imesi-ile comes in again. Permission was obtained to cut twenty miles of new road to join the Ilesha road six miles out. Several villages en route joined in the scheme and made fairer the division of labour but, so far as is known no grant in aid was given. The work burden must be borne by the promoters. It was a major task for the tropical forest was dense and cutting and filling employed the long days of hundreds of men and women. Countless headloads of earth had to be carried and deposited to reduce a steep rise or to build up an embankment. After a long time and a non-stop flow of labour, the huge task was complete. Culverts of cement had to replace the temporary tree trunk bridges covering water ways and then the filling process so that no gaps remained.

Now we come back to our visitors. The Lavenders duly arrived and were thrilled with all they saw and did. They were astonished to see what the cook could do on our wood fire between two (empty) petrol tins turned on their sides, with a piece of expanded metal forming a bridge on top and giving the base for pots and pans. They were fascinated with the big mission house with its mud walls, two feet thick, and the fact that there was no glass whatsoever in our large windows. We simply had louver hinged covers held out on a stick. They were greatly loved as they attended service in our very big mud church, packed with people: men on both sides and women and children in the much longer middle seats. Of course they did not understand a word of our language but sang heartily when they recognised the tune.

The height of the visit was to come: the trek. How they watched the packing

up and the cook's experienced inclusion of what he would need. Then the packing of beds, boxes and tins into our kit-car.

For us too, this was to be a special trek. We hoped to get right to Imesi-ile the whole twenty six miles by road, if the last of the culverts had been bridged with tree trunks covered with laterite. The timing was perfect, the last culvert could be coped with and, amidst cheering crowds we drove the very first vehicle into Imesi. I suitably obliged with prolonged blowing of the horn and we pulled up right in front of the Chief's house. He gave a great welcome to us all, presented Mrs Lavender with a chicken, not over ready, but very much alive. The cook came hastily to the rescue.

Normally we pitched our camp in one of the school rooms. We intended putting our visitors in another class room. The chief, however, would not hear of it. He had prepared the Courthouse for the visitors all clean and the floor newly washed with the usual dung mixture. We got the camp beds erected, complete with mosquito nets. We were a bit worried that in each of the two cells at the end of the one roomed courthouse there was a prisoner. We mentioned the matter to the chief who immediately put matters right. He released the prisoners and told them to go home but to return next morning.

Bathing in our own home was rather primitive. We did, however, at least have 'private facilities' including a hip-type bath which often figured in old time advertisements for Pears Soap. Our house boy would leave a half filled four gallon tin of water, which smelled of smoke as it had been heated on an open wood fire. Beside this would be a similar Kerosene tin of cold water. In a hip-type bath, the amount of water poured in has to be gauged by the displacement of the bather if of slender girth, one would require a generous amount but if of ample proportions one had to go gently with the water or else, on sitting down there could be a flooding problem. For any reader slow to visualise this type of bath it may help to know that whilst the bather sat, his or her feet remained on the ground.

Things were different on trek.

1. We could not guarantee private facilities. This absence of privacy was a cause of considerable anxiety in early days, however, one soon gets used to probable prying eyes. Indeed, in a really rough trek, when we lived and moved and had our bath under a tree it would be difficult to ensure the absence of interested spectators.

On one trek accompanied by a young missionary who fortunately had a sense of humour, we had no alternative to sleeping in the same little rectangular mud church. With the complete absence of privacy of this building we had to solve the problem of cleanliness by letting her bath in the pulpit. There is an oft quoted proverb, which closely links cleanliness with godliness. This situation became hilarious but was 100% respectable. Joyce and I took our own bath standing in the darkness of the surrounding bush. Despite the increased snake and insect hazard our hurriedly arranged ablutions were carried through without incident.

2. We never carried a tin-type bath on trek although for those who could afford the luxury, exporters tried to sell one, with a tight fitting lid and a basket filling the interior. This basket was useful for carrying clothes etc, so long as one remembered to remove it before pouring in the bath water. Our provision was very much cheaper and easier to carry. It had a folding frame which, when extended was square. On to this we hooked a shallow square canvas arrangement, about two foot six square and eight inches deep. It was safe to pour four inches of water in. One had to sit, tailor fashion, as far as one could get towards a corner. This meant that ones feet were in also. The disadvantage was that only this piece of canvas separated the body from the ground. This gave one a rather chilly reception when one sat down. On the other hand, if the water was clean, which sometimes happened, it was easy to locate the soap. One bright manufacturer brought out floating soap, which obviated the necessity to have clear water.

This was the bathing arrangement we provided for our visitors, the Lavers. At least they had been spared the anxiety of ring side observers with the temporary release of the prisoners. We could guess the cause of their smiles and good humour when, after baths, we assembled for evening meal in the classroom we had selected for our dining room.

Our second visitor came from Ireland. Richard White was a well known layman who had a prosperous business in his Dublin Printing Works. We were still living in Ilesha when he came and, whilst we shared his time with the hospital, we did not have time enough to undertake very much outside the town. In his wisdom and knowledge of printing he advised me against proceeding with one of my projects. I had invested in an 'Adana', a small hand operated press capable of producing postcard size notices and had the intention to expand the idea into instruction classes for promising young men. Mr White felt that the cost of expanding this idea would be greater than I then realised. I took his advice and sold my 'Adana' for the same price (25 pounds), which I had paid originally. Before many years there emerged numerous small private printers. Although they gave a proof reader a gigantic task in correcting spelling and punctuation errors, competition became widespread. My advisor was right, even though I felt capable of producing a higher standard of workmanship than the local small trader in his craft.

By the time our third visitors had arrived, we had already handed over our work in the South to our successors and were now living at Afon, in the Northern Provinces and working the whole time in this pioneer field. Mr and Mrs Bowden hailed from Bristol. He was a self made businessman who had started as a door to door sales man. He had decided to start his own business and imported sugar bags. This was a big success. He became very well known in the church, principally for his work in the Methodist Bookroom in Bristol. We have since had the pleasure of visiting them in their residence, Chew Magna Castle. I should have mentioned above that we had also had the pleasure of visiting our other visitors in their own homes, Mr and Mrs Lavender in their

Health Centre in the Midlands.

The timing of the Bowden's visit found us in much more primitive surroundings and accordingly, the standard of our entertainment was simpler. They did not have the thrill of big, well filled churches, but rather, sat on backless benches, or low mud walls serving the same purpose. Still here they found the two or three gathered together. No hospital tour to undertake, but they saw our little dispensary with its one-nurse staff, and watched whatever operations were on the programme. At one end worked the skilled surgeon with the simplest of equipment while at the head end I administered the anaesthetic and fervently prayed that the patient would wake up at the right time.

All this was great stuff to our visitors. We benefited from their visit in an unexpected way, Mrs Bowden went down with malarial fever and they had to delay their departure for a few days. Now it happened that we had of course, built our house near to a spring, but although we had constructed a large concrete storage tank and laid in a quantity of pipes and a semi-rotary pump, we were still having to carry all our water from the spring in four gallon petrol tins. This made an easy head load for our compound labourer. So, while Mrs Bowden lay ill in bed, Mr B. gladly became my pipe-laying assistant.

I had previously got as far as erecting the semi-rotary pump on a wooden tripod. The next stage involved us in laying a pipe from the pump, across the motor road to the tank. We must sink the pipe so that traffic would pass safely over it. This operation of digging into a road, required the permission of the Native Authority or even engaging them to undertake the work. I had not done anything about this and decided to finish the job and ask permission later. Mr B. and I were thus busy, with our compound labourer, in ripping a trench across the road when the impossible happened. An African Native Authority inspector, in the very infrequent inspections of the condition of the road surface and drainage, arrived on his motorbike. Naturally he was very surprised to find the road closed. He was very nice about it and quite understood that we needed water in that tank and that we must lay a pipe across the road. We offered him no 'present' and waved him goodbye as he set off down the hill to see the Daodu of Afon, the Emir's representative. On his return journey, we had already sunk our pipes, replaced the laterite top dressing and he expressed himself as quite satisfied with the job. No one ever mentioned the matter of my irregularity so I presume the inspector, wise man, had decided on silence.

Before the Bowden's left, we actually got the twenty five gallon galvanised tank into the roof. Thus encouraged and with the helpful advice and co-operation of our five year old Anthony, I pressed on with the fitting of a wash basin in our tiny bathroom and a tap in the kitchen with all the connections involved. We now had a luxury in our little house away on the hill, which we never had in our nineteen room mud house in the south. True, we had to be very careful of water for, in the long dry season the spring dried up. Our precautions included a stout padlock on the tank. For drinking water, we still had to go through the whole process of boiling and filtering. This included teeth washing and any water which would touch or enter the mouth.

The last of our four visits from overseas to be recorded here was, actually,

the first in order of time. When we went on leave in 1937 our arrival was a very sad occasion. Joyce's father had just died before we reached Plymouth so we got to her home in the midst of funeral arrangements. Amidst a great sense of loss, but of triumph for her father, we begin our leave. Before returning to Nigeria again, Joyce repeated her hopes that her mother would think seriously of visiting us out there. The rest of the family advised against such a silly suggestion. They felt that their mother would never stand up to the heat and the kind of living to which we were accustomed. Finally, despite fears that she would never be home again, the family gave in and, in company of one of our Nigerian friends, she sailed for Lagos.

Travelling was no worry. She had done a lot of Northern Europe and also in the United States and Canada. She did enjoy the journey out to West Africa. Through letters and all our chatter while on leave, she already knew a lot about Nigeria, but there is no teaching so good as first hand experience. For two happy months she gained that experience, walking miles along bush paths, climbing rocky hills and meeting so many people who seemed never to have thought that we too had parents. "Iya Dokita" (doctor's mother) was always repeated with respect.

One thing I fear she did not learn was to overcome her real fear of creepy crawlies and all sorts of the many varieties of flying insects which were drawn by our lamp each evening. Flying ants by the thousand, fat sausage flies, praying mantids and stick beetles were of course accompanied by the sharp pinging sound of the dreaded mosquito. Perhaps her worst moments were when, inadvertently she stood in a trail of driver ants. She learned of their speedy inspection of every part of the body and that the only remedy is immediate seeking of privacy and shelter where the invaders can be dealt with separately. This, and any moving object, which got into her hair, caused anxiety but, blessed with a keen sense of humour, most experiences brought forth loud laughter. Her greatest safety was when under her mosquito net at night, provided no mosquito had got there first. She had great joy as she saw the work that her daughter had started and was busily continuing among children, girls and women, as well as our partnership in the widespread general tasks for the welfare of our people. Her two months with us increased her full enjoyment of life, instead of taking years off, as the family had feared. Anyhow, she lived for another twenty four years after her safe return to England. The observations and material gathered during her visit enabled her to speak at many meetings with the authority of one who had been there and seen it all.

So ends my record of our four visitors in nearly a quarter of a century. There were visits, of course from Chairmen of the District (three of them European and the first African appointed to that office). As our station was furthest inland from the coast, it was a popular centre for visitors from the Colony who knew little of pioneering. Missionaries and many traders, especially workers in the commercial branch of the Lutheran Church's Basle Mission, stayed with us as often as possible. We have happy memories of our Swiss holidays when we continued friendship with these pleasant people. Christmas was our busy time with visitors from mission boarding schools especially, who welcomed the

opportunity given by the school holidays, to see some up-country activities. With the guaranteed dry weather of December, picnics could be enjoyed and the cooler nights of harmattan and the added value of our piano, made a welcome change for our visitors from the South.

## Chapter 10

# Making music

### 10.1 Sunday services

Elsewhere, I tell of our entertainment of and by European Government folk stationed in Ilesha and also within reasonable distance of our small mission house in the Northern work. I also tell of the effect of Nativity plays on the chiefs and people as well as the spiritual lift experienced by our white guests as they attended such plays and our very simple church services.

Dr Hunter had organised a Sunday evening English Service for hospital staff. When I came, in discussion we agreed to widen this to include outsiders. The clamour to improve their English led many teachers to join in this service and , when the Ilesha Grammar School got under way, we decided to transfer to our big town church for, many boys wanted to attend. They saw it as an extra free class to hear English spoken as it should be. When the Hospital got its new electric light plant, we transferred the old one to Otapete, the town church, and brightly lit services increased the numbers. My hopes to raise the tone and indeed the purpose of the congregation from that of improving English to hearing the Gospel preached, began to be realised. I was disappointed that very few of the Europeans, other than missionaries, seemed anxious to attend. But, during the war, when the RAF had a camp twenty miles away, the CO put on a liberty van and many soldiers came regularly. So it became the desired opportunity for Evangelism and not only the troops enjoyed and benefited.

### 10.2 Making a wooden leg

The Headmaster of the biggest school in Esa-oke was a man named Lawanson, a kindly, progressive teacher, who served his church and town well. He did his best to urge Joyce to add Esa-oke to the town and villages where we were planning to station nurses and run small dispensaries. He had been tremendously impressed with the success at Imesi-ile. Years later, we were able to send an Esa-oke girl for training as a midwife and she did return to Esa-oke and Lawanson's dream

became fact, but that was much later than this story.

One night there was a bad lorry crash and several badly injured men were carried into the hospital. One had a badly scarred and swollen face. It took some time before Joyce recognised him as Lawanson, the headmaster. The leg injuries of his companion, Gabriel were very serious and it was obvious that the only answer was amputation. Poor Gabriel suffered not only the pain, but even more the shame of having to face life with only one leg. Probably most Africans in such circumstances would prefer, and indeed would pray that they could die. But Gabriel lived and, in time the stump healed over. With crutches he persevered, but suffered silently. Now, there was just no place in Nigeria, certainly not before World War II, where we could send him to have an artificial leg fitted. Anything we could do for Gabriel must be done in our own house.

From a length of iroko, which is a hard wood and can resist the onslaught of white ants seeking after softer wood which they may devour, our circuit carpenter under frequent supervision such as I could give, fashioned a calf and ankle. Then we made a piece, as nearly like a human foot as we could get and, by mortise and tenon, joined the foot to the ankle and leg. We decided that at that stage we would not attempt any hinging to give greater movement so we fixed the foot at a right angle. Next came the big task of connecting our handiwork to Gabriel's stump. Again, under close supervision, a blacksmith undertook something new and formed a bucket, which would fit up on the stump. With padding and bandages we fitted it until Gabriel said it did not hurt. It was not difficult to lace the bucket top to a belt round Gabriel's waist. It worked, and Gabriel soon learned how to walk once more. With a shoe and a sock, attached to the wooden leg with tacks, a pair of long trousers made the legs match and, with a great smile, Gabriel faced life once more.

To our utter astonishment, Gabriel went missing one day. Secretly, he was determined to walk the twelve miles to his home at Esa-oke. He did, and no pain or discomfort could mask his smile of triumph. Gabriel never returned to Ilesha again. Soon after his long walk home, he was stricken by small-pox. He did not last long before joining up with another Gabriel, a musician in the Church Triumphant.

### 10.3 The baby Austin

It was sometimes difficult for us to arrange our timetables. We both needed transport at the same time, but in opposite directions. When the opportunity arose Joyce took it. The Agriculture Officer in Ilesha was due to go on leave. His wife and he had lovingly cared for their Austin Seven with its folding canvas roof. We decided to buy the car. The price of 26 pounds was agreed, and Joyce became the proud owner of the second car. The sense of independence this gave was of considerable relief in her timetable and mine.

The Baby Austin was the cause of much amusement to the Africans. It was given two names. One, 'Ehoro' was complimentary for it means 'A Hare'. It did dart into passages between houses hitherto unavailable by any other travel

aid bigger than a bike. The alternative name, favoured by the more humorous and perhaps younger element was, 'Pungalo', which means a little empty, can. It really was not all that noisy and, in any case it did have a horn to give warning of danger in the vicinity. Anyhow, we let the funny people enjoy their comments and went on using the little car for years. This saga is not divided into chapters in chronological order but includes feats of interest during a remarkable life-span.

One of the advantages was that it ran on practically no petrol. The tank held four gallons and when Joyce enquired if it needed more petrol, I would happily answer that I had put in a tankful last month. It is perhaps the wrong place to insert this act of generosity, but talking of petrol reminds me of the time we went on leave and offered Dr Crosby one of the hospital doctors, the use of the Baby Austin for off duty runs. When we returned to Nigeria we were sorry to hear that he had not used the car at all. We had forgotten to tell him something very important. He had tried to start the engine but couldn't. He consulted a handy man with lorries, but even though he was proud of his mechanical triumphs, he failed to get the little car to show any sign of response. They examined the petrol situation, the tank was nearly full. They got boys to push it, the plugs were sparking, but nothing else happened. The simple reason was that they did not know we had to turn on the petrol by means of a push-pull cock right under the tank. We regretted that he had not been able to use the car. We also regretted our silly omission to tell him about the tap.

Things sometimes went wrong for us also. I am no engineer and probably give the wrong names in the following:- I once called in the man who was handy with lorries, to tighten the bolt holding the manifold cover. He undertook to drill and tap so as to increase the hold of the bolt. He did drill and tap and made it tight, but water leaked into the cylinder head because he had drilled too deeply. The result was circulation of oil mixed with water. We tried solder, Hallite and other possible remedies, all to no avail. One day I had a brain wave. Removing the bolt, I plugged the tiny hole with a very small piece of a matchstick and tightened up the bolt again. The water swelled the matchstick plug, the movement of the oil inside polished the end and, in time, carbon covered the lot. We travelled thousands of miles on that match.

Apart from the advantage of being able to dart up narrow passages, we were able to go where larger vehicles could not fit between forest trees, or in the North, over flat country with no roads, provided the elephant grass was not too high. Joyce adapted her medical loads, enabling her to carry Stephen, plus the supplies most often used in her clinics. We were guilty of overloading, but it always got there until one day, when an ostrich sat on the radiator.

It happened that Stephen and I were both there. I was driving, with Joyce by my side. We drove over many miles of country where a big bush fire had recently consumed the elephant grass. In one of the larger villages we called and helped a number of sick people. The chief showed his gratitude by presenting Joyce with a turkey. She tried parking the bird in the small floor area of the passenger seat, but the turkey took strong exception to this indignity and tried to nip her legs. Finally she announced that she would drive and I could see

for myself what it is like to cope with a rebellious turkey. We changed places and, admittedly, I enjoyed less being driven with my hands grasping a turkey rather than the steering wheel. We approached an area where the bush fires had not done their work. Joyce drove along the narrow trail with the elephant grass rising like a cliff to eight or ten feet on either side. Suddenly there emerged from the grass a flock of ostriches. They covered the narrow trail completely and, not that it was necessary because of the rattles and noises of the Baby Austin, Joyce pressed on the horn. All but one ostrich disappeared into the high grass but that one, perhaps with a hearing problem, strode on stolidly before us. Horn blowing had no effect whatsoever. To demonstrate her intention of passing out, Joyce increased her speed, but the ostrich didn't. Suddenly the ostrich stopped, but she couldn't. He sat firmly on the radiator with a great flop, but only momentarily. The ostrich was gone into the bush and only dust and feathers filled the air. We never saw that ostrich again, but I could have recognised him without difficulty; the radiator was almost red hot.

Another of the funniest and happiest remembrances of the Baby Austin was the day we invited two very important men from the North to have lunch with us. Now the Emir of Bussa was, perhaps understandably, at daggers drawn with the Emir of Kaiama, because the latter's new and less important emirate was carved out of Bussa's territory. Both men were visiting Ilorin, fourteen miles from where we lived at Afon. We could not invite one and leave the other, so we invited both. They accepted and their lorry deposited these two enemies, complete with their retinue, at our door. All went very well from the hospitality point of view, but as we were eating, a runner arrived to announce that their lorry had broken down so, enter the Baby Austin. But what about protocol? If we offered one the front seat beside the driver, the other would be offended. They were both Emirs. They solved the problem with us. We had to lower the folding canvas roof so that their high turbans could be worn at the correct angle. They both got in and, without any aid from a shoe horn, sat erect in the tiny back seat. Joyce sat in the passenger seat and, slowly and respectfully the Baby Austin covered the fourteen miles of dirt road. In Ilorin, there were no waving crowds lining the streets but there were many gasps of astonishment from those we passed as they saw the voluminously robed Emirs, side by side in our little car. I would like to call it the 'peacemaker' but their rivalry continued.

I have related the story of Gabriel's wooden leg. The tragedies, which occur on the world's roads, are so common in West Africa, sometimes due to illiteracy. For example, a notice painted on the side of a lorry "Load: 3 tons or 35 passengers" is useless to any driver who cannot read it. The usual practice was to pack on the 3 tons and then allow 35 passengers to sit or hang on to the load. Thus, grossly overladen the driver could not steer accurately and risked broken axles daily.

## 10.4 Infectious diseases

In a country with very few hospitals the method for dealing with persons suffering from infectious or contagious diseases is very different from the UK. Here patients with notifiable conditions are put into isolation wards or units, in West Africa, such sufferers were sent to a grass or mud dwelling remote from the town. Our hospital in Ilesha had neither the space nor staff to cope with smallpox when there was an outbreak in the area. The Government Medical Services organised mass vaccination and the local vaccinators worked through schools and in the public market places. Their method sometimes caused anxiety when, without any sterilisation, the same needle was used to scratch the arms of many, usually terrified children and adults. The possible danger of this possible danger of this process was pointed out to one vaccinator with the suggestion that simply holding the needle in the flame of a match could help. The practical vaccinator's immediate enquiry was "who will provide the match?" With hundreds of vaccinations per day, he had a point.

The isolation camps usually were extremely crude. Food was provided but there was nothing of occupational therapy and no visitors were allowed. We have been to some because of Joyce's medical standing. I likened them to concentration camps, but the output was a restored human and not a corpse.

Leprosy was another instance. South Western Nigeria had not as high an incidence as the Eastern Provinces. There, our own Mission had the splendid Uzuakoli Settlement where Dr Frank Davey, the renowned expert on leprosy was in charge. His earlier experience was gained in India. The Church of Scotland too, had its large and well established settlement at Itu in the Calabar country.

In Ilesha, Dr Hunter had applied for and obtained permission to use land for a Leper Colony about 100 yards from our hospital boundary. When I was appointed to Ilesha, he was glad to hand over the lepers to the Church for any spiritual or educational work we could undertake. I took this on, but came up against an unthought-of problem. I could not get any of our large staff of teachers to help. They were afraid, and despite Joyce's efforts to reassure some of them of the absence of risk with a contagious disease when normal care was taken, I got no volunteers from the staff of trained workers. There was however one man quite willing to act as interpreter and helper: our own house steward, Stephen. He was a Kukuruku but his knowledge of English and Yoruba was, by now, sufficient for this work. Incidentally, the project was good for our language studies also and the first time I preached without an interpreter was at the Ilesha Leper Colony.

I quote this paragraph from our Prayer Manual.

Africa has about five million of the world's sixteen million leprosy sufferers. Although multidrug therapy is now an effective way of dealing with it, there is still need to identify it early and to break down fear and prejudice in society.

We did not have any lepers with grossly deformed hands or feet yet, some were unable to carry out any construction or hand work. The hospital continued its

regular injections and treatment and the unit became a more comfortable place of residence and for some, the place where they learned to read and began to understand the teaching of the Christian Gospel.

## 10.5 Music and musical instruments

In things musical, I have always been a sort of jack of all trades but master of none. I fear, selfishly, I have aimed at what gave me the most pleasure and did not aim sufficiently at perfection. A series of piano teachers did their best until one discovered that I was not even looking at the music but was producing, from memory the work I had been told to prepare. She banged the music and shut its pages and let me go the lazy way I preferred. From that moment of release, I enjoyed her lessons.

The result was that I was able to play tunes from gramophone records and, of course hymns from Sunday Schools and Church as well as our frequent evenings at home, round the piano. The 'wireless' was still a long way off. But, despite the joy of an ever increasing ability to harmonise, sadly I paid the penalty of decreasing ability to read an accompaniment when a piece was put before me. Several times during later years, I have tried to recapture this ability and have paid for lessons, but without success. However, the great pleasure of being able to play continues even if mainly for my own enjoyment.

I was always ready to have a go on any kind of instrument. An early undertaking was a harmonica tied to the handle of a right angled walking stick, the ferrule of which I stuck into my shoe. This enabled me to hold the stick rigid between my knees and leaving both hands free to play the piano whilst my mouth was level with the mouth organ. I often performed in this way and, if I got an encore, I changed the setting and, playing the base notes with my nose, still had two hands for the keyboard. My mother used to worry about this and feared I would develop a boxer's nose as well as a crooked mouth from the harmonica. Happily I persisted and developed no facial deformity.

Talking of encores; they were very popular in those days. They increased the value of an evening out, by making it last longer, all of sixpence (back seats, shilling for the front). In these modern days, we can't win. In Radio or TV we take what we are given; encores are useless. Although one notices the quantity of Repeats shown on our screens, not necessarily because of the generosity of the BBC, quite the reverse. These programme fillers save the authorities a lot of money, and are often the load of rubbish, which we turned off when they first appeared on our screens. Hats off to the good old 'Proms.' One cannot miss the rapture on the faces of those who already have stood for a couple of hours, when they succeed in getting 'Rule Britannia' several times as a result of their clamour for an encore.

I must get back to where I began to wander. Failure to read music at sight, was not the only disappointment I had in things musical. I have already told of the accident to the carrier resulting in the breaking of my portable gramophone away in the African bush. I also related how I carried my banjo throughout a

three month visit to the United States and Canada. I also took my banjo and violin to Nigeria. Opening the violin case on the first occasion I was urged to “play something” I was horrified to see that the instrument had been overcome by the tropical heat and, literally, it had sat down, flattened. I hurried to my banjo case and here again, the glue had melted. Foolishly I discarded both. With today’s prices on the home market for such items, new or second-hand, I only wish I had held on to both until domiciled in a cooler climate.

This obviously is the place to write of the sad end and final passing of the piano which had fallen from the ship’s hoist and reached the wharf with a thud. It had served so long and so well after extensive repairs, even if of a Heath Robinson type. It stood in the corner of my verandah. We went on leave and, six months later returned and found the piano still standing where it was when we went away. During our absence it had been attacked by termites and, without leaving any external signs, the white ants had eaten all the soft wood interior. They had left the walnut veneer as their shield against light, for white ants only work in darkness. It was sad but ludicrous to be able, literally, to stick my finger through the veneer into space. Exit one banjo, one violin and one piano; heavy loss indeed.

We bought an upright piano next leave. I got it for 6 pounds in an auction, made a case for it and it withstood the hazards of export, finally filling the same spot on the verandah, vacated by its white ant eaten predecessor. While on pianos, I have been glad to learn the D.I.Y. ability to tune these instruments and, in many countries as well as a few in Nigeria, have had the pleasure of being able to make playable again pianos which reluctantly had been written off by lonely people living in isolated outposts.

## 10.6 The Ilesha brass band

During one of our early furloughs or leaves, we were visiting Joyce’s sister and her husband in Devon. We were invited to the home of Major and Mrs Windeatt. We talked much about Africa and of the usefulness of objects, which had often lost their interest in England. After tea, we visited their large garden. In the garage, balanced on the rafters was a full size Army bass drum, which had belonged to the major’s old, regiment. Jokingly he asked me if I had any need for a drum out there. We laughed and I told him that apart from the Nigerian Regiment and the Nigerian Police I knew of no private nor any other official band. It made me think; what about starting a brass band in Ilesha where we lived and worked. An absurd thought but funny. Then, being serious, who could I get to teach able young Africans to play any instrument and, anyhow, where could I get the funds for the purchase of some? Well, I thought “I know where I can get a drum”. Later, I went to see Major Windeatt again and, when we returned to London, his drum was no longer on the rafters of his garage but on the roof rack of our car.

We set about enquiring from churches where we learned there used to be a brass band, but could not track down any of the instruments. A couple of visits

to the specialists, Boosey & Hawkes, in London were most helpful. We bought simple instruction manuals and learned what they regarded as a minimum list we should acquire in brass: trumpets or cornets, trombone, euphonium and possibly a tuba. In woodwinds, a clarinet, flutes and then to add to our large bass drum, we would need a side drum.

We went back to Nigeria after leave. Our Band still consisted of a big drum a sheaf of instruction manuals and high hopes during daylight and fanciful dreams at night of progress. I contracted our Resident Magistrate who, in political terms was Number One in responsibility for the affairs of justice of the Province and leading guide of the Native Administration (the people's African Chiefs). He was interested and, as a music enthusiast, promised to give the idea all the support he could. Some time later he told me that he had managed to trace a few discarded Brass items, which I could get from the Police Band. These included one Euphonium, one Tuba, a couple of cornets and a clarinet in poor condition. We also got a few from the Army. Now, national bands like Police and Army would condemn instruments, which in my opinion had still some life in them. So, as a hungry tramp will gladly snatch a bone or some stale bread cast off in the rubbish bin of some restaurant, I was ready to be a scavenger and take anything I thought I could use and return the unusable to the rubbish bin.

We had books with the know-how and we had the basic material, but there remained two urgent requirements, a bandmaster capable not only of conducting but of being able to teach the correct use of each instrument, and of course, enough young enthusiasts from whom to select the members of the band. When I mooted the idea amongst the young men in the churches there was an immediate favourable response, but no teacher emerged. Slowly I learned how to handle a trombone and then the euphonium, which is a junior member of the tuba family. I chose this because its wind requirements are much less than the big brother. Fortunately, as a youth, I had been both a Boy Scout and later, in order to help out an inner city Boys Brigade, some of my pals and I had joined the Brigade to swell up its numbers. I had therefore acquired a little knowledge of lip position and how to blow into an old fashioned bugle in the hope of getting a variety of sounds. This made the attempt at learning and teaching the cornet or trumpet much easier. After a lot of practise and several months, I felt ready to show the aspirants what I had learned. I made no progress whatsoever with the clarinet and, like a bad workman, tended to blame the instrument. Anyhow, the idea appealed to one youth and he made much more progress than I had or could. I was much happier with a tin whistle than a flute. My dignity, however, was saved by the mere fact that no flute was ever offered to our band and we certainly did not buy one. So James Galway still goes unchallenged.

Our house in Ilesha was the only European residence in the town, our hospital and the few remaining residences were outside the town boundaries. This fact was much appreciated as a complimentary welcome by the earlier missionary resident. It was later discovered to be the site of a large refuse deposit. I hope that fires had had a cleansing effect on the refuse. I later had to risk undertaking a scheme to underpin the foundations where sinking caused anxiety, obviously

where there was more soft rubbish than the original builders ever suspected. The house was large with mud walls two feet thick. The upper floor provided all our living rooms requirements. Downstairs was a large waiting room, offices and storerooms and in our day three rooms for dispensary and medical facilities. The kitchen was a separate erection of corrugated iron sheets in order to keep smoke and smells outside the living quarters.

On Tuesday evenings we had band practise in the Waiting Hall downstairs. This was more convenient for me as the alternative rooms would have to be in our large church and school complex a few hundred yards from us. I was able to hear the sounds during practise and, if there was evidence of difficulty, I could go downstairs and help to put things right. One week, we had a visit from the Chairman of our District Synod and his wife. They would arrive before we could get home from another engagement. We had written to explain this and the steward would supply orange juice and also carry up tins of hot water for their baths. We had forgotten it was Tuesday and to warn them about band practise. When we did return they did tell us of strange noises and assumed that our neighbours were slaughtering an animal just over the wall, a common occurrence where no law confined such undertakings to a Slaughter House. Our visitors listened with interest, then amazement when, after the usual warming up period, the animal being slaughtered changed from weird noises to 'God Save the King'.

That gives a clue to the progress already made. I mentioned elsewhere, that any applicant for a job as a teacher, was surer to get a job if he could play the harmonium. One day, a qualified teacher walked into my office seeking employment. I was amazed to find that he had been a bandmaster at home in the church of Scotland Mission near Calabar. He got the job. Band practise was moved to our school compound the band grew and we got the length of performing at functions. It was very gratifying to see what that chap could get out of the members and their instruments. I can still see old Sam from the Bookshop, playing the tuba, cheeks distended a bit too much but thoroughly enjoying the deep notes he could produce. These were so loud that we had difficulty in preserving a balance with too few solo cornets etc. I still have a cutting from the English 'Daily Mail' with a descriptive article under the large print heading 'Brass Band on the Mission Field'. That was us.

Apart from harmoniums, details of which will follow, I think the only other instrument I need include is the Piano Accordion. A Nigerian teacher asked us as we were preparing to go on leave, if we could buy for him a good, second-hand Piano Accordion. I promised to try. In a overcrowded junk shop in London, I got one for 4 pounds 10 shillings. I so enjoyed trying to play this during our leave that I was determined to buy one for myself. So I came to own and use in public, yet another instrument. On our retirement to England, I led our carol singers every Christmas with this very portable music as we went from door to door collecting for the National Children's Home. Each evening ended as twenty five young people descended on a pre-arranged house where we enjoyed hot mince pies and many other dishes as well.

So it will be seen what I meant when I wrote about being a 'Jack of all

trades in things musical'. I have dealt with 'my music' thus far. I hope there will be more to follow for, after all, and I do mean "after all" I do hope to take up the harp and to enjoy playing it for a very very long time.

# Chapter 11

## The Road To The North

### 11.1 The earliest Methodists in Nigeria

The enthusiasm of the earliest of our Methodist missionaries in West Africa is an inspiration. In 1842 they were the first Protestant workers in what was later to become Nigeria. Their dream was to evangelise the whole country.

Despite heavy losses through malaria, black water and yellow fevers their slogan was “ON TO CHAD”. Now Lake Chad was 800 miles from the Coast. In pursuit of their quest, they met with appalling health problems and extraordinary fluctuations in supplies of men and money from England. Progress was very slow in the push to the north. Indeed, from the arrival of Thomas Birch Freeman in Badagry, the Mission was still bogged down in consolidating work amongst the Egbas in Abeokuta (60 miles) almost fifty years later.

Townsend, Workman and Eayrs in their ‘New history of Methodism’ say: “it appears to have been the turn of the century before great centres in Yorubaland like Oyo and Ibadan have been occupied”. They suggest that perhaps it was “the great secession in the home Church which, for a while crippled our forces”. In any case, the dream in the slogan “On to Chad” disappeared and the only other reference by these three historians is “Lack of means made abortive an attempt to open new work up the Niger.”

I feel, from my own experience from a quarter of a century in up-country pioneer work in Nigeria, that other factors may have played an important part in retarding growth.

West Africa is the home of many hundreds of tribes, each with its own language. Its peoples are tribe-conscious and proud. Inter-tribal warfare has been a brake on progress and has taken its toll in death and destruction. Painful and disfiguring facial cuttings and marks have branded for all time the bearers with proof of their tribal identity and added to the tribe’s parochialism.

Even the keenest missionary workers can become so obsessed with the importance of what they are doing on their own patch that they can become less attracted by, and even opposed to the wide distribution of meagre ‘block

grants' to the whole District. They collar as much as they can for their beloved undertakings and forget the distant unevangelised tribes.

So, not only was the tribal barrier and the impossibility of working amongst two enemy tribes at the same time a cause of delay, the Ijebus, the Ijeshas or the Egbas demanded the undivided attention of their own missionary. Sadly, records show the success of this universalism in retarding extension and missing the wonderful opportunity that lay before the early missionary pioneers of the "On to Chad" movement.

In their "Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society" (Findlay and Holdsworth Vol. 4) we are given much more detail of the fluctuating concern to reach Chad. At the end of the 1870s the Chairman of the District wrote "We have no intention of allowing our energies to be cramped and the aggressive spirit of the Church to be confined. It is our desire to press forwards the countries of Central Africa. We are preparing for great undertakings".

The Rev John Milum, who had been appointed to the Gold Coast in 1871, soon joined the staff of the Lagos District. He is described as a man of well furnished mind and thorough culture, characterised by true manliness added to a spirit of friendly consideration, but, beyond all these great gifts he had the supreme endowment of vision. He saw the vast tracts of Southern Nigeria brought into the Kingdom of Christ and he too had dreams of starting a Central Africa Mission.

Milum set out for the north under a very heavy blow. His wife had joined him but she became ill and deteriorated so rapidly that she had to sail back again from the West Coast. She never returned. She died on the homeward voyage and was buried at sea. Her stay in Africa had lasted just five weeks.

Because of the heavy fighting in intertribal wars, Milum could not walk through to the north. Instead, he had to travel by canoe up the Niger. He opened a mission station at Shonga. The Rev M J Elliott joined him there in 1879. This must have been a great encouragement, for Elliott too was a man of vision. Indeed, in addition to hopes for a Central African Mission, they now spoke of getting through to Ethiopia.

The Missionary Society in London was fully aware of these aspirations. In a letter written to the Field Secretary for Africa, Elliott reminded him of his own parting words when Elliott sailed for Africa: "Remember Lake Chad".

It must have been a thrill to get as far as the lower borders of the Sudan in this Nupe country. Milum and he begged the Home Church for at least four missionaries for this northern thrust. The appeal was not successful. Soon afterwards, Elliott was invalided home, just escaping with his own life.

Meanwhile, progress in the south had not reached more than 200 miles, and the resources were used. Satisfaction seems to have been found in concentration and consolidation. Looking back now, one sees that we had become firmly stuck. We pumped in money and manpower and controlled too rigidly a limited field, instead of encouraging Africans to be less dependent, in order to get the message over in a bigger field.

The Church Missionary Society who arrived a few years after us, adopted the wider horizons policy with amazing success. They now cover a much larger

area than ours and have a tremendous African staff.

So, to return to John Milum he was astonished and disgusted to be recalled to the south. The northern enterprise was abandoned. The vision and call "On to Chad" appears now in Synod records only. The Methodist Church will never get to Chad. The north has been invaded from the north by the carriers of the words of the Koran. A sad but true observation was made in the report of another part of West Africa "Every Mohammedan trader is a missionary of his religion, and the paganism of the African yields at once to the presentation and practice of the Moslems". But our Church in the south appears to have known nothing of these things.

In 1929 that "On to Chad" spirit found a new supporter. I had my work in the south, but eagerly listened to any news I could get of, or from the north. Happily the girl I hoped to marry shared my outlook, and in 1933, when we married, we became 'Partners in Pioneering'. We became known by that title and were introduced as such to hundreds of audiences and congregations throughout the United Kingdom to Eire.

"It's been proved in other countries that of all forms of service that have been effective among Mohammedans, that of the medical missionary stands first."

## 11.2 Starting work in the north

I have already written of Joyce's concern to get out from the Ilesha Hospital and into the villages. Such were the appalling conditions of many patients carried to the hospital as a last resort, after the witch doctor done his best, or his worst, that something had to be done to stem the flow of moribund sufferers from the villages from which they came.

Joyce's contract with the hospital was now completed and she was free to use her skills and energies in meeting this long felt need, a freedom which was soon to be exercised in Northern Nigeria. We had no need to resurrect the buried slogan "On to Chad" as has been stated, consistent lack of concern in the Southern Church and the inability of the Home Church to supply the necessary staff and funds had stopped Methodism from filling the Sudan, then unimpeded and with no danger of encroaching on the work of other missions. Thankfully, this vacuum in Northern Nigeria was filled by the Sudan Interior and the Sudan United Missions. Their work, however, did not cross the Niger southwards. What about the large area of land still in the north but on our side of the river?

In the Ilesha circuit to which I had been appointed as Superintendent in 1931, we had one small church over the border with the north, in the town of Offa. This was made up entirely by African Christians who had gone there with the gradual extension of the railway being constructed from the Coast to Kano. Offa became an important terminus for some time, pending the next extension through Ilorin, on to the Niger and the erection of the long bridge across that river. This task was serviced from Offa with its large railway engineering works.

We had a catechist in charge of the small Christian Church and school in

Offa. But the catechist was a southerner and employed by our southern circuit in Ilesha. I visited the little church and school as regularly as my other churches and schools in the south. The enthusiasm of the railway workers was encouraging but disappointing. They had no concern about outreach, but wanted all they could get in service and money for their little church and their children at school. During my first stay in Offa they arranged that I have the use of a waiting room on the platform. Shunting proceedings seemed to reach their peak from 10.00 to 6.00 a.m. and a favourite spot for a driver to stop for a chat was right outside my waiting room. Steam gushed out and it appeared to be a rule that standing engines must signal their intention to move with several loud blasts on the whistle. Fortunately, on following visits, a senior worker was able to get the use of a two storey slated house. These supplied accommodation for European engine drivers. There were usually some unoccupied. It was a luxury to have even a minimum of furniture, also running water and a large bath in which to enjoy it.

After our marriage, our visits were more frequent also longer, in order to provide medical services. We gave much thought and prayers for the future work. We would replace the catechist with a trained Sub-Pastor from our Wesley College. The members slowly accepted that whilst he would raise the status of their church, his appointment would be as a pioneer. He would visit towns and villages north of Offa. We would give him a young assistant Pupil Teacher to carry on the school.

In 1936, Synod agreed to the appointment of the man of my choice and Emanuel Fowode came to Offa. He was a very happy, attractive type of Christian, fond of lyric singing accompanied by clapping to keep the beat, but more important, he was keen on outreach and was prepared to undertake as much trekking as required.

I asked him to go off in a different direction each week, to make a map of the countryside denoting the location of towns and villages, the length of time it took to walk to each and the approximate population. He would report on the reception he got and whether there had been any former Christian workers visiting them. There was no trace whatsoever of any former Christian visitor and, as he covered an ever wider area, it became clear that his was the first and only Christian visit.

On Saturdays Eman was free. On Sundays he conducted worship in Offa, Monday and Tuesday he stayed in Offa, giving supervision to the young teacher and visiting his members, and then Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, he did his weekly village work. His four years training covered the three year normal training course for teachers. The fourth year was spent entirely on evangelism, theology and church policy and doctrine. Sub-Pastors sacrificed the opportunity of earning a salary for this year. This helped the College to produce a fine, dedicated type of man for church work.

Our visits to Offa now allowed time to accompany Eman to all the places he had visited. Our friend and co-worker Stephen, assisted the doctor everywhere and patiently dressed nasty sores and horrible eye conditions and the follow-up after he opened an abscess or performed other minor operations. We always got

a hearty welcome and were asked to come again as soon as possible.

On leaving college, Eman married. During the happy early months his young wife went with him on his weekly treks and gave her support to his work. Women in the villages were amazed that any young woman would dare to stand up and speak with her husband in the open air. They themselves would talk a lot, argue and even fight within their own family or dwelling, but this was an unheard of liberty.

In due course she became pregnant and, as the months passed, had to cut down her treks. There were no roads, so journeys were all on foot. She would wave Eman off and look forward to having his favourite meal ready for his return. This was usually on Friday afternoon. One such Friday afternoon, as he was returning to Offa, Eman was surprised to see one of his church members waiting for him along the bush path. The messenger was the bearer of the sad news that the previous afternoon, Eman's young wife had died. Premature twins had been born but did not survive. So, the members carried through the very solemn triple burial. Internment normally takes place on the day of death. Eman did not go straight to his house, but to the place where she had been laid and those two little ones who had had no chance of survival.

As soon as we heard this tragic news, we set out on the journey to Offa. I thought that the best source of comfort could come from his own family, and advised Eman to go home for a few weeks and, when he felt ready, to come back to Ilesha and we could talk about future plans. He went home. Ten days later there was a knock on my office door and in walked Eman. I welcomed him and said I was surprised to see him so soon. Then I asked him what he wanted to do. At once he replied "I will go back to the north." What, I replied, you want to go back where it all happened? Yes. I will go back. Why? After a short delay he said: "I have been telling those people that death is not the end in our Christian faith, it is the beginning of new and everlasting life with god. Now, if because of what has happened, I do not go back those people will not understand. No, they will not understand."

He went back. He passed on his message of life and hope, now confirmed through his own personal experience.

I am sure that much of those wonderful things which later developed in this pioneer adventure, might never have happened if Eman had asked for a transfer and had not gone back to the north.

### 11.3 North to Kaiama

We became so impressed with the opportunity and the fact that so far, there was no evidence of any previous work done by any Christian church, that we put in a report and a request to our Annual District Synod.

This told of our findings during detailed trekking and of population estimates. True there were distances between the villages which in the absence of roads had to be covered on foot, but the welcome and the response made up for the extra walking. The request was for permission to spend up to three months

searching that area north of Yoruba land right up to the River Niger and out to the border between Nigeria and French Dahomy. Synod readily agreed and called for a full report at its next meeting.

When the dry season came round, we put into operation our much discussed plan. We would go as far as we could in our Kit Car. Eman would be with us and our own cook and Stephen, the ever helpful companion, medical dresser, interpreter and general friend maker. We would aim at visiting two Emirs, Kaiama and Bussa, the former just over 100 miles whilst Bussa was just under 100 miles further north and situated right on the Niger. There was a very rough dirt road as far as Kaiama, if we went far enough to the west of Kishi. The Church Missionary Society had work in Kishi, the last outpost of their Yoruba speaking area. This route would also take us through Igbetti where there was an isolated station of the Canadian United Missionary Society. We visited these folk who assured us there was no Christian work being done between them and the Niger. They had no plans for extension out of their own language speaking area. They wished us well in any plans we might make.

So we left Yoruba land with its rectangular dwellings, most of which in the towns were covered with corrugated iron sheets, but outside the towns, with thatch or wide leaves. We travelled many miles before reaching the unknown Buggawa people. Their dwellings were clusters of round mud rooms with conical thatch roofs. We stopped at the first village. No one could understand what we said nor could any of the five of us understand a word they said. We decided to press on to Kaiama where we expected to find someone who could understand Yoruba.

Kaiama is at the end of the rough road, but had an English District Officer in residence. His large district covered the whole of the two Emirates. The official language was Hausa, the lingua franca of the north. Both Emirs spoke Hausa. We reported to the District Officer, got permission to use the Government Rest House and were invited to have dinner with him that evening.

The Rest House was in keeping with the Bussawa style of building, round mud walls with a thatch roof. It had neither door nor windows, just open spaces. It did have a cement floor but had no plaster on the walls, just rough dried mud. Furnished, that is with one table, two chairs, two wooden arm chairs without cushions and an old bed. We chose to use our own camp beds. It offered a wide view from within outwards but, of course excellent viewing from without inwards also.

We had carefully packed 13 food parcels and given cook strict instructions that they were for 13 weeks supplies. We foresaw the possibility that in an unexpected shortage of a tin or two he would "borrow" a tin from one of the other parcels. We knew that if this were allowed to happen, we would end up without any possibility of repaying what he had borrowed. This, if it were a tin of flour, would mean no bread for the last week. Our precautions were taken because of previous experience. At home it always was our custom to be wakened with a cup of tea. If there were a shortage, it was necessary to tell "Mrs" the night before, she would issue the needed tea. On one occasion, poor old Momo forgot to top up and next morning, punctually at 6.30 a.m. he walked

into our room, tucked up the mosquito nets and handed out two steaming hot cups of cocoa. Now, cocoa in the south is the main source of income for our farmers, and I am a keen supporter of the use of local products, but a cup of steaming hot cocoa as a revive at 6.30 a.m. is asking just too much.

On another occasion I had been on a long walking trek. Cook warned me on the day before the last homeward stretch that tea was running low. I agreed with him to see that one small teaspoon would be the allowance until we got home. After breakfast on the last day of the trek cook showed his wisdom in the calculations he had made. There was precisely one small teaspoon of tea left in the caddy. He packed up the kitchen loads, announced that he was ready and off we set. At midday, as it was becoming exceedingly hot, we stopped under a shady tree. Cook put on a very good midday meal. I joyfully poured out a cup of tea, made with that last teaspoonful. Instantly, I spat out the first sip. It was like diluted soap. In fact, it was diluted soap. On cross examination, cook admitted that as we set out that morning, he had seen his piece of soap left on a rock. He collected it and, for convenience, popped it in our kettle. He had forgotten this when we stopped for lunch. Tealess I set out on the last eight miles home.

While on the subject of forgets, I must include another incident, this time against myself. I had been on that long trek ending with a mouthful of soap, a very unusual way to end some sixty to seventy miles walk. On arrival home, Joyce, as usual gave me a warm welcome. However, instead of asking me how I had got on, she commented on my appearance and asked me where I had been to get a wash and brush up. I gave a hearty laugh, denied that I had been anywhere and then told her that unfortunately I had forgotten to take with me both my comb and mirror. She enquired as to how on earth I had managed. I assured her that I had overcome these mundane luxuries quite easily for (1) Cook had taken a spare fork. I tied a thread round it to avoid mixing and for nearly a week I had used it to comb my hair. (2) the absence of a mirror, I admitted, had been more difficult. Then I remembered that the top of our Thermos flask was marked E.P.N.S. I used this. Awkward, but to us seasoned travellers not disastrous. It did give my face greater length than width, so much so, that I had a tendency to shave my shoulder.

Experiences like these made us take great care in making up those 13 food parcels. Each contained tins or other containers of flour, sugar, butter, evaporated milk, powdered milk, margarine, tea, coffee, cooking supplies, fish and for our special Sunday treat, a tin of sausages. In most large village markets we could get yams or sweet potatoes, chickens and some sort of spinach or other green leaves. None of the above listed supplies could be bought for there were no shops. We had bought 72 x 1 lb tins of butter in Cork. In the tropics of course the contents became liquid. When washed in filter water, the butter became a creamy spread which we put in a screw cap jamjar. We managed for years without a fridge for the simple reason they were not available and, in any case, trekking as much as we did it would have been of no use. All our stores in tins stood up well to the heat of three or four degrees north of the Equator. Most cooks were expert in making bread in their open ended kerosene tin ovens, they

used palm-wine in place of yeast.

We toured the area around Kaiama and again found neither trace nor knowledge of Christianity. We made a very useful early discovery in finding that the Emir could understand and speak a little Yoruba. This enabled us to talk direct with him. Next, we turned to the north with Bussa on the Niger as our objective. A beginning had been made in clearing a track, wide enough for a vehicle, but no attempt had yet been made to cope with water, whether rivers or streams or even the amount that flows normally through a culvert under the road to enable passage of water from one side to the other. In the wet season it was impossible to use this track, but in the dry season even rivers dried up. Our journey was in the dry and, with great care to treat even hollows with respect, we were able to get through. We managed to inch our way through the tall elephant grass not yet burnt in bush fires, and to find the safest route to go down the bank of a dried up river, cross the bed and climb up the other side.

## 11.4 On to Bussa and the river Niger

Eventually we reached the town of Wawa. The people took fright and either fled to the darkness of their windowless dwellings, or ran out into the bush country surrounding the town. Slowly we found what looked like the residence of the Chief. He too had fled. We were impressed with the size of Wawa and looked forward to an opportunity to return there when the people would not be frightened.

We drove over a ridge of higher land and then stopped. A long way off, but quite clearly we could see the Niger, like a thick silver cord in the bright sunshine. The intervening miles seemed to be down hill all the way and we covered them quickly. Bussa is the place where, in the early 19th century, Mungo Park, the famous explorer, had been ambushed and killed.

News travels quickly in West Africa, either by tom tom drums or by runners. We knew that our arrival would already be known by the Emir and his staff, so we made our way to his 'palace' without delay and sought audience. We got a quick invitation to enter. Our normal procedure would require lining up a row of interpreters: English to Yoruba to Hausa to Bussanchi, and then back again giving the reply. This process slowed down any conversation. In fact, I used often to tell folk at home that by the time my 'Good morning' had reached the chief and the reply had come back, it was already afternoon.

The Emir of Bussa was a regal figure robed in white and wearing a tall turban head gear. He received us graciously and, because he was fluent in the Hausa language, he saved us one of our line of interpreters. He seemed pleased to see us, would do all he could to help us in our fact finding and invited us to come back anytime he could be of use. He and his chiefs were most impressive on horseback.

We were witnesses of a most extraordinary anniversary occasion. The Emir is a Moslem. When Mohammedanism was spreading over what is now Northern Nigeria, the Bussawa people worshipped their own pagan gods. Such was their

fear of being overrun by Islam that their chiefs used to mount their horses and charge around the very large square in front of the head chief's house. They slashed their swords and cried out words of defiance to the Prophet Mohammed. Today, the pagan ceremony is similar but, once a year the Emir himself leads the cavalry and the sword slashing and the cries of defiance ring out each time they pass the Mosque. The following Friday, the Emir is at the Mosque for prayers.

By the end of the twelfth week, we had covered an area the size of Wales and had not found a single trace of Christianity. We returned home to prepare the report we would submit at our Synod the following January. Our recommendations included:-

1. We would ask permission to enter this large area and commence any initial development work as an extension of the Ilesha circuit.
2. As soon as possible we would propose to make a new, separate circuit to which we would transfer when a relief could be appointed to Ilesha.
3. We would build a small mission house at Afon, providing a centre for the Yoruba speaking area, and live there for six months each year, covering the wet season. Then to Bussa, 200 miles north where the dry season would make travel easier.

We were glad to find that our Ilesha people supported this plan and, in 1938, Synod too gave its hearty approval to undertaking a missionary work within the District. It agreed to the setting up of a new circuit to be called the Ilorin Circuit and Borgu Mission. This would come into effect in 1939 when, it was hoped a new missionary would be sent out. But, unhappily, this was not to be. Instead of responding to the call of Africa, the Home Church called out for Chaplains.



## Chapter 12

# The war years

### 12.1 1939: Peter is born

We were due for leave this year. Church affairs as usual would be handed over to my senior African Minister, the Rev J A Pearse. Although nearing retirement age, he was quite ready to undertake the extended work. So, with no anxiety for the six months of our leave, we set out from Lagos and enjoyed the weeks at sea.

I engaged in the missionary deputation tours organised by the MMS Joyce did not join me for reasons which will be recorded here. Together, we visited our family in Ireland and other relatives in England and did as much preparation work as possible for our return to Nigeria in the autumn.

On 20th August 1939, our first son was born in the Elizabeth Garret Anderson Hospital, London. All went well with Joyce and with the baby, to be called Peter. It was, however, a very anxious time for war clouds hung heavily in the sky. Hitler's promises were worthless. On 23rd August, it was decided to evacuate the hospital and all those women who were well enough were sent home. We were staying in Joyce's old home in Brockley, London. Her mother very happily and efficiently coped with the one hundred and one jobs which have to be done on such occasions.

Each day the European news got worse. Neville Chamberlain's effort of appeasement and the whole Munich agreement with Hitler rapidly faded and belated war preparations were reluctantly made. Then came Sunday, 3rd September. Hitler did not respond to Chamberlain's final appeal, and the Prime Minister, sick at heart, waited until the last second of the deadline. Then the brief broadcast explanation of the failure of a mission came and the declaration that we were at war with Germany.

Within an hour those dreaded sirens, portents of a coming air raid, sounded out their shrill whine. It was said that somewhere, an overwrought official had, too hastily concluded that a skein of flying ducks was a flight of approaching aircraft. The reaction was immediate. ARP wardens rushed from street to

street and sirens maintained their doleful warning.

We shoved the Moses basket in which Peter slept, under the heavy oak dining room table and decided we would all go together in the event of a direct hit. No heavy oak table could withstand such. Then came the tremendous relief of the changed message of the sirens, the danger was over.

Evacuation became the order of the day, resulting in the removal of over a million people from their homes. Heart rending scenes were witnessed daily at London stations and those of other cities, as mothers said goodbye to their children. We moved too. Joyce's sister, also wife of another Methodist Minister who was stationed in Tiverton, Devon, immediately opened her home to us and to Peter's cousin, Angela, and her mother. Angela's father was in the wartime Fire Service in London. She was 3 months older than Peter. This invasion of two infants and three of us parents, must have been a great strain on the Shaw household, especially as there was no Shaw family. We have always been grateful for their home and their acceptance of all the extra work, noise and broken sleep involved.

## 12.2 Running the gauntlet of submarines

It sounds as though we were peacefully landed in a County remote from London and could forget the war while there. Far from it. The impact of food rationing and of petrol restrictions and control were yet to be fully felt, but apart from the physical changes to wartime, there was the mental anxiety as we awaited the October day when we, with a ten week old Peter must set out on the Atlantic and, for just over two weeks, run the gauntlet whilst an unknown number of submarines lurked in our course. This fear of the voyage was driven deeper as we heard and read of the British line "Athenia" falling victim to a German submarine in those early days of the war.

Our sailing date was fixed, purchases and all sorts of preparations had to be made but now an added dread had come. Suppose we were sunk, how could we give little Peter the best chance of survival? I have asked Joyce to describe these most essential preparations.

The preparations made were relatively simple. It was in the time before all the modern baby sleeping bags were available. We took a warm wooly pram cover, blue one side and white the other, stitched a zip into two thirds of the length, closed the bottom and the top, but in this way leaving a space or hood at the top above the zip. We then decided that it would be good to be able to strap him to Nelson, in case we had to take to a life boat, so wide straps and buckles were added. A second, waterproof cover, zipped like the first, was added to prevent wetting as we took to the boats. Finally we made a little waterproof bag with spare nappies. This was slipped into the bottom of the wooly bedbag, it also contained a note giving name, address and destination, so that if we became separated or if Peter alone survived, the finders would know who he was.

This may all sound melodramatic but once our precautions were complete

there descended on us a great sense of peace. This, in no small way, we regarded as an answer to many prayers being offered on our behalf. Peter slept in his Moses basket in the cabin, ready every night but, thankfully the precautions were never tested.

Finally we sailed on this nightmare voyage. We had various stops along the English coastline while we awaited arrival of other ships to be in our convoy. Now, convoys cannot sail at a greater speed than the slowest ship, probably a cargo vessel. We were on a modern passenger liner and, after the first few days, as nothing had happened, our captain decided to cut the convoy. None of the passengers were very happy about this. True, he observed some protective measures and did a zig-zag pattern in the hope of upsetting the aim of any submarine launching a torpedo at us. Each port at which we called, gave us a welcome break but then, usually evening time, once more we faced the dangers. It was a tremendous relief when, one day, we turned in between the mole walls of Lagos harbour, along the Marina and finally docked. Thankfully we stepped ashore and could set out up-country as a family of three. We did not think then that it would be six years further on that we could set sail again for a war weary England, still suffering the very many privations they had borne but rejoicing that although the war in the east, with Japan still continued, VE Day had come.

### 12.3 Safe home in Ilesha

Our reliable friend and colleague, J A Pearse, had kept the circuit in good shape and did not hand over any unsettled disputes. It gave us very great pleasure to invite him to conduct the service and to baptise Peter. It obviously gave him great pleasure, in a very full church, to baptise the very first and probably the only white child he ever baptised.

Joyce and I had led an open air life and had walked long distances in our medical, evangelistic and educational partnership and had gained quite a reputation. Sleeping in schools or churches, beneath the overhanging grass or leaf roof of a native house or even under a tree in the market place with our mosquito net hung from the branches. We did not rise as early as the village folk so there often was quite a crowd watching us dress, wash, and in my case, shave. We knew that our exploits were the subject of conversations amongst some of the more senior member of the mission staff. Some, whose job confined them to their schools, may have been reminded of their missionary reading of stories of adventure, and may have been a bit envious. When we arrived back in Nigeria with Peter, they concluded and said so that our life style would have to change. They said he was lovely and all that, but saw the end of our trekking programmes. Absolutely nothing was further from our minds and even when we consulted Peter, he said absolutely nothing!

Admitted, we took extra precautions. We had never been able to be extravagant, and had never considered ourselves as being the owners of a fridge. But, with an infant in the house, we fell to the exceedingly rare opportunity,

up-country, to buy one. It was 3rd, 4th or even 5th hand and belonged to a Salvation Army couple who were moving up country. Now the Salvation Army are not noted for fat salaries nor for luxuries and we understood all about the pensionable age of the fridge. It had health problems which led to their readiness to sell, it suffered from indigestion and periodically we had to stand it on its head to let the chemicals inside get the wind up. It ran on kerosene and was subject to fits of depression, emitting clouds of heavy black smoke from its wick. Still, we got results from it in the shape of many a bottle of cooled and preserved Cow and Gate for Peter. We paid 10 pounds for it. They say one gets what one pays for; true.

In trekking, we did have to carry extra loads. Peter's garments consisted mainly of underwear. This all fitted into his cot which, in turn, fitted into a metal frame which folded cats-cradlelike. The most important extra, was a very large mosquito net. When suspended from a tree, this gave ample space for our lilos or camp beds, a folding table and two stools or chairs and was high enough to enable us to move about with shoulders erect. Now in addition, Peter's cot had its own net thus giving double protection against mosquitoes. We were fortunate to have yet another line of defence. Joyce is one of those people much sought after by insects of the biting varieties. No self respecting mosquito or flea would pause as it passed me in its rush to get to her. So we were sure that if anything had got into the outer net, she would know as she awaited feeding time or giving other attention.

The arrival of Peter put us on a much closer level with the African people. Joyce had reached their highest attainment: motherhood. Single women missionaries were respected for their example, leadership and devotion to their tasks but, for them, as for many African women who remained childless, there was regret that they lacked the joy of a family.

I omitted one most important transport item. How did we manage to walk for hundreds of miles and carry Peter? First of all, while he was happiest in a sleeping posture, his carry-cot provided the answer. We shared our carrying of this very light cot with our trusted friends, Stephen and our cook. But, when Peter wanted to sit up and take interest in all going on around him, we thought out a satisfactory means. I made a very simple but strong seat complete with back rest. This we fixed to a metal frame with two uprights bent over to rest comfortably on my shoulders. Thus, he was at chest level, facing me, and I was able to observe any visiting insects or when he knocked off his hat. This also avoided the inevitable perspiration of two bodies and it left both my arms free. I know he had to view my chest instead of the tropical flora, but he never complained of that and soon, he was big enough to see over my shoulders. Then, of course the time came when he was able to walk along the more level parts of the bush path. We both enjoyed this new freedom.

Thus the fears that our trekking would be abandoned or even curtailed, disappeared and already we were a missionary staff of three, for the boy attracted so many people that it often gave us the chance to talk or tell some of the simple Gospel stories. Joyce used to joke with the women and compare their children. She boasted at the speed with which Peter produced teeth. Ah, said the women,

he will be slow to walk. They were right, he was over twenty months before he was ready to venture from A to B without having a chair or other object to hold on to. However, when he did start, we could not stop him. One day, as we both were busy in a main road village, she saw her patients while I visited my school, the girl who looked after Peter took him along the road and reported that he had walked from a certain spot all the way back. We counted the telegraph poles, it was exactly half a mile.

## 12.4 1941: Don't risk the submarines

In 1941 we were due to go on leave. We thought about it a lot and decided not to face the submarine hazard of a journey to England. The Mission authorities said we must take local leave. Now, in the Northern Provinces is the large plateau 4,000 feet above sea level. This offered the best area for those seeking cooler days and nights. We were able to book into a Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) station and we set out on the long train journey. We booked a Second Class rail compartment and one of our hospital doctors drove us the twenty miles to the station. We had a very good friend who was the one and only lady Education Officer for the whole country, she shared the holiday with us. She travelled First Class and had boarded the train at Lagos and been on it all day. When we found our compartment, it was clearly marked for our family, but was already occupied by a Syrian gentleman with a lot of loads and quantities of food. The Guard directed him to another compartment. He was greatly displeased and said "You are driving me out of my home". We were sorry, but with Peter on one seat and us on the other, obviously there was nothing we could do about it. We had two nights there and on the morning of the third day we changed to the Bauchi Light Railway: a narrow gauge line which took us right up the escarpment on to the Plateau. This was a most interesting but very slow journey.

On the main Kano train, we had a restaurant car and got good meals, but here there was no such provision. The engine puffed and panted any many times, we could have got off and walked along beside the train as it ascended the escarpment. Our picnic lunch was good, but we wanted a pot of tea to accompany it. Arrangements were made for this. I went along to the engine during one stop, with my teapot and spoons of tea already inside. The driver gave me a long handled coal shovel and directed me to put the teapot, open lid, on the shovel and hold it under a certain pipe. I did so. Then he opened a valve and out hissed steaming water, filling the pot. Miss Plummer, our lady Education Officer companion and we enjoyed many cups of good tea.

We got off at Jos and were met by the driver of the SIM car and driven to Miango, quite a long way off. Our room was very comfortable, all meals were served in the dining room and we really were made welcome.

The change of climate was wonderful and needing blankets on our bed at night was a pleasure we had not previously had in Nigeria. In the hot south, the very thought of any woolly covering was absurd. Then there was the joy of

playing tennis, wearing a pullover to keep out the cool air. It amazed us that the native people were completely unprotected. They did not leave the fashion of nudity to the children but all ages followed the same fashion. No wonder everyone seemed to run most of the time, there was no bus nor train to catch, they found it was warmer to do it that way.

In 1941 the SIM showed the sense that, 40 years later has slowly dawned on the whole world. 'No Smoking' was their policy. Today, in the eighties, it is forbidden on the entire London Underground system. In cinemas, theatres etc., the same is generally true. Many leading shops display notices and in many places, we are thanked for not smoking. Despite the SIM notices, amongst the guests opinions varied. It was not uncommon to miss some of the older southerners after our evening meal and, if we went for a walk, we could see, dotted here and there, the pinpoint glows of cigarettes as their owners puffed quietly in the bush. We were often amused at the way these old chaps tried to get round the rules.

Refreshed by the climatic change and also by the friendly SIM folk whom we met, so many different varieties and nationalities, we felt ready to return to our own work in the hot south. One great help in our pioneer work came through. When the SIM mapped out a new area, their policy was to send a married couple to live there. No building schemes, no church services, they were simply to live and to live simply amongst the people. They were known as 'Friend Makers'. Our mission set up was very different in that each missionary had many towns and villages to look after. We could not stay for long in any one place but, we were still Friend Makers who, as frequently as possible gave medical aid and showed films and told Bible stories in the open air. We did not build, nor even discuss any schemes during our early years in the north. So, we too were Friend Makers with a different method.

We had no radio and no newspapers and it was sometimes difficult to think of the hardships and suffering of others within the reach of war. We knew nothing of the progress or losses of those early days. We were thankful, however, that Nigeria was out of the range of enemy aircraft.

## 12.5 Delays in moving north

We were very conscious of the delay in our plans for extension. One problem was that I now had two circuits to superintend, eight quarterly meetings instead of four. As each quarterly meeting included a week of instruction and refresher course all this took up two months of each year. Also, the building of a bungalow in the north had to be postponed. Instead, we stepped up our visits in the north and each dry season went as far as possible to the towns and villages in both the Kaiama and Bussa Emirates. As Friend Makers, we were now accepted wherever we went, including Wawa, the place where chief and people fled as they saw us approach. Doctor, with her wonder working support, opened doors which would have remained closed for a long time to the introduction of a school, or even to preaching.

I have explained how the work was divided. In and around the Province of Ilorin, the southern half was Yoruba speaking but the northern half was a foreign country, abounding in foreign languages (this was the view of the Yorubas, who could not understand that there was anyone in Nigeria who could not hear and speak Yoruba). So, we managed in our staffing of the southern half. Untrained men, catechists, were stationed widely. In addition to their conduct of worship on Sundays, they were to gather children for the opening of little schools. We next took the plunge and I applied to Wesley College for two trained Sub-Pastors for our extension work. I got two: E A Ogungbe (who later entered the Ministry) I stationed him at Amodu and the second, Philip Adebisi, at Ogboidun. They had supervisory duties with the untrained men in their areas as well as their own churches and schools. These were lonely outposts in which each was a pioneer.

What of the northern half of the area? Here too we had signs of development. Some keen American agency must have written up the plans we had to open work in a large untouched area up to and along the Niger. One day I had a letter from our District Accountant in Lagos. He told us of an anonymous American source ready to give financial aid to anyone undertaking evangelical work in a new field. They would bear the cost of salaries for new workers for the first five years.

This was indeed splendid news, but there was the very serious problem of staff. All our workers were Yorubas. We called for volunteers amongst them who would go to far away Bussa to work and witness there. We got no response. It was not a question of needing more money than they were already earning. It was that old fear, borne of centuries of intertribal war, and general suspicion. This was too big a barrier. It is all very well for you to go there and talk of the friendly reception you got and how nice the Emir is, they argued, but we will not be living in the Emir's palace nor moving amongst his chiefs and ruling class. How will we be protected? Then too, we will have to learn a foreign language, it will not be possible for us to command interpreters. Strong and reasonable arguments indeed. How were we to solve the problem? The solution was not instant nor simple.

We thought about it, prayed about it, talked about it, continuing to try to present the call in terms of need, adventure and that the Gospel was not a gift for the Yorubas only. It became clearer to us that patience was the only thing required. In order to be patient, we were not inactive in our own work. Life went on.

## 12.6 Hyenas and a sleepless night

During one of our Synods in Lagos, we had been invited by a Methodist European, an official in the Lagos Town Council. He had put us up for the three weeks and also put up with us for that long period. We felt that the only way we could show our gratitude was to invite him to come up country and stay for a holiday with us. He was very pleased to look forward to a trip into the interior.

Many people get an entirely wrong impression of life in Nigeria through being confined to Lagos and its suburbs. He came to spend the next Christmas with us. Our other guest was a fellow missionary Ashley Rose.

We decided that a trek to the Niger would make this to be a never to be forgotten memory. With the Christmas festivities over, we packed up and, with Stephen and the cook, set out on the two days journey. We spent the first night in Kaiama and then the exciting part where we had to crawl down the side of dried rivers, cross the bed and climb the other bank. We arrived safely at Bussa. But I must relate a little of our experience the first night in Kaiama. The European District Officer, in his isolation, warmly welcomed us and invited the four of us to have dinner with him that evening. During dinner, conversation turned to animals and he told of incidents with hyenas around Kaiama. Not very long ago, a forestry officer and his wife were staying in the Rest House. They had a small dog and, as there was no means of locking him in, they tied his lead round the legs of one of their camp beds. During the night, a hyena was seeking food and followed the scent of the dog right into the Rest House where his owners slept. The fight was short and sharp and exit the hyena complete with a loudly protesting small dog which never returned.

Now I have already outlined the architecture of the Rest House. A large circular room with a low walled verandah, the conical grass roof covering both spaces. The central room with no bath nor water, but the cement floor over the whole building did at least give firm clean space for one to stand while bathing. There was not a single door or window frame, just large spaces for access and light. Naturally, we took over the larger room and parked our guests at the front entrance, one camp bed erected in each opening to this small verandah.

It was already late and very dark as we walked home after dinner. We had our torches which we shone to reveal any of the many puff adders in the grass. We did not delay in getting to bed. Our guests, like sentinels on either side of the door space, took a long time to settle down. One, or perhaps both had the fidgets, perhaps aided by indigestion, judging by the noises off which interrupted their whispered conversation. Regrettably, our guests did not have a good night and were very glad when our early morning cup of tea was ready. Of course, it was unfortunate that our host of the previous evening told that story of the hyena. Many times during the rest of our trip and later, we laughed heartily at their dread of a wandering hyena.

We took our guests down to the Niger next morning. They were amazed that the river should be so wide even though it still had a thousand miles to flow before it reached the sea.

Talking about the hyena reminds me of the time, a few years later, when Peter was with us. Once more we were back in Kaiama Rest House. He was tucked up in his carry cot, in the care of Stephen and the cook. We were on our way into the town, to keep an appointment we had made with the Emir of Bussa and his chiefs. As we drove along the narrow road, suddenly we saw an hyena running away from our car, but in the direction of the Rest House. We put in a terrible hour of anxiety; supposing Stephen or the cook had for some reason left their post and did not see the animal. It was our turn to enter into the anxiety

of our guests of an earlier visit. We were indeed thankful on our return to find that no hyena had been seen or heard. We took a more sympathetic view of our guests sleeplessness.

I tried to be a helpful husband and took my turn in the supper, bath and bed time story. Peter was a good listener and really enjoyed a good yarn. I read and read and gradually got quieter, hoping sleep was near. My voice sounded distant; sleep came at last! But the trouble was only beginning, it was I who went to sleep. Peter was chuckling at my funny puffs and was wider awake than when we started.

## 12.7 Contacting the neighbours

Whilst we were committed to the northwards thrust, I felt that we should make enquiries as to borderlines with other missions to the east, the route which John Milum must have taken when trying to avoid intertribal warfare and chose to make for the Niger and then turn northwards. So we prepared to travel to the lower reaches of the Niger in the Lafiagi and Pategi, it was important that as the building of our first mission house in the north, was held up by the war, we should at least know where Christian work already existed in the eastern direction. There was a European Government official at Lafiagi. I wrote telling him of our proposed visit and asked permission to use the Rest House for a night or two.

We eventually arrived. I called on the District Officer to report arrival. At the same time an African lorry stopped and the driver came and handed the DO an envelope, it was my letter sent a long time in advance. Major Glasson came out to welcome me, visitors were very few. I simply said I was reporting arrival. He shot out his hand and loudly said "What part of Dublin do you come from?" We had a good laugh at his correct placing of my accent. He too came from Dublin. At dinner that evening, to which he had kindly invited us, he presented us with a pillow slip each. No, not for extra bedding but for extra protection from the hordes of mosquitoes which in the greater darkness beneath the table, made for our ankles.

We reached the Niger on that trip but found that the Church Missionary Society was well established. So we returned to Ilesha satisfied with our journey and happy to know that there was no need to stretch any further to the east.

## 12.8 An appeal from Owo

Peter was growing and developing and was happy to play with other children. The African minister in our large Ilesha central church, had a son the same age. The two got on well together. It was funny to see them, like two elderly gents, talking about the weather and the state of the world. They were two years old and spoke different languages one each, but this did not appear to be a problem.

One day, my colleague received a message from a large town called Owo, about 100 miles from Ilesha along another road. It was a request that the Methodist Church should come to help them. He brought the letter to me for consideration and action. We decided that we should visit Owo to find out what it was all about. So the three of us, together with Eman Adubifa, my colleague, travelled to Owo. We got a great welcome from some 400 people. Somehow these people had been gathered together by a disciple of Swedenborg and were being taught the very strange tenets of the 17th-18th century philosopher, theologian and mystic. The people of Owo had had enough and had sent the call for help. They wanted us to take over their 400 adult members and their property. I thanked them for their confidence and assured them that I would consult our authorities. Several ad hoc committees were held and the decision was to go ahead. I decided that we could steer clear of the danger of any former Swedenborgian making a stand and claiming that the property still belonged to their church. We would ask for a new site and began all over again.

We were on firm ground here for the Olowo, the head chief of all the town belonged to the 400 group. He gladly gave us a large site of our choice. Every thing went very well, there was no opposition to the scheme. We built a church and a school. Pupils flocked in and the school was a big success. In later years the Olowo was knighted by the Queen. The church became the centre of the new Owo circuit.

## 12.9 A breakthrough in Bussa

We had now spent three years in the tropics instead of the usual eighteen months, followed by a six month leave. I have described above how we had taken a local leave on the Nigerian Plateau (4,000 feet) but the benefits gained were in no way equal to two sea voyages and several months at home. The Missionary Society was willing to send us to South Africa instead of England. So after three years, we set out on a journey right across the continent. Descriptive details are too long to include here. I have therefore written the whole account of three memorable months in Part 2: World Travel.

During our absence in South Africa, we had thought over and prayed about the sad failure to find anyone who would volunteer to go to the Niger River and thus the non-Yoruba speaking section of our new circuit. The five year offer of our anonymous American sponsors still held but sadly, two of those precious years had passed and we still had no one who would live in Bussa.

At the Quarterly meeting following our return to Nigeria, I shared our thoughts with the staff and again appealed for a volunteer. James Bakare came to see me. He explained, as I already knew that his wife and he had never had any children, whilst all the rest of the staff were family men. It would therefore be easier for him to volunteer to work in Bussa. Here was the first break and a very happy answer to prayer. It was also good news that his wife and he could get ready and go soon.

As soon as we could rearrange our programme, we set out for Bussa. We

told our friend the Emir that at last we could send a teacher. He said that he was very pleased to hear of the appointment and that I was to assure James that he would be welcome and need have no fear of trouble although they were of a different tribe. I raised the question of accommodation. The Emir said that he would arrange to have a house built for the teacher. As this would be our financial responsibility, I thought it wise to enquire how much this would cost. The Emir was silent for a moment and stroked his beard as he did his arithmetic, then announced the house would cost 3 pounds 15 shillings. I tried to show no surprise whilst I paused to consider this large total, then thanked the Emir and said that the financial arrangement was quite satisfactory. Of course, there would only be one room and certainly no supply of H & C taps in the bathroom outside. The room, with its conical grass roof would have no windows and one hole for a door; we would have to finance the mat which would hang over the door and could be rolled up and tied there as required. The adjoining bathroom was completely in public view and consisted of a mud wall three feet high, no roof. The house for the teacher would be ready in three weeks.

We returned to Ilesha, reported all to the Bakares and arranged a date for departure of these two who were missionaries just as much as we were when we set out to work for a people, not of our tribe and speaking a language which we had never heard before but would have to learn. One further disadvantage for the Bakares was that they would not have any text books to help in their study. For their new tongue had never been reduced to writing, whilst we moved into a language area where we had text books, dictionary, the Bible and many other works already translated.

Amongst other equipment, I gave James carefully ruled exercise books so that he could write down what he thought the sound of each new word was, then in another column, its meaning. We determined that as soon as we could take lessons at home, we would tackle the recommended way to reduce a language to writing. We felt sure that the research work James and his wife would do would be a big help.

When all was ready, we started our long journey to Bussa with the Bakares and their belongings. They also took a young relative to act as domestic aid, she would also be a companion for Mrs Bakare. The journey took two days and on arrival, we all stayed at the Rest House. The Emir was true to his word and the very next day the Bakares moved into their new house. The land given to the Christian Community at Bussa (of which there was not a single representative, but that clause in the agreement clearly indicated that I who signed the application, had no claim in the land) was of a generous size and the mighty Niger flowed past the bottom of the garden. It was unlikely that there would ever be a water problem.

We showed the new residents as much as possible of the town and countryside and introduced them to such people as we had already come to know through our visits.

On the evening before we were due to return to Ilesha, I felt that the best farewell we could give the Bakares would be to have a Communion Service. Our trekking table top consisted of some twelve slats of wood fixed on to a pair of

canvas tapes. This made it easy to roll the top tightly into a convenient bundle. When unrolled, it hitched into slots on the four legs of the folding frame. The result was a perfectly steady though very light weight table. We placed this outside the Rest House wall, spread it with a white table napkin, laid out our travelling set of twelve individual communion cups and the small container for the bread. To us, our constant companion Stephen and to our missionaries the Bakares, this open air Celebration was a moving experience. There, with the setting sun lighting the smooth waters of the Niger as it flowed quietly by, we all realised the presence of God at this act of re-dedication and valediction. So we left James Bakare and his wife, strangers amongst other strangers who spoke an unknown tongue, the first Christian witnesses living in Bussa.

The Bakares did well as they laid the foundation for Christian work in and around Bussa. The Emir continued to keep his promise to look after them and there was never one word of complaint. It was a long time before there was any sign of interest in what they said, but notice was being taken of how these Friend Makers did. James wrote down his observations of the meaning of words and, according to his ear, how they sounded. The vocabulary grew and grew. We visited Bussa as often as possible, to encourage them as well as to extend our friendship with the Emir and chiefs. The medical activities of Joyce were not only in demand in the town itself but spread to the widening number of villages around, where James had made contact. We were glad to find that the Bakares and our own presence was welcomed. We were no longer strangers.

We hoped that their reports we brought back each time as well as the letters James wrote to his colleagues would stir up interest in other catechists, now that the courageous Bakares had broken the barrier so well.

## 12.10 Troops preparing for the Burma campaign

Meanwhile the war years continued. Twenty miles from Ilesha was the chosen site for an airstrip and a large camp for men being trained for the Burma Campaign. Our climate was said to be just like that of Burma and therefore ideal for training. This new arrival of hundreds of soldiers and airmen, opened up opportunities for a very different type of work amongst our fellow countrymen now in Nigeria. The men became very bored with the bush life and the complete absence of healthy and moral leisure activities. We were glad to cooperate with the Brigadier in putting on a 'liberty van' for the queue of men who would welcome spending Saturday afternoon or evening, or alternatively Sunday afternoon and then English Service in our large church in Ilesha. It was a very big undertaking for Joyce to prepare for a dozen or more who were delighted when their turn came to get a half day away from the camp. For most of these days we had a female cook, Miriam. She got down to it, preparing cakes and all needed to entertain. It took her days to prepare each week, but no one left unfilled. We made very many good friends, amongst them chaps who obviously came from church-going families and who missed this regular use of Sunday. Others who had never had much interest but who became interested

while training for Burma and in their repeated visits to Ilesha. Our Hospital staff appreciated what we were doing and happily joined in the entertainment of the men. There was another side to the scheme, that of maintaining the cake and sandwich teas as well as a three course evening meal on both Saturdays and Sundays was made easier as we shared responsibility.

Two other domestic matters can be included here. Peter was not four and we felt a play-group could ease his entry to proper school. The ever-ready Joyce was glad to undertake this. In Ilesha there were several Lebanese and Syrian traders. They all traded in cloth materials and kept a very good stock and variety of same. One Lebanese family had also a four-year-old girl. The parents were delighted when we asked if they would join in and Houda joined Peter in the Play-school every day. The other domestic matter? Government had a very strict rule that any wife who became pregnant must return to England at three months. This rule only could apply to Government servants so, as Joyce was now in this condition, she became a pioneer in our own Mission and decided to await events in Ilesha. She continued her medical, Homecraft Centre and the play group until the time came for her to travel to Lagos where we had made all the arrangements necessary. This meant spending Christmas with colleagues who very kindly gave us hospitality during the remaining days of waiting.

Our second son was born in the Creek Hospital, Lagos on 28 December 1943. I gladly undertook the despatch of cards announcing the arrival of Anthony Richard, who was 10lbs 7 oz at birth.

We stayed on in Lagos for our Annual District Synod, which always meets in Lagos in January. Anthony had difficulty in retaining his feeds. As soon as the contents of his bottle, or even part thereof went down, he promptly sent it back. This became such an anxiety when we were back up-country again that Peter, then 4 years old enquired "Shall we send him back?" Our own hospital had not got the pathology facilities to cope with a thorough examination. This is where our war-time visitors from the camp twenty miles away were of great help. The army undertook to rush specimens 200 miles to the Coast to the large Army hospital. The bug was identified and the correct treatment started. Thankfully we watched the very quick improvement to a thriving baby who consumed and retained all that he was given.

I have already written that Peter was baptised by my senior African colleague. Peter Woods Ludlow. Woods was his mother's maiden name. To these the Owa of Ilesha had given an additional name "Setokunbo" which means "comes from overseas". We invited Edward Jones, whom we all affectionately called Jonah, and who was superintendent minister of the neighbouring circuit to baptise Anthony Richard. When the Emir of Ilorin, the big Moslem chief, saw him he too added an appropriate name.

Signs of a turn in the tide of war were showing. The big clash in North Africa was taking place in which 'Monty' was victorious over Rommel at Alamein. The Allies too, were rising to their peak ability to become victorious in the air and to make the whole horror of bombing cities in Germany a reality to Hitler who had enjoyed for so long being master of destruction in England with his Luftwaffe and doodlebugs.

Grateful as we were for those welcome signs of progress towards the end of the war, once more the time for leave had come round and once more we decided that we would make it a short local leave.

We were able to book into the Government Rest House at Jos, on the Plateau. Once more, a fortnight at 4,000 feet above sea level did remarkable things for the two boys and for both of us. One excitement whilst there was having the heaviest storm we had ever experienced. Four inches of rain pelted down in two hours. A concrete bridge nearby disappeared, with the road which had been over it. One foolhardy European decided to make a dash for home at the height of the storm. He could not see properly and failed to notice in time that in place of the bridge was a deep hole. With his car, he slithered down and came to rest in the torrent of water rushing by. He was able to get out and up, but his car was a write off. So that we could get to church in Jos, we had to select the narrowest part of the swollen stream and leap over. This was risking a wetting at least, but we had to leap over, carrying Peter and the baby. Not both at once, but doing the jump several times, we got safely over and were in time for church that Sunday morning.

### **12.11 Financial independence for the Ilesha circuit**

With the boost the Jos fortnight had given us we were able to carry on our work in the two circuits, Ilesha and Ilorin. The missionary grant from England had continued although Ilorin had been recognised as a circuit. Now, however, development was possible with the greatly increased availability of men suitable to take on responsible positions. We, ministers and laymen and women, felt the time had come for the Ilesha circuit to get on without any grant. The official term within the church was for a circuit to reach 'A' status. We lodged our notice of this intention at Synod and, at its next meeting were granted this new status. The churches in the circuit rejoiced with this step towards independence, the Missionary Society also rejoiced and, whilst for some time the Missionary in Ilesha was to be the superintendent of the circuit, my time in the northern work was increased together with the very small grant that had been allotted to the Ilorin circuit and Borgu Mission.

This transition to financial independence had taken us through much work after our local leave. Unfortunately too, much time was taken up with illness. I was struck down with typhoid. Joyce nursed me through those weeks, with the ever ready help of our hospital doctors. But, to add to our troubles, very soon after my being able to be up and about, Joyce herself went down with typhoid. Happily the time came when she too was able to be up and about, but the indications were clear. The normal appointment to the work in tropical Nigeria had wisely been fixed for eighteen months work followed by absence from the tropics for six months. As mentioned already, this was not a six months holiday. True, more than a month was spent on board ships, also the Missionary society

made full use of us for advocacy work during much of the other months which, too had to be the time for plans and the laying in of stores for the next tour.



## Chapter 13

# The peace

### 13.1 First leave after the war

8th May 1945 was VE Day (Victory in Europe) and although the Japanese surrender was not signed until 2nd September, very many people whose work had held them in Nigeria, as in many other countries, were long overdue for leave. Passages were difficult to obtain. We had a fairly strong case. We had been in the tropics through the whole war, except for our South African break and were both still recovering from the effects of typhoid. In addition, I had developed a very nasty boil on my thigh. These facts may have helped to get us a cabin on a sort of hospital ship, in that most of the passengers were in a poor condition. The ship was a Dutch M/V, the Peter Stuyvesant. We had no regrets this time, of getting away for a year's leave to make up for the long six years since we had left England. We had decided that we would divide the year between England and Ireland, thus giving equal opportunities for both our families.

With Victory in Europe, there did not immediately come a return to normal as far as shipping was concerned. Orders were strictly enforced and at night we had a complete black out. Those who smoked were forbidden to light or smoke cigarettes or pipes as they took their after dinner walk around the decks. With the eastern war going so strongly against the Japanese it was unlikely that they would launch any fresh offensive in the Atlantic, but there was always the danger that a fanatic might try to do damage and take his own initiative. More fearful passengers dreaded each night at sea. Daytime, bright warm sunshine, good food and complete freedom to walk or sit and, of course, the knowledge that we hoped to be home in a few weeks brought new life and health to the mentally and physically weary.

Other ships joined us as we reached the Channel. It was rumoured that we would land at Tilbury and our joy was great as we turned into the Thames Estuary and finally anchored off that port. Our joy was short lived for, up came the anchors and once more we turned away from London and down the

Estuary, joined by quite a large convoy. Patrolled by a Navy frigate, we turned northwards into the North Sea. Once more rumours floated around, a Dutch port for a Dutch ship, or could it be Hull, as some ridiculous passenger said: probably a native of Hull? He was right, it was Hull.

Now, it was the practice of our Missionary Society to inform Thomas Cook to expect so and so from such a ship due at somewhere on a certain date. Cooks would see to everything, including our financial needs. But on this journey, the Mission House could not know of our arrival. Hull had been battered by the Luftwaffe and accommodation in any hotel was out of the question. We were told to get to York as soon as possible and were even issued free rail tickets to make sure we did so. We re-labelled our heavy luggage: Thomas Cook & Son, hold, pending instructions. And we set off for York. It was late afternoon when we got there and were fortunate to find that the Midland Hotel could take us in. We used 'Room Service' to get a meal for Peter (6) and Anthony (1).

I have made no mention of the ports at which we called on the homeward voyage. One was Freetown, Sierra Leone. I record this fact for, while there, we bought a hank of bananas, not merely a 'hand' which is the largest on sale at home, but a 'hank' of probably a dozen or so 'hands'. I probably paid a couple of shillings for the lot. I hung the hank beneath one of the stairs on deck although in the shade they began to ripen very quickly. When we landed, we had perhaps twelve which had not gone black and dropped off. These precious remains, we took as hand luggage and both of the children had a banana at that hotel supper. The young room service boy who came to clear the dishes took up and closely examined the banana skins. He probably had forgotten ever seeing one before.

Peter was much admired. He was dressed in what looked like a bell boy's uniform, blue, long trousers and a row of brass buttons from neck to waist.

Next morning the problem of money became real. I had my cheque book but in those days we had no 50 pound plastic guarantee cards from the bank. And hotels just did not accept cheques from travellers staying one night only. In the telephone directory I was able to find a number of Methodist Ministers, so I started ringing around. I found one who was going on holiday that day and had already made his financial arrangements with his bank. I explained our problem, who I was and my reference to the Methodist Missionary Society. He was naturally worried but, bless him, also concerned for us. He looked up his Minutes of Conference. I was recorded there and the address I gave in Nigeria was correct so he agreed to come round to the hotel and discuss the matter. I produced my passport as further evidence and, very helpfully, he accepted my cheque and gave me the amount from his holiday money. He would be plain to the bank manager and get a further withdrawal. So all was well. I was able to pay the hotel bill and purchase rail tickets to Kilsyth, Scotland where Joyce's sister to whom I have already referred, was with her husband now stationed there. We got a warm welcome, it was good to be in a home once more.

We shall not forget the effects of rationing of food and the stress of air raids and war conditions which showed on the faces of the people. After a whole fortnight of good food and day after day of sunshine on the liner, we

had become tanned and rested, while Scottish and English people were thin, and sallow. As we sat in the train on our departure from York, thoughtlessly perhaps we gave the boys a banana each from our dwindling supply. We caused a queue on the platform of gazers at the bananas.

Whilst in Nigeria we had no official ration books, we were subject to restrictions, minimal compared with those living in Europe. For example, on our occasional visits to the Coast we always had bought a few luxury items like raisins for the Christmas cake. During the war these were unobtainable. Fortunately Joyce has always been good at making do, so her Christmas cake had instead of sultanas, diced dried bananas; very good too. Another commodity rarely obtainable was sugar. We either had none at all or perhaps would have a note from a not too distant trader begging us to take a 56lb bag of sugar. Usually, when we arranged to collect this prize, we found it an almost liquid mess. The trader dared not open up the bag to sell in smaller quantities.

In the U.K. of course, we had to register and fill in so many forms in order to get ration books. In the end, I had to travel to Stirling to get ours.

Apart from seeing grandparents, Peter had some outstanding priorities. He wanted to see the King and Queen and Buckingham Palace but, almost as high a hope, to see and travel on an upstairs bus. So, while I was away in Stirling, Joyce took him on the top of an upstairs bus. He was thrilled but must have caused great amusement for the other passengers by his loud voice enquiries. Passing a factory, he would ask "What do they do in there Mummy?" This reached its peak when, passing a cemetery he shouted out "And what do they do in there?"

Regarding his Buckingham Palace dreams, Joyce wrote to the Lord Chamberlain. She told of this six year old who could not be in England during the war and of his wish to see the King and Queen. She mentioned that she was a doctor and had been on medical duties in Nigeria. A very important envelope came one day in the post, very correctly addressed, showing that someone had done their homework, it had the long string of her medical degrees. If we took Peter outside the Palace at a certain time and day, their Majesties would be driving out. We did. They did, and Peter got a Royal wave.

We divided our year of leave fairly, spending half in England and half in Ireland. As a base we rented a cottage in Bray, a seaside resort south of Dublin and the very beautiful mountains of Wicklow and Dublin. We toured a lot and saw many of my large family and relatives.

There is no need in this record to comment on the great difference that came over the world with the end of war, but I would refer to the difference that came for our plans. We could now look forward to being able to build our new house in Northern Nigeria, our hope that an extra missionary could be found to take over my work in Ilesha, and enable us to devote our whole time to the development of the long planned but delayed pioneer work in the north.

## 13.2 Leaving the children in England

Family-wise, it was an unhappy period: Peter, now over six years old, must have schooling which could not be found in Nigeria. Joyce had been his teacher, with the aid of the PNEU (a parents correspondence course). Slow communications meant that lessons sent home, could not bring a reply for six or seven weeks. No air mail was in operation. He had made good progress in reading, writing and arithmetic, but obviously he must stay behind and attend school.

We took the advice of two of our fellow missionaries who had children in school in England. Peter joined them in Miss Woods Nursery Hotel in Herne Bay, Kent, and attended a local primary school. Dr Catherine Evans, who had trained with Joyce had a practice in Herne Bay. She very happily and efficiently acted as universal aunt for Peter and we felt this was a big help in what we dreaded, the separation when we must return to Nigeria.

Once we had decided to take the advice of our fellow missionaries, we arranged to rent a small house in Herne Bay for the rest of our leave. We would help Peter to feel less of a stranger in the place. Miss Woods took the boarders in the Nursery Hotel to Sunday School and Church in the local Congregational Church. We also attended there on Sundays. The collection was taken up before the children went to their Sunday School classes and, on the last Sunday together, to our great pride Peter, who could hardly be seen above the pews, was one of the collectors.

In the Methodist church the President of the Conference presides for one year only. The honour of being nominated as President Elect indicates the high regard in which the chosen man is held by Laity and the Ministry alike. One such holder of this highest office in the Church was Walter Noble, a true statesman and General Secretary of our Missionary Society. It happened that when Walter Noble retired, he lived in Herne Bay.

In 1946, as well as rationing there was a genuine shortage of unrationed items such as vegetables. I used to help Joyce by queuing for supplies. Standing in my place in the queue I was embarrassed to see that Walter Noble had joined us, three or four places behind me. I got the last of the carrots on sale that day. A few days later we met again in the same queue but Walter was one in front of me. He was wanting a cabbage, so was I. But, when he reached out his arm and took the only one left, he turned round and gave me a most unpresidential wink. The moral was clear: if you would be a good statesman, queue early and often.

To return to the nightmare of the pending goodbye, Peter, although the more conscious of that dread happening was not the only one sharing it with us.

In Northern Nigeria, while building our new home, we must find water and would have to live very rough during the operations. We therefore decided that it would be safest all round if we also left Anthony behind. He was then about 2.5 years. Now, many years earlier, Joyce's parents had made very good friends with Nellie and Roy Gooding and had helped a lot during his long illness. Roy recovered and was now Governor of the National Childrens Home at Congleton,

Cheshire. They generously offered to give Anthony a place in their own family, until he would sail to join us in Nigeria.

Sadly we were setting out once more for Nigeria. We had dreaded our goodbye to Peter. We took him to school that morning. Providentially the bell rang out very soon. Peter was off like a shot, he never looked back as he ran to the classroom. Our agony was greatly relieved.

We still had to part with Anthony, but we looked forward to his joining us soon as our new house in the Northern Provinces could be built. Not so with Peter for, Educational reasons demanded that he must stay in England.

People have often spoken of the courage and the sacrifice of missionaries who go to the ends of the earth, separated from their children. But far too little is said of the loneliness and sorrow of those children. Heartbreaks are not the exclusive experience of parents alone. We could tell when fears of impending farewells and separation began to gnaw. Weeks before each of our sailings to West Africa every second year, Peter would change. Less bubbling over with boyish fun and happiness, the shadow of the heavy cloud gradually came over him. In 1946, we had left him running to the classroom, not even turning to wave goodbye. We knew he would be well cared for by Miss Wood, proprietress of the Nursery Hotel, and by Dr Catherine Evans, his universal aunt, but Mummy and Daddy would not be there that night, nor indeed for another year and a half.

After a term in the local State School, he went to Vernon Holme, Prep School for Kent College, Canterbury. The Principal had kindly agreed to take him earlier than usual because of his circumstances. He appeared to be happy as a boarder. His Housemaster supervised letter writing and often added a few lines. Peter had chosen the cello as his musical instrument. The housemaster wrote of the day he entered the music room where a cello seemed to be playing itself until he spotted Peter behind it. Then there was the time Peter wrote a story for us. We were surprised to get two air mails by the same post. The first ended "to be continued" and the second contained only two lines concluding the story, followed by "Love Peter. XXXXX".

In 1948 our next leave came round and for a few months we were again a happy family together. Again we rented a house in Herne Bay to be near Peter's boarding school near Canterbury. During his holidays we all travelled together. In 1949 he was accepted into Kingswood, our leading Methodist Boarding School, the Preparatory department of which was Priorscourt, in Berkshire. We were back in Africa at the time of this transfer but Miss Woods and Dr Evans undertook the removal operation. His holidays were still spent at Miss Woods, Nursery Hotel, Herne Bay. Now this address was all wrong for a lad at the beginning of a Public School education. Of this, much more was to follow in 1950.

### 13.3 Sailing to Nigeria

I started this chapter with the words “Sadly we were setting out once more for Nigeria”, actually we did not set out together. Poor Joyce had the added loneliness of leaving me behind also. This was quite a blow, to start on a two weeks voyage without the husband and the two boys she had on the journey home. The circumstances were as follows:-

The Christian Council of Nigeria was a very active body and included all the Protestant denominations in the two southern halves of the country. In Eastern Nigeria there was a happy avoidance of overlapping. The Church of Scotland occupied all the Cross River territory. They had a very large Leprosy Settlement in addition to all the ordinary outlets for Christian service through church and school. The Church Missionary Society worked in the Ibo and Efik speaking areas.

Work in the south western section was much longer established than in the east. Here in the Colony of Lagos and the extensive Protectorate, Lagos had become the headquarters town for all the churches, with a resulting overlapping of missions. This explains why we had undertaken those thirteen weeks exploratory tour in order to ensure that we would not encroach on the work of any other mission in our expansion programme.

The Christian Council of Nigeria decided to combine in one new department, all medical work, including the north. The Council invited Joyce to be Medical Secretary for the whole country. She was very glad to undertake this responsible task in an honorary capacity. The Roman Catholic Church came in on this joint medical work. The Secretary had to deal with a lot of correspondence, visit hospitals wherever and whenever possible and attend the meetings of the Christian Council, alternately in east and west.

Towards the end of our leave we had an urgent message from Nigeria. Dr C Chesterman (later Sir Clement) a very prominent man in Christian Council affairs was arranging to visit Nigerian hospitals. It would be a great advantage if the Medical Secretary could accompany him on this tour. It was asking a lot of Joyce, a voluntary missionary doctor, to rearrange sailing dates, especially as with great difficulty the Mission House had managed to reserve the only berth left on board a very full boat. I therefore would not be able to travel with her. We decided she should go on the “Cupacabana” and be in Nigeria when Dr Chesterman would arrive.

This South American liner was to sail from Southampton. I went to that port with Joyce but also with my loads, desperately hoping there might be a cancellation which would enable me to travel with her. Nobody had cancelled so she went alone. Fairly soon after I got a call to travel on a troop ship. I was glad to travel on anything. The accommodation was spartan. One of my colleagues slept next to me in a large area aft. All our bunks were on the same level like a dormitory. We all lay heads to the unpanelled steel plates of the stern and with our feet towards one of the masts. About forty of us men shared the semi-circle dormitory. We were right over the propellers and had to get used to the noise and the shudder each time a large wave lifted the stern of the ship

out of the water. One of the great pleasures to me, but doubtless a fortnight in hell to some, was that as a troopship there was no alcohol on board.

We duly arrived in Lagos and to our personal reunion. Meanwhile, the tour with Dr Chesterman had been completed satisfactorily, well, almost satisfactorily.

### 13.4 Medical tour with Dr Chesterman

The tour necessitated long train journeys. When Dr Chesterman and Joyce were booked, the railway clerk conveniently put these two doctors in the same compartment for two. Joyce spotted the label indicating that they were to be joint tenants of the compartment. So began an effort to rearrange matters. Fortunately, a representative of Nelson's the printers and publishers had a compartment to himself and, as he realised the embarrassing situation he offered Dr Chesterman his spare berth. During the days, the two doctors were able to confer, discuss and arrange their visitation.

All went well until they reached Kafenchon Junction. The two men got out to stretch their legs with a walk on the platform. They decided they would like to get some snaps of the local ladies of Kafenchon. Their dress was certainly unusual. It consisted entirely of a piece of bush string around the waist. From the middle front hung a small bunch of leaves suspended, for inadequate modesty. From the middle back was suspended a disc made from animal skin. This had nothing whatsoever to do with modesty but served the useful function of always having something to sit upon. When walking, these discs flopped up and down.

Now Joyce had stayed in her compartment where, during the days, they worked on Christian Council matters. The two men came in to ask her to help on the platform with distracting the ladies while the men got their snaps. She mentioned the danger of their small luggage being stolen. They pointed out that there was a policeman stationed at the end of that very corridor, all would be well. With the snaps completed all three returned to the compartment. Immediately Dr Chesterman missed his attache case, Joyce also looked in vain for her bag containing needlework and other items to work on while travelling. The policeman spoke no English and soon the train pulled out with two extremely annoyed and frustrated travellers in that compartment.

Dr Chesterman's loss was very serious. His case contained his full manuscript of a book he was about to publish. Joyce's loss was different. For years she had carried round with her a piece of tapestry on which she worked in her spare time, but as spare time was a rare experience in her very busy life, after about nine years, it was not yet finished. It could not have served the Kafenchon ladies in making a garment for, when they decided to put on something different, they just plucked a new bunch of leaves. The missing treasures of manuscript and needlework were doubtless flung into the bush by the thief. Even the attache cases would not have fetched adequate payment for the thief's time. Kafenchon was notorious for men from elsewhere who hung around the station with an eye

for other peoples property.

One of our Methodist doctors in Eastern Nigeria had hopes that one day we would build a fine new hospital in Umuahia. As our Mission already had our Itukmbang hospital as well as several small institutions, it was felt that we would not rise to his dream for the Eastern Provinces. So Harry Haigh's thoughts turned to the possibility of the Christian Council undertaking a union development. Harry and Joyce, as Medical Secretary of the Board, pushed the idea and eventually sold it to the Christian Council.

A tremendous amount of work had to be undertaken by the Secretary. In addition to visits to Eastern Nigeria, Joyce paid a number of visits to the Government Director of Medical Services to discuss plans and the scheme in general and finally on behalf of the Christian Council, accepted the offer of a grant of 116,000 pounds. This was a magnificent sum in those days. Work started, Harry Haigh was able to give local supervision and, in due course, in part of the country where no other medical aid was available, a splendid large hospital was ready for use.

The opening ceremony was probably unique. The Queen was visiting Nigeria and her programme included the naming ceremony for the new hospital at Umuahia. Now roads, often too deeply cut with ruts caused by heavily laden lorry traffic, are not suitable Royal routes. So instead of being present on the ground, Her Majesty flew over the hospital and named it the Queen Elizabeth II Hospital.

We had retired from Nigerian work before this happy opening ceremony and Joyce could not be present. We were very pleased however, on one of our return visits to Nigeria to go to Umuahia and I, in particular, noted that all the hard work she had put in as Medical Secretary of the Christian Council had been recognised in the engraved plaque "LUDLOW WARD".

### 13.5 A new house at Afon

I can now return to the building of our new house. We had found a spring and had chosen a site near to this precious water supply, on a hilltop. We drew up plans for a U shaped building. A covered porch of 12 feet square gave entrance to our dining room. The room on the left was the office while on the right hand was our bedroom. This had a door to a cement floored 'bathroom'. Its only furniture was our travelling folding canvas bath, 286 inches square. (Later we graduated to a tin bath in which one could actually sit with legs fully extended and exult in our allowance of two inches of water). Next door, in the smallest room in the house, was an Elsan Chemical Toilet. This was the height of extravagance compared with the nil cost of sand for an Earth Closet, but it had a hidden advantage, mosquitoes did not like the chemicals that the Elsan manufacturerers used.

The remainder of the wing was our small spare bedroom and an equally small lounge with wide doors on to a patio, still covered with the same roofing. The opposite wing consisted of a store and our kitchen. There was a three foot

wide verandah all round the house.

The large village of Afon was about half a mile down the hill. All the houses there were of the usual reddish, unplastered mud walls, and thatch roofs but without the added protection we enjoyed in having corrugated iron sheets under our thatch. Here a most friendly District Head lived. He was the Chief through whom we conducted any local business within his district. Like the Emir of Ilorin, our big Provincial Chief, he was of Fulani descent. The features of the Fulani are very different from the normal Negro type of thicker lips and wider nose. The Fulani are pale, almost yellow-black with longer thinner faces. They are a very quietly speaking people.

As soon as it was possible on the completion of Dr Chesterman's visit, and our reunion in Nigeria after the voyage in different ships, we prepared to hand over the Ilesha circuit where I had been Superintendent for sixteen years. Joyce wound up her medical work where she now had seven village dispensaries, each with a resident nurse. The hospital staff took over responsibility and the good work continued. When all was ready, we packed our loads and said goodbye to Ilesha.

We lived a camp life at Afon whilst supervising the completion of the new house I have already described. With the joy that we were now resident in the Northern Provinces, we gave our whole time to the pioneer work which we loved and which we had not been able to undertake fully whilst still living in the South.

## 13.6 A new helper at Kaiama

As the presence and work of our Mission became more widely known we felt that the time had come to station a man in Kaiama, the smaller Emirate, but which still covered a large area of land through which we had to pass every time we went to Bussa and the Niger. Joseph Abe had been to our Training College, but had not been able to keep up with his fellows and did not pass his examinations. He was very active however, and it seemed right to give him this opening in the new field. There were some traders in cloth who lived in Kaiama and travelled to the many markets in the area, so he was able to converse with them in his own language for they all came from the south. The presence of these people also made it possible to start a small church. This, in some respects, was not a good thing for the native people of Kaiama regarded it as an activity for the Yoruba speakers only. When Abe gathered enough children to start a small school, he, of course, could only teach in his own tongue and such children as came, were all of southern families. These efforts in church and school were both mistakes. Until we could have a Hausa speaking member of staff, it would be wise to continue making friends of the local people.

Added to the mistakes made in permitting the founding of a little church and school which catered for Yoruba speaking people only, a heavier cloud spread over our work in Kaiama. I had to dismiss our representative there and the wound to the native people as well as to our work, took time to heal. Brighter

days did dawn and full account will be given of these days and events in later pages.

In Afon itself it became obvious that we must undertake medical work as soon as possible. In my record of Joyce's opening up the village dispensaries, I have already referred to the co-operation of Sister Mildred Earl in Government service in Ilorin Hospital. As our own hospital in Ilesha had not enough girls with minimum Standard Six education, their output of trained nurses was too small to let us have sufficient for staffing village dispensaries just then. Naturally they were reluctant to lower their standards in order to admit more girls. Sister Earl however, ran a training course in midwifery and a lower type of general training for girls with a Standard Four education. She was therefore ready to help us by taking Wende Awoseyi for training.

Wende was a devoted and splendid type of girl. Her failure to be accepted by the Ilesha Hospital was a bitter disappointment. (She had completed the Standard Six course but had not passed the final exam). She readily welcomed the opening given by Sister Earl and satisfactorily completed the two year course in Ilorin. She returned to Ilesha to serve in our circuit medical work. Her name will appear again, but I cannot but mention here the outstanding fact that in later years she became the Sister in charge of the large out-patients department of our own Ilesha Hospital where she had been turned down for training in her earlier years.

When we transferred to live and work whole time in the Ilorin circuit and it became obvious that we must open up medical work in Afon, Wende volunteered to come and work in the north. We had no dispensary but, with Joyce, she worked every day under the shade of a large tree on our compound and news of this new work spread rapidly. The shade of a large tree was a blessing but, what could be done in the wet season? The funds we had received from home for the building of our new house catered for that purpose only and there was nothing forthcoming for a dispensary.

As described elsewhere, importing unwanted harmoniums from England, repairing same and selling them was providing a source of income. We decided that this small provision added to an amount of faith, should be put to a dispensary scheme at Afron. It worked. Built with the very attractive brown/red Yangi and its cement pointing following the irregularly shaped lumps, we put a heavy thatch on top of corrugated iron sheet roofing. The building provided a large covered verandah adjoining the consulting rooms and store. The rear end was a 4-6 bedded ward.

The opening ceremony was a grand occasion for Afon and all who lived there. The Emir of Ilorin, the Provincial Resident Magistrate and many others were present to take part and show their approval of this, probably unique, non government undertaking, with its own doctor and staff. We made it clear that our work covered a very wide area right up to and along the River Niger. Doctor would not always be in daily attendance in Afon but, in her absence, Nurse Wende would refer anyone to whose needs she was not qualified to attend, to the Government Hospital in Ilorin. This was the understanding and practice at the Native Administration dispensaries throughout the Province. Happily our

co-operation with both Emir and Government was good and highly regarded on both sides.

## 13.7 Stephen

Our friend Stephen was still with us, helping in the house and in the church as well as his beloved activity, medical work. He had appealed to Joyce to let him undertake this work with her so that when, one day she would not return to Nigeria, he could become more useful to his people.

He travelled everywhere with us, cleaning up and dressing nasty sores and washing horrible eye conditions. On one of our journeys we visited a new village. We asked that we should be led to the Chief's house so that we could salute him. He was ill but agreed to let the doctor see him. His foot was very swollen from a suppurating wound caused by a large thorn which was still there, embedded in the foot. A minor operation followed and the thorn was removed. A very grateful Chief assured us of a welcome at any time we could return.

The same Chief's son had very poor sight we were told. Could doctor do anything to help him? Now, Suberu's trouble was that he had in-growing eyelashes which had not only caused much inflammation but had almost closed the boy's eyes. Yes, doctor could help, but suggested that Suberu should come and live with us at Afon as regular treatment and the plucking out of offending hair would be necessary and could only be undertaken with daily attention at Afon. This was agreed and very soon Suberu became a member of our family on the hill. His recovery was complete and he asked to be allowed to stay on with us as a compound labourer. So our message, work and influence spread and grew.

## 13.8 Crossing the Niger

In our most northerly station, Bussa, James Bakare and his wife were doing well. We felt however, that Bussa must be the stepping-off point for work amongst the river tribes, of which there were several. Each tribe had its own language, further complicating any progressive plan for extension.

We planned to explore the upper reaches of the river and one day set out in a long canoe with a crew of three. Two of these had poles whilst the third had a paddle which he used as a rudder. The poles were used so long as we hugged the shore, the paddle, when in deeper water we had to cross from one bank to the other. We were alarmed to find how swiftly the Niger was flowing once we got away from the shelter of the bank. Our crew knew what to expect and, before leaving the shallower sheltered water, they went well up stream so that the paddle could steer us down to the island we had already passed. On one such crossing we had a very frightening experience for the current exceeded expectations. We almost made it but were swept ever more quickly down. We must have shown far too much alarm, for Stephen unintentionally rebuked us with his assurance "God will take care of we". In desperation, one of the pole

crew reached up and caught an overhanging tree branch as we passed and, with his companion's immediate aid, pulled the canoe alongside the island. We all rested a while before thankfully resuming our journey.

Thus we came to Ojiji. Not a large village but one in which we estimated up to half the population, children and adults, were blind or partially blind. Ojiji in our memory has always been called the village of the blind.

River blindness was a terrible but widespread condition. Ojiji had a far higher incidence than any of the other riverside villages we visited. Stephen, with his great sympathy and patience, spent many hours washing infected eyes, but this could not restore sight.

I am reminded of a touching experience in one of our villages, far from the river. Doctor had frequently visited here. One day a little procession came into the village, a woman carrying a head-load then a young man holding the end of a long stick the other end of which was held by an old man. The youth explained that his father could not see properly and that they wanted the doctor to help him to see again. Joyce examined the old man's eyes. They were seared, scarred and sightless. She asked the young man how long his father's eyes were like this. He explained how, gradually, the old father had become less able to see. Doctor replied "Why didn't you come to me long ago?" No one told us, replied the son. Doctor said "I might have been able to do something for your father then, but it is too late now." They turned to go back to their village. The mother again lifted her head-load of sleeping cloths and food which they had hoped to use while the old man's sight was being restored. So they left. Again the son repeated his answer: "No one told us; we never knew!!"

### 13.9 Anthony's return

Our house building, as so many other people have found, took longer than we expected. There was another disappointment, it was very difficult to arrange a passage for little Anthony to come out to join us. Finally a missionary couple in Eastern Nigeria were sailing with their little daughter, Ruth, and very kindly offered to include Anthony in their family. They came in an old troopship, and our excitement was very great as this dirty looking, grey painted ship arrived. Anthony had grown and was very quiet. He accepted the red bus we gave him but he was not too sure of us. A few hours later Joyce put him to bed, under his mosquito net. He made it quite clear that he had come here on a holiday and that he would be going back to Auntie Nellie soon. However, he began to relax and it was not long before he cuddled up and told Joyce "You are a rather nice mummy after all".

Here are two flashes back to the missing months. In church, the Gooding family sat well to the front and Anthony often stood in the pew seat. Once during prayers, he was looking back down the church and a lady in the next pew smiled at him. Anthony, in his loud and rather deep voice said "Will you shut your eyes". The other incident was when Roy Gooding took him for his first hair cut. Addressing Anthony, the barber asked "and how would you like

it, Sir?" He replied that he would like it with a little hole in the top like Uncle Roy.



## Chapter 14

# Developments in the north

### 14.1 Foundation of Offa Grammar School

The large town of Offa appears at least three times in these memoirs. It is the first large town as one enters the Northern Provinces and was for some time the end of the railway line being built from Lagos to Kano. As further construction on the line took place, Offa was the supply base from its large engineering and supplies work. This meant it became the residence of a large staff of well qualified Africans and Europeans. Most of the Africans came from the south and we had a small church served by a catechist to look after the Methodist community. I decided to raise the standard of the staff, and was able to replace the catechist with a fully trained Sub-Pastor from our Wesley College. He was to undertake outreach work. I have already recorded the tragic event which left him a widower in his early years.

Our first school at Offa was opened in the small church built by the railway workers. The building itself had the usual mud walls, not very straight nor smooth. These had been improved with a splash of whitewash. The mud floor had to be washed each Saturday with a solution of cattle dung, to keep insect life to a minimum. The lower creation seem to dislike the smell, we humans got used to it quickly, but the khaki colour was not inspiring. The choice of site had been unfortunate and it was difficult to attract pupils to the school. Native residents were dependent on their farms and not on market stalls for their food supplies. They went to farm every day. They suffered much loss through monkeys. These animals were not satisfied with uprooting one growing yam, the staple diet of the people, and after one or two bits, the monkey would toss off the remainder and unearth a fresh yam. The farmers could not be persuaded to send children to school, they were sent to the farm to watch and drive off the monkeys when they got up to their monkey tricks. The children took it in turns to sit in a tree until the enemy arrived and gave the signal to their companions who sent showers of stones in the required direction. The railway workers were not farmers and their children were able to attend.

I discussed the problem with the Oloffa (Chief of Offa) and suggested we would like to move to a big and prominent site. He promised to have the necessary discussions and would let me know. The result was favourable and we were given the chosen site. This would allow for a church and four classrooms with space for enlargement to cover the eight standards in a Primary School. There was also adequate space for a teacher's house, a playground and other activities. We later built a Bookshop with an annex where the bookseller lived. The money for this latter construction came from my 'Harmonium Fund'.

This active interest in education was later to lead to important developments. The Offa Descendants Union (ODU) was a progressive body with a large membership. Most of the local storekeepers and educated persons in the town belonged, but the greatest financial backing came from Offa descendants abroad, living mainly in Lagos. They were very generous and did much good for their home town.

One greatly desired objective was to start a Grammar School so that children, having gained success in their Primary schooling, need not leave the town but enter a secondary school at home. In Northern Nigeria, the only Secondary Schools were Government-built, controlled and financed. There was little hope that Offa would be favoured by Government as a project, so the ODU aimed at an independent Grammar School. I had taken a general interest in the town and was on very friendly terms with the Emir of Ilorin, the Resident Magistrate and the Education Officer, so the ODU approached me.

In our developing Primary school on the new site mentioned above, we were making very good progress and already had several fully trained normal teachers on the staff. I could not commit our Mission to supply trained teachers ad lib, to staff a secondary school, but I promised to look into the possibility of making a start. Naturally I kept the Chairman of our District Synod informed, we also had several meetings with the local committee of the ODU to clarify the position. I was also very grateful for the support and advice of Bandele Oyediran, Principal of our Methodist Boys High School in Lagos, who was not only a very active Methodist but also an Offa descendant. There is much more to write of him later.

I agreed to become Manager of the Offa Grammar School and to make a start possible by lending one of our trained teachers from our primary school. We would start Form 1 in the African Church and planned to step up with an extra class each year. We would embark on a building scheme for the new school, including the provision for Science Labs in keeping with Government requirements. Fortunately the ODU for years had been contributing generously for this project so there was no problem.

So, at the beginning of the school year we started with forty boys in Form 1 and with our Solomon Ajayi as the teacher. The Oloffa and his chiefs were all there for the opening and although they were all Moslems, they asked me to open with prayer. It was interesting how they always referred to Solomon as the first principal of the school. No matter how large a primary school may be, it is always under the care of a headmaster, but the Offa Grammar School, like all other grammar schools must be controlled by a Principal.

We drew up plans for the building and were helped with the advice of the Public Works Department of Government. A date was agreed for the pegging out of the foundations which would be undertaken by a Government official. Early that morning I had an urgent message from the Public Works Department. The man responsible for the pegging out and measurements was ill. They asked me to carry through the programme. I had done a lot of this sort of thing for our mission buildings and actually owned a theodolite, but was surprised at the request. However, I agreed to go ahead.

Now, no one had told me that there had been a long standing dispute between the chiefs and the owner of land adjoining to the site we had been given. He had refused to allow the Grammar School buildings to encroach on his territory. I got on with the pegging and in so doing pinched quite a large corner of this owner's land. The Oloffo was present but neither he nor anyone else said a word about the palaver. The Chiefs gave their blessing on the scheme and, fair to the previous owner of the corner of which I had deprived him, he made no further protest and the matter was closed. "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread", and sometimes get away with it.

The ODU got its Grammar School, the first Independent Grammar School in Northern Nigeria. It went from strength to strength. In 1978, on one of our return visits to Nigeria, it was a great thrill to be the guests at a reunion. We inspected the completed premises of a now very large co-educational Grammar School offering full secondary schooling. The assembly was held in the large Ludlow Hall with the Oloffo, chiefs and people rejoicing over the act of faith taken by the ODU and me thirty years earlier.

## 14.2 Requests from government

Several years after the opening of the Offa Grammar School, I received a telegram from the Provincial Education Officer inviting me to breakfast with the Resident Magistrate. After breakfast the talking began. Government had a secondary school at Omuaran. It included a boarding department and its own farm. The authorities wanted me to become manager of the school. They would hand over the whole unit to the Methodist Church and would guarantee a substantial annual grant.

Quite apart from the school and its opportunities, this would give us entrance to a new area for general missionary work. I informed the Mission Chairman. He called an ad hoc committee in Lagos. Unfortunately, as the extension area possible came geographically nearer to my next circuit neighbour, although he had no plans to occupy same, he felt that I would encroach on what one day might be worked by him. He therefore strongly opposed the acceptance of the offer. Added to this a second senior missionary, who had led in opposing our accepting the invitation of the Ilesha people to start their now huge, Ilesha Grammar School, put up the same argument that we would be straining the output of our Training College and endanger the progress of our existing work in the south. I lost the vote and very sadly had to contact Ilorin and reject

the offer. (See 'Omuo' by J D Clark. Longmans.) It is tragic that, added to inter-tribal warfare, lack of financial support and the promotion of 'what we have we hold', jealousy has to be added, to hinder our advance into the North. John Milum and the days of 'On to Chad' seem all the more remote.

About the same time, I was asked if our Mission would take over the Government Leper work in Ilorin. I fully understand our Ilesha doctors reluctance to accept this in view of their limited medical staff but it did seem such a pity to reject yet another good will offer while we struggled to gain a strong foothold in Ilorin. We appreciated the high regard the authorities had for our work but these rejections would definitely impede the goodwill and co-operation of those authorities.

### 14.3 Bandele Oyediran

I have briefly referred to one of Offa's outstanding sons, Bandele Oyediran. Born into a Moslem family in 1908, he was given the opportunity to go to a Christian school and during those years he became a Christian. We first met him as a graduate teacher on the staff of Igbobi College, Lagos. This was a joint Church Missionary and Methodist promotion. He was an active worker in our church and a member of the Methodist Synod. He was one of the Lagos members of the Offa Descendants Union and a keen supporter and adviser in the Offa Grammar School scheme. He was promoted from Igbobi to become the first African Principal of the Methodist Boys High School in Lagos.

The flow of young Africans to British Universities was great and, as could be expected or feared, there were some who could not stand up to the strain of a new life in a new country for them. This became such a problem that the Government in Nigeria decided they must appoint a liaison officer, residing in England, and working between Nigerian undergraduates and the universities. Government approached the Methodist Mission and asked that Bandele Oyediran be seconded to this important post.

At that time, we had retired from our service in Nigeria and were then stationed in Margate, Kent. Bandele had come over and had been very successful in his new work. His Christian character as well as his long experience as a teacher enabled him to give much needed help and advice to his Nigerian compatriots. After one of his leaves, he decided to bring back his wife and two youngest children to London. Yinka, the older of the two boys started in primary school. Unfortunately, his mother found it hard to adjust to life in the West End and, as a result did not enjoy the best of health. It was decided that she should have a holiday back in Nigeria. She was due to return but, a few days before her flight, suddenly she died.

Bandele was thus left in a London flat with two little boys. It was near Christmas, so we invited all three of them to spend the holiday with us. Meanwhile, however Bandele had found a very good foster home for Femi, the younger aged about three and the foster parents were very sad that they would not have the little lad for Christmas so Bandele and Yinka, now about eight years, both

came. We thought a lot over the possibility of offering Yinka a home instead of living in a London flat with the problem that his father's duties required frequent and often urgent departures from London. On introducing the matter to Bandle he admitted that he had been praying for an opportunity when he could ask us if we could help. So, for three years Yinka became a member of our family. He went to school with our daughter of the same age. At the end of the period came the eleven plus examination. His father thought of admission to our Kingswood School, Bath. We advised against this. He would be in danger of losing contact with his own native land and people, so he returned for his secondary schooling in Lagos.

Meanwhile, Nigeria had become independent. Unlike many other parts of the British Empire which had been granted independence, Nigeria was in a strong position. She had some 40–50,000 young men and women who had completed their full secondary schooling and, educationally were available for the Africanisation which rightly followed independence. European personnel would be reduced to a minimum as more and more jobs became available for Nigerians. Also with the opening up of universities within Nigeria, a lesser number of young people rushed for places in British universities.

Bandle was posted to Sierra Leone as Nigerian High Commissioner. His next Government appointment was to high office in the Diplomatic Service in Washington. Unhappily, what we believe was the onset of Parkinson's disease befell him. He had to retire home to Lagos where he died in 1966 at the early age of 58. He was a true servant of his Lord and of his country.

## 14.4 Changes at Bussa

To return to Nigeria. One day, news reached us which meant changing our whole plan of development in the Niger region. James Bakare received a message from home calling him to return south because his father, chief of his town, had died and James was next in line to take up his work. He felt that he must undertake this new duty, but it required him to lay down his work in Bussa. We sympathised with him in his bereavement, sincerely thanked him and his wife for the work they had done and sorrowfully accepted his resignation.

Another two of the five-year guarantee to cover expenditure on salaries had passed. James and his wife had made a good start in making friends, their daily life and habits had been watched and doubtless some of the conversations would be remembered. James had faithfully filled up book after book of scores of words and their meaning. Now he was going and would carry his knowledge of spoken Bussanchi with him to his town where, it would not be understood and would eventually be forgotten. Meanwhile, where were we to find another volunteer for the north? Some months went by before an offer came, from a most unlikely person.

Philip Jaiyesimi was one of our older catechists in the south, probably about 45 years of age, married with four children. He offered to go to Bussa with his wife and the youngest children, the older two were in late teenage. Egun

was in United Missionary Training College and would soon qualify as a teacher, her grandma would be responsible for her during holidays and would also look after her younger brother. We were very happy that the work in Bussa could be tackled once more.

As soon as arrangements could be made we took Philip, his wife and children to Bussa and stayed with them for about a week whilst they began to realise that what we had told them was true. No one understood nor spoke Yoruba; they must learn a new language, as well as grow accustomed to changes in diet. Philip was convinced that he was doing what God wanted him to do and he bravely faced the future. He was very sincerely welcomed by the Emir and the folk who had become friendly with the Bakares. When we had completed introductions and explanations, we returned again to Afon to prepare for our first Secretarial Visitor in the north.

## 14.5 Fred Dodds

For two reasons we looked forward to the arrival of Fred Dodds. He was promoted to his responsible position as secretary for Africa from his long service in Eastern Nigeria where, for years he had tramped the bush paths as we were now doing. He therefore understood our pioneer work better than some of the very excellent men who had more limited knowledge and experience through having a background in educational work. We could not shock nor even surprise him by the more primitive nature of our field. But we knew as he returned to London, that he had real knowledge of our problems and, perhaps greater sympathy than others. A story of his must be told.

Mrs Dodds was not a good cyclist but loyally accompanied Fred on his treks, following him along miles of bush paths on their cycles. On one occasion, as he free-wheeled rapidly down a hill, he was horrified to see that a single tree trunk served as a bridge across a small river. He got over safely and immediately dismounted in great fear that his wife, too near to stop in time, would not make it. By an extraordinary visitation of guidance she shot straight over the tree trunk and landed in a heap as she fell off her bike. Her fury arose before she did. In a loud voice she shouted: 'I might have been killed, what would you have done then?' Fred, as coolly as possible replied "I would have cabled the Mission House in London: 'Wife dead, send relief'."

The second reason for the name of Fred Dodds being important to us follows:- several times I have written of our clamour for help in obtaining transport which would really meet our needs in medical, as well as the more general equipment we must carry over long periods as well as distances. We had graduated from the days of the Baby Austin on which the ostrich sat, the trailer which we towed until it decided to go its own way and was not there when we reached our destination. The Chevrolet Kit-car in its day had been the result of much planning and the generous support of many relatives and friends who backed their prayers with their gifts, but a dry road skid when we rolled sideways and somersaulted down a high bank, hastened the end of its usefulness. What were

we to do now?

In desperation we wrote to our Secretary for Africa, Fred Dodds. We prayed that this time, the Mission Headquarters in London would respond favourably. In due course a reply came with a remarkable story. The very same post which had delivered our appeal also included another letter with a cheque for 1,000 pounds enclosed, from a gentleman who had had a good year in business and would like to make possible some needed work in Africa. He did not want his name to be made public.

Fred Dodds wrote of how the two letters had clicked so firmly that he had recommended and had great pleasure in putting this gift to meet our needs. He added that as we were soon to take our leave in England, we might decide to make the purchase then. He was right, it would have been well nigh impossible to get what we wanted abroad, so we decided that we might try to purchase a chassis at home and have a body built to our specification. 1,000 pounds went a very long way in 1948.



## Chapter 15

# A harmonious leave

### 15.1 1948: The second mobile operating theatre

Our 1948 furlough was a very busy time. The Missionary Society appointed us to undertake many speaking engagements. We could be sent for a week or more to Ireland, Scotland or the Channel Isles. We would address meetings each evening in a different town or parts of a city, with afternoon womens meetings thrown in, then perhaps a three service Sunday in a Central Hall or large church. We enjoyed it all and met very many fine people. In addition, we had privately arranged to address meetings where friends had been supporting our work in Prayer and giving.

Much time also had to be taken up in searching for and buying items of equipment for our medical and visual aids programme, our bookshops and our personal needs. Through the years, it had become possible to purchase a variety of tins of food which in the earlier days were not to be found in Nigeria. But for reasons of economy, it saved a lot to buy larger quantities at wholesale rates in England. All these things could be included in our personal baggage on board ship and thus no freight charges were made.

Then came the Mobile Unit. Through the influence of Fred Dodds, the Army Transport Department agreed to release one of their stock of unused Humber ambulances. This had a flimsy canvas covering. The price they suggested was ridiculously low. They knew it was to be used for travelling medical work in Nigeria. A new Humber engine with four wheel drive was just ideal for our needs. If we ran into soft soil, we could pull out on powered front or rear axles.

We were introduced to Mr Pilcher of Wimbledon. He would strip the body and start again from the chassis upwards. We visited Wimbledon each week to watch growth of the vehicle of our dreams and to suggest to Mr Pilcher what he would tailor to meet our needs. The result at the end of our leave was a gleaming, made to order unit.

It looked like a modern ambulance, all metal with double rear doors which folded back against the sides. Folding steps gave easy access to the interior

and, incidentally gave maximum fresh air also. Up the steps and on the left was a 6ft x 2ft cupboard with sliding doors, the top was covered with PVC and made an examination couch and operating table. The top was also hinged and opened like a book. A metal leg could be dropped and the whole, now 4ft width, provided a clean base for our double bed. In the capacious cupboard over the driving seat were three biscuit like mattresses of foam rubber which gave total covering of 6 ft x 4ft. A mosquito net could be press buttoned to studs in the roof and, within a couple of minutes it was all ready for the night's sleep. The upper part of this left-hand side had two opening windows and, above them a row of lockers containing books and school supplies in our mobile bookshop. The two cupboards beneath bed level contained all our tins and other food supplies for weeks at a time.

Along the right-hand side was an upholstered seat for the staff. This hinged up and provided ample space for our cook to store his stove, pots and pans, and all his domestic loads. Above this seat the whole of the right hand side was given to lockers for medicine bottles, pills, surgical instruments and equipment. All the locks worked well and remained safely shut when travelling. In the middle of these lockers was a hatch door which opened outwards, providing a useful little counter on which medicines which could be dispensed to patients waiting in the queue.

Immediately behind the driver's seat was a wide cupboard to house our petrol driven electric generator, a Bell & Howell sound projector, cine camera, reels of films, an epidiascope and screen. The top of this cupboard had a sunken wash basin with water piped from a tank in the roof, a large filter for already boiled drinking water and, on the door of the bedding cupboard was an electric fan. In the roof was a bright ceiling light. Between the top of this electric cupboard and the bottom of the bedding cupboard was an eighteen inch gap, the whole width of the vehicle. This gave essential breeze to the staff sitting in the rear of the mobile unit as we travelled. When doctor needed to make any private examinations, we could unroll a blind to cover this gap and separate blinds to cover the windows, turn on the fan and the electric light while she was thus engaged. Further provision for literature and school materials was made by a fixed series of lockers on either side of the driver's seat, which was wide enough for driver and two passengers.

So our four-in-one unit was constructed on four wheels but meeting our medical, bookshop, cinema and caravan needs. The body builder took a personal interest and must have contributed generously from his own pocket for the bill, including the money paid for the Humber engine and chassis, came exactly to 1,000 pounds, the sum of the anonymous gift.

We had broadcast our plans widely and had received generous support from many relatives and friends. Their giving had made possible the purchase of the projector, generator and much of the medical equipment included. We are grateful to all who finally solved our pioneering travel problems and gave us a caravan home and workshop for years.

## 15.2 Learning Hausa

I have taken many paragraphs to describe what had to be done during our leave to get the Mobile Unit constructed, but there were still other time consuming items in the queue. Some of these I will include here.

Hausa is the Lingua Franca of Northern Nigeria and must be used in any hope we had of reducing to writing the language of the Bussa Emirate people. Along the Niger several tribes were located and spoke different languages, Kamberi, Gungawa and others, but Busanchi was our target.

We linked up with the School of Oriental and African languages in London University and gained greatly with the help of Dr Ida Ward, who advised on tackling a new language and creating an alphabet which would include all the sounds recognised in the speech of the tribe. Here, the work of James Bakare and his wife and those lists he had written down would prove to be of great basic value. Later, I will have further to write on this subject.

We must study the Hausa language. Here, fortunately much ready help was to be found in print, grammars, text books and a large Hausa Dictionary compiled by Dr Bargery. His work was officially regarded as the bible of the Hausa language. We were indeed privileged to be accepted by this very Dr Bargery and, twice a week like a pair of undergrads, we rushed by bus and underground to Goodge Street, the nearest to Malet Street and the University, to sit at his feet. Dr Bargery seemed pleased to let two rather overgrown learners take up his time, he was interested also in our development in the north and our desire to tackle Busanchi. Now, I am writing these lines nearly forty years later. I have forgotten a lot of the Hausa he managed to teach, but I still remember a lovely story which we had to tell in Hausa after translating it from English.

As in England, Scotland, Ireland, stories about the Englishman, Scotsman and the Irishman always end up with the hero belonging to the country of the narrator and the dull one, the rogue or the lacking in humour and imagination invariably belonging to one of the other countries; this kind of story is told universally. So in Dr Bargery's version the Hausaman is on top of the Fulani, a tribe which probably came from Egypt in the 13th century and settled in what is now Northern Nigeria. Incidentally, the Fulani tribe is divided into two. Those settled in towns soon became the ruling caste. The other half are called the Cow Fulani: a quiet, peace loving people who follow their herds wherever fodder can be found.

A certain Fulani had ten sons. They protected their father's herd all day. They came to a wide river and one of them suggested they should all have a swim. They did so and greatly enjoyed themselves until their eldest brother suddenly called out and told them to form a line. He began to count, pointing to each man facing him, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine. Suddenly he cried out "Ah one of us is drowned". All the brothers joined in weeping and mourning for the lost brother.

As they were thus engaged, a Hausaman was passing. He enquired

what might be the matter. The eldest explained that they had been a happy family of ten, caring for their father's cows. They had gone swimming and one of them had been drowned. Wailing renewed until the Hausaman told them to stop, he would help them to find their brother. They clutched on to this vague hope and promised that if indeed the Hausaman succeeded, they would give him a cow.

The Hausaman instructed them that once more they must all go and swim. They obeyed. Then he called them to come out and arrange themselves (stand in line). Eagerly they did so. Then pointing at each of them he counted loudly, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten. Their joy knew no bounds "Ah" they said "our brother is found" and they gave him a cow.

During our leave, there was another time-filling occupation particularly for Joyce. Her brother, also a doctor who had served in China, now had an extensive practice in Cornwall. He fell ill and Joyce volunteered to be his locum. George had his own chauffeur. This saved much worry in finding the homes to be visited. I moved in with the two boys and we were all made very welcome by George's wife. The boys greatly enjoyed going in the car whilst Joyce visited. For their benefit, the chauffeur went as quickly as he dared over the hump bridges of the Cornish lanes, always with the guaranteed shrieks of joy from the occupants of the back seat.

### 15.3 Summoned by bells

Yet another time consuming occupation was the work and travelling involved in connection with the development of my harmonium enterprise and the export of church bells and handbells to supplement our exceedingly small grant from London for our pioneer area, the size of Wales, which had no hope of raising funds from church collections nor school fees. We received no grant whatsoever for our medical work.

I think my interest in harmoniums and organs must have developed through readiness to tinker with our harmonium at home on the rare occasions when anything went wrong with it. Also, two of my sisters and one brother were all church organists and I was keen enough to go with them, when time permitted, and listen as well as watch their footwork on the pedals and swell and their choice of stops as they practised.

In Nigeria there were many churches, especially in Lagos, with organs or good harmoniums. There were also good organists to play them and conductors for choirs. But as the years passed and more and more up-country churches wanted to copy their wealthier Lagos friends, the demand for organs and organists grew. One of our large Lagos churches imported a big secondhand organ from England and hopefully invited me to assemble and install it. There were three very good reasons why I declined. One, I could not spare the best part of a month, two, as I had not taken the organ to pieces in England for packing, the task of identifying

all the parts would be very hard and three, frankly it was beyond my ability. However, good came out of the invitation for it made me think of what I felt I could do. Why not import harmoniums and after necessary repairs, sell them to waiting churches and thus supplement our northern work which was financially starved. So next leave I made enquiries as we toured around the UK talking of the church work in West Africa.

We found that many of our churches had old and no-longer-wanted harmoniums and when we sailed once more we had four instruments with us. True, they were more ancient than modern but gradually, in spare time and holidays, I got them all working and, provided a school teacher who could play could be found, he stood a good chance of a job. I have singled out school teachers because, during their training college years they were able to learn on one of the college harmoniums, an occupation which appealed to many.

The idea caught on and news spread to churches at home of a useful outlet for old harmoniums. This was considerably aided by publicity like that given by Dr Ralph Bolton. I welcomed the official backing of the Methodist Missionary Society given in his letter in the Methodist Recorder:-

The Old Harmonium. The Rev Nelson Ludlow has for several years been engaged in front line evangelistic work in the northern part of Western Nigeria. Following an illness Mr Ludlow commenced the repairs of a broken winded harmonium, rendering it vocal again. He sold it to a town church and thus started a church building fund. On his next furlough he asked for supernumerary harmoniums and actually took a number back with him to Nigeria. These were made orchestral and the first little church was built out of the fund. The plan has progressed and all that prevent further church building is the need for raw materials in the shape of harmoniums. Have you one in the corner of the vestry or even in the boiler room? If so, please communicate with me c/o Methodist Missionary Society, 25 Marylebone Road.

I received letters that read "We understand that you want a harmonium. We have one here and will be glad to give it to you as we have no further use for it." None of the donors gave any idea of the condition of the instruments. Usually the main trouble is asthma and kindred breathing problems, or reeds which have taken a vow of silence. I received so many letters from people who just had not the heart to burn anything which just might be useful to someone. It appeared there was a cloud of unwanted harmoniums just ready to fall upon us. My usual reply was to thank the would be donors and express the hope that I would visit them during next leave.

Meanwhile I had made a useful contact with a dealer in ex-Government items. He had some handbells used during the war by ARP street wardens to supplement the warning of the air raid sirens. I bought a dozen of these knowing that I could use them in some of my own schools if I found it difficult to find buyers. On return, I displayed them in our Offa Bookshop. They sold in less than a week and so many enquirers wanted their names put on a waiting list

that when I received a cable from my ex-Government dealer offering a 1,000 handbells, I decided that the extraordinarily low price he quoted would make a handsome contribution to our building fund. I cabled back saying I would take the lot provided he would store them until I collect.

The church in which we had been married was one of the very many London churches that was bombed. The adjoining Sunday school accommodation became the centre for as many activities as could be fitted in. On Sundays, services were held there also. Only the front half of the church was open to the sky so the back half had some sort of covering. This was supplemented by a large gallery which afforded accommodation of sorts, protected on three sides but leaving the fourth open to wind and rain. It was not difficult to get permission to make this a temporary store and packing centre, especially as I was helping the church out voluntarily in the absence of their minister.

We had a very keen Missionary secretary who had great D.I.Y. ability and also was retired and very glad to become storekeeper and chief packer. His contribution to our church building fund in Nigeria was of very great value. Mr Eustace and I carefully examined each harmonium that arrived, checking on woodworm and whether to export or reject. Our dealer friend was able to get old packing cases and wood which solved our packing problem through the ability of Mr Eustace in enlarging or reducing the size of each case to fit the harmonium concerned.

The 1,000 handbells were a separate problem. Obviously it would be best to unscrew the wooden handles on the handbells then the brass business end of the unit could be stacked like a number of tumblers. The difference was in the weight. Another commodity stocked by our dealer was a pile of ammunition cases. These were steel and each had a secure hasp lock and a handle at each end for the two carriers required. We found we could get 100 bells into each container and although they made a really heavy load, ten ex-ammunition cases were locked and adorned with "Meth Mission, Afon via Lagos!" and were ready for the long journey.

Another opportunity to add to our church building fund arose out of my contact with the Fire Brigade. I asked about those bells they had used during the war on emergency fire vehicles and whether I could buy some. I foresaw a ready market in churches in Nigeria where a bell to call people to worship was really necessary. Village clocks were never seen, watches were unobtainable and clocks were not reliable. Each church near Offa railway works, managed to get a two or three foot length of old railway line which was hung on a nearby tree and struck with a heavy bolt, also acquired from the railway. This gave quite a clear sound, but did not look so good as a proper bell like the Lagos churches had.

An official reply came from the Fire Service. They were interested in my enquiry and the purpose for which I wanted to buy some bells. They had made an effort to trace any bells still available and regretted they could only produce ninety. I was alarmed that this would run me into the red but when they told me of their nominal charge and that they would make no extra charge for delivery, I thanked them and bought the lot.

I shall not forget the day the bells arrived where Mr Eustace and I would pack them. Opposite the bombed church was a row of shops, each with living rooms above them, making a terrace. The corner shop was owned by a cycle retailer. He stood watching the unloading and finally rushed over and demanded to know if we were going to install and ring them. I have rarely seen a man more agitated, neither have I ever heard of a carillon of ninety bells. I often laugh at the memory of the incident and of the absurdity of the fears of the cycle shop owner.

We eventually got everything crated, harmoniums, hand bells and church bells, which incidentally fitted into a further number of ammunition boxes. Obviously we could not take this consignment as personal luggage, but despatched them on a cargo vessel. Eventually they all arrived safely.

I started this chapter with the words “our 1948 furlough was a very busy time” and with a few descriptive digressions have told how we undertook a lot, perhaps too much, during our months of leave in order to cool down after the tropical heat near the equator. We were often amused by kindly enquiries from some who had hoped we had had a good rest during our stay in England and were refreshed by leisure. Our voyages, homewards and outwards were undoubtedly rest periods but when I came to describe what happened between, I had to turn up my dictionary in order to spell ‘leisure’ correctly.

## 15.4 The harmonium workshop

When we returned to Nigeria, I got down to the problem of storage of all our purchases as quickly as possible but, as I shall relate not quickly enough. As I saw it, top urgency must be given to the provision of cover from the rain.

I had decided to build an extension to our mud walled garage which had a corrugated iron sheet roof. This extension would eventually become a store and would become a workshop for our circuit carpenter. He was already fully employed making school desks, blackboards, easels and tables and stools for schools and teachers’ houses. He also made frames, doors and windows for our new buildings. Until the extension would be complete, he worked in the shade of a large tree and made extra protection from the rain by erecting a leaf roof over his bench. Joseph was a good worker, well trained by our Ilesha Hospital carpenter. He was honest and made good use of time whether we were on trek or in residence. As we could not commence building this extension for a few weeks when the rainy season would finish, the much needed protection for all the crates of harmoniums and bells must be found elsewhere. The obvious place was the wide verandah around the house adequately covered with thatch. We unloaded case after case on to that verandah and, to make a real start with repair work easier we carried the contents of one of the cases into our living room and placed the harmonium just outside the door into my office. This was a mistake. The harmonium was of French origin and had a flat top instead of the often heavily decorated type more favoured in England, which sometimes had an overmantle with imitation pipes, elaborate knobs and fretwork.

The idea of putting this flat top variety at my office door was that in the evenings or at other spare time I could work and also be more companionable to Joyce. Unfortunately I often came in with an armful of exercise books or other loads and while getting my keys out of my pocket I would lay the load on the convenient top of the harmonium, and did not always remember to remove them. This also was a mistake. I am quite willing to admit now that that corner of our living room did get rather cluttered. However, one day Joyce, who normally is very ready to accept situations and remain patient with me, said "Nelson, I want to talk to you". Now a lot can be sensed from the tone of voice, not the volume, and somehow I felt there was trouble brewing. I laid another pile of books on top of the already crowded harmonium, came abruptly to a halt ready to listen but simply said "Yes". "That harmonium will have to go". Again, the tone of voice suggested deep feeling and called for action. We did not argue, it was all over in a moment, but I do remember that we started digging the foundations for that urgently needed workshop the very next morning.

It was a great joy to be able to hand over more and more of the harmonium work to Joseph. At first he glued and screwed, gradually he could renew bellows and carry out any frame repairs whilst I did the more delicate work of restoring sound to silent reeds and attending to ciphering problems. We reached the state where Joseph was able to strip, thoroughly clean and repair, leaving only the checking and final tune-worthiness to me. We sold dozens of harmoniums and all the bells. The Government Public Works Department undertook to make frames so that the big bells could swing and be erected on proper wooden frames or even fixed on suitable large tree branches. We were very glad to be able to put the profits to the building of two dual purpose churches/schools, a dispensary and a new bookshop. These were not mud constructions but built of yangi, which is the Yoruba word for red coloured rocklike lumps of laterite found in tropical climates, not as hard as stone but it is a mason's work. Neatly pointed with cement, following its crazy shapes it makes a most attractive wall.

## Chapter 16

# Adventurous journeys

### 16.1 My pulpit was a leopard

Our church/school buildings had no doors and no windows. We designed them so that their oval shape was a continuous series of arches, a wide arch at either end and narrower arches along the sides. The purpose of this was that in Moslem areas, people would be afraid to enter the building but, if they wanted to, they could see and hear all that was going on as they paused on the nearby bush path. The roof was well thatched by a professional thatcher, on properly chosen, sawn timbers. The seats were rows of low yangi walls with a smooth plank on top.

We had left the new catechist, Philip Jaiyesimi in Bussa. I was anxious however to impress on him the vastness of his field. We travelled north again and when we reached Bussa we were glad to find he had made friends and had been welcomed. He had no band of traders from the south, such as young Abe had at Kaiama. There was no one to call to worship on Sundays, yet. We drew up a timetable and programme for a journey up river which would take us beyond where we had gone with his predecessor. We set out in a reliable looking canoe and reached Ojiji, the village of the blind. We were made welcome and our journey had become possible because Philip had made friends with a man who was able to act as interpreter. He had gladly agreed to travel with us in the canoe. We can only guess how much the people of Ojiji were able to hear of what we said for all had to pass through two languages before it reached their ears.

Our canoe team had no objections to occasional stops in our journey, they enjoyed a rest. Some of the villages at which we stopped were very small, but we were glad to tell the people who and what we are doing and that Philip was now living in Bussa and would be visiting them as often as he could. Sick people were treated and friendships begun.

Camping overnight at any village at which we called towards evening was a cause for much excitement and chatter. Our loads, mosquito nets, camp beds

and feeding arrangements were so different, all helped to impress the villagers with our friendship.

One morning we set out earlier than usual, we tried to avoid travel through the heat of the day, but also because we wanted to reach a village on the other side of the river. Behind this village was a cone-shaped hill on the top of which was one solitary tree. We always spoke of the place as “one tree hill” its proper name was Yimo. As we approached we could see many excited people dancing round the tree. Men were waving sticks and shouting. When they saw our white faces and arms, the men started to run down the hill, still shouting and waving their sticks. We wondered whether we were in for trouble. As we touched land, the leader of the excited men spoke through an interpreter. He welcomed the strangers and invited them to come and rejoice with them. We were not anxious to be drawn into any fetish act of worship and obviously sought more information. It was immediately given, as follows:-

For some days Yimo has been very sad and troubled. Every night a large animal has visited us and always carried away a cock or even one of our goats. Yesterday, we decided to set men who would stay awake and attack this animal. Last night they were all ready to stop anything entering Yimo. For a long time they stood and listened. Then one man heard a noise but it came not from the bush in front of them but from the village behind. With a heavy log of wood poised above his head, he saw a leopard passing him, it had a cloth bundle hanging from its teeth. He brought the log smashing down on the animal's head, the cloth bundle was immediately dropped. Fellow watchers rushed to help, they battered the animal until it was dead. Come and rejoice with us.

We did. Climbing one tree hill we sat on the roots of the tree which had been washed clear of earth by erosion, while the villagers resumed their dance. There lay the dead animal, its mouth open, showing the large teeth which would have taken the life and flesh of a little baby inside the cloth bundle.

As the dancers tired, I told them they should rest a while. I have used a variety of strange pulpits during my life, but this was the first time I stood between the legs of a dead leopard while I spoke. I told them “ We are delighted to rejoice with you about the baby saved from the leopard, this indeed is good news. We also have good news and we ask you to rejoice with us. It is also about an animal, not ferocious like your leopard, in fact it is about a sheep. The owner had 100 sheep but one poor little animal had strayed from the others and now it is lost.” And as I told that very well known story Jesus told, and simply pointed out its message, the villagers of Yimom listened. They heard for the very first time of a God who loved and cared, and still does.

## 16.2 Animals at home

I have left our young Anthony out of this record since his arrival back in Nigeria after his long wait for a sailing. Then through kindness of the Jackson family, fellow missionaries in Eastern Nigeria, whose daughter Ruth was about the same age, he travelled in their care on a troopship. We met him in Lagos and motored up country to our now completed new house in the Northern Provinces. Naturally he journeyed with us wherever we went but, back in our compound in Afon, he had his own little kingdom. From early days he had shown great interest in bird life and animals. Like Noah's Ark, he always kept the door wide open for pairs of any species. Like us he was sad to see birds or animals in cages. Monkeys were free to come and go wherever they wanted to. Our doors and windows were all wide open by day and through the night. We suffered some losses through the differing values we and the monkeys had for vases and ornaments. We still left them completely free. We could not teach them but they taught us to keep delicate items in cupboards.

The District Head of Balah was a good friend. He had many peacocks and peahens. On one visit to him he presented us with a beautiful peacock with a wonderful spreading fantail. Not long afterwards he gave us a peahen in the hopes that we could raise a family. Their loud calls rang out from our hilltop. We named the pair Percy and Priscilla. I learned to imitate the clicking sound they made when they talked to each other. Either Percy had a musical ear or he associated my clicking with food, soon he plucked up courage and responded by coming up the steps of the verandah and he would eat corn out of my hand. I felt rather like many fathers at home who take such an interest in their Billy's train set that they only occasionally allowed Billy to play with it. I greatly enjoyed Percy's friendship but did remember that Percy belonged to Anthony and allowed him to look after the bird and peahen sometimes.

The pair of pigeons, Paul and Penina, in Anthony's Zoo were independent, they did not require board but appeared to welcome our lodging. Next came 'Tolu tolu' the turkeys. The name was not our invention but is Yoruba onomatopoeia. It served for either Mr or Mrs Turkey. They were a noisy couple and despite their free range training, were always glad to get any spare corn, on or off the cob. Still on the feathered species come Donald and his several ducky wives, also Gertie the Guineau fowl and her family.

I have written of our objection to making any of our birds a prisoner in a cage. Anthony approved of giving all of them their freedom. This applied equally to animals but, we made two exceptions because of predators. So Nibble, Nobble and Bobtail, the rabbits had a large wired enclosure for protection.

We were sometimes approached by a hunter who had trapped a mother animal. He wanted to sell the orphaned offspring which was too tiny to be of any culinary value. One such hunter came, carrying a little furry bundle. We had to do something about it, this is how a beautiful little Bambi joined us in Anthony's Zoo. Regular feeds with bottles of milk were gladly undertaken by the young keeper. Bambi gave us all great pleasure. He had a large enclosed area but every evening, while we were about he had complete freedom. His

speed around the compound was good to see. He wandered where he chose but always returned home, that is, until one evening this graceful, glossy animal, now growing quite big, must have scented a mate and made his own arrangements for the future. We explained to a disappointed Anthony how lovely it would now be for Bambi to be able to play his own sort of games and be able to talk his own language to his new friends.

### 16.3 There's a donkey in the canoe

On one of our visits to Bussa I wanted to go up river as far as Agwara. This would be our furthest river trip yet. Joyce and Anthony remained in Bussa whilst Philip, the catechist, his friend the interpreter and I undertook the journey. We had told Anthony that we heard there were some donkeys up river and that I would buy one if possible.

Our visit and welcome were satisfactory and the Chief and people invited us to come again. The rumour was true about the donkeys and advised by the Chief, I bought one for one pound. There was of course the problem of getting him to Bussa, a very real problem. My plan was to journey back on foot, but I was assured that with tributaries of the Niger in full flow, I could not get through. Then I proposed striking inland to a point where the water would be narrow enough to get across. We had to abandon that course. Finally, I decided to risk tethering the donkey and have him laid in our canoe. The animal held his own very definite view that this was not a good idea for any self respecting donkey and, true to reputation he refused. One alternative alone remained. We would let him stand in the canoe, with a good supply of fodder. As an advocate of freedom for the animal kingdom, I decided to overlook the danger of being called an ass in attempting such a thing. With a wave of goodbyes we pushed out into the great river, having warned our crew that there must be no crossing to cut time and that the canoe was to be steered as near the bank as possible. There was no need for paddles nor poles, the flowing river carried us along. The donkey remained remarkably quiet and I was amazed to find we were passing the place where I had thought we would spend the night.

A huge cloud bank was building up down river and anxiety grew. Our crew evidently felt they could make Bussa in time before the tropical storm would break. The donkey hardly moved. If he had become restive he could have overturned the canoe. As we approached Bussa, we could see that many other small craft were travelling as quickly as possible to safety. We were very thankful to pull in to the spot where canoes off loaded. Joyce and Anthony were there on the riverbank. Joyce had been worried with the approach of the storm. I am sure Anthony was glad to see me, but the greatest delight was seen as he saw the object in the canoe which had ears larger than mine.

At this season of the year one can count on the time the usual evening storm will break and there was the usual rush hour for canoes crossing the Niger. We had a tragic reminder of this fact the very next evening when one team of paddlers left it too late to complete their crossing, the gale force winds swept

down the river and rain came so heavily that visibility was nil. The canoe capsized and one woman passenger was drowned.

The return journey of 200 miles south by car, with a donkey on board, continued to cause much excitement. We would have to travel for some thirty miles through a tsetse belt. No living creatures wandered here without the risk of being bitten by the dreaded tsetse fly. In human beings such bites are the cause of sleeping sickness.

We always drove quickly through this danger area and, this time did not stop even though we might have to do more cleaning up after the donkey's occupation of the inside of the mobile unit.

Dinky, as the donkey was called, settled down in our home at Afon. He gave Anthony a lot of fun, but like most of his kind he could be very stubborn. He tolerated a child's weight but when I tried to ride him he sought means of showing his disapproval. As soon as I was astride, Dinky fought hard against my directing pull on the reins. He usually won even though it meant proceeding with his neck and head to right angles from his body. He would edge up to the house and then walk so close to the wall that he not only squeezed my leg but then would advance so that the wall would scratch my leg unpleasantly. No one taught him this bit of evil but it made me wonder whether there is, perhaps, something of truth in the transmigration of souls. It could account for a lot of the behaviour of this animal if he had a former life in some other and lower form of creation.

Our verandah doors and all windows were wide open, day and night, except during storms. Dinky, usually during our siesta, started slinking indoors to emerge with a mat or a cushion. He revelled in shaking a cushion from side to side until, aided by his teeth, feathers and cotton stuffing came out. This game unfortunately led to the early demise of Dinky. It happened like this:-

Our leave was due. Just at that time, Government had a scheme to help villages by digging deep wells which would last through the long dry season. They appointed well-digging supervisors. Afon was chosen as one of the districts and a European supervisor set up camp in the outskirts of the town and his team got down to work. Now, a job of supervising his teams in lonely places provided a little of outside interest for a leader and, our man thought it would be fun to look after our donkey during our absence. We were surprised at his choice, however, Dinky agreed to a change of address and was moved to the encampment and we left on our journey to England.

Incidentally, it was on that journey that Anthony revealed the simple, isolated life we led. Our table steward on board ship was taking orders at breakfast. We asked Anthony which cereal he would like. He looked round the table and, pointing to a plate in front of a fellow traveller, said "I would like some of that grass over there". This was announced in a loud and clear tone and was the cause of many smiles. (Apologies to the makers of Shredded Wheat!)

During our leave we received a letter from Afon telling of an unfortunate development back home. In his new surroundings, Dinky was unable to find cushions nor other inanimate objects which he could shake to pieces and help release his surplus energy. There were however a number of goats around with

kids following them about. Dinky switched his interest to the animate and caught and violently shook these small moving objects. The goats, and more particularly the kids did not like it, some did not recover from the exercise. Reproof of a verbal nature was useless. Dinky kept up the game too long so, after several fatal encounters, the District Head and the well supervisor decided that enough was enough and poor old Dinky was shot.

The story of Anthony's Zoo ends here. In relating same I have had to ignore months and years so the following bears no relationship in point of time.

## 16.4 A setback in the north

We had a serious setback in our plans for advance in the north when returning from a business trip to Lagos. I wanted to save transport cost on a variety of school and other purchases. I estimated that we could fit all the loads into our vehicle and got busy packing same. Foolishly, I tried to lift a large basket hamper of books and immediately felt such a pain in my back that I had to drop the load. On examination, the diagnosis was a slipped disc.

Obviously I fought hard against hospitalisation so, as we had a doctor in the house I could be treated at home. Joyce turned our small lounge into a ward. I was given no pillow and with the aid of a large towel stretched across my tummy, weighted on either end with heavy books, I was kept in one position.

Daodu, the District head, the Emir's representative and many others became regular visitors. The medical attention I was given was wonderful. I must have been a trying patient and irritable; there was no radio of course and holding up a book with no pillow to aid the angle became wearisome. The dry season meant that any breeze crossing the room was a very hot breeze, a fan would have been very pleasant if we had had a fan. The dry season also brought danger. Elephant grass grew to six or eight feet in height and was a serious hazard. Farmers enriched their land by burning their patch bare, where there are no farms, just wide areas of elephant grass, fire can spread very quickly. One day this happened. We had no farmers near us and therefore no protection. We could do nothing about it. By using a hand mirror I could watch the inferno as it came nearer and nearer. Word quickly reached the Daodu and he acted immediately. Leading a number of men he had managed to call, he came up the hill and there was no need for him to instruct his helpers. They did all they could to beat out the flames and to cut a track across which the advancing fire might not sweep on. They were successful and, when any obvious danger had passed, several men were left on guard, watching for signs of any tiny flames finding a way through. They stayed on into the night.

My six weeks of inactivity and the slow return to limited mobility was a setback. For Joyce, however, despite all the extra attention and help I needed from her, they were also weeks of planning as well as the unusually long continuous period she was able to give to our new dispensary and ward. There was more.

## 16.5 Starting the Homecraft Centre

The almost complete absence of girls from the few schools then open in the north, was pathetic. All our teenagers were illiterate. That generation would just become like their mothers. They would marry the men they were told to marry, possibly an old man who had two or three wives already. They would sit in the market, tend their babies and be satisfied to live in dark, often dirty accommodation. With twenty or thirty other people they would live with the extended family under the same roof. No privacy whatsoever, no sanitation other than the nearest bush and no place where conversation would not be heard by anyone living under the same roof. To tackle this need, Joyce determined that a homecraft centre should be offered to this generation of teenagers. We would teach domestic subjects, simple Religious Knowledge and the three Rs. But of greatest importance, the whole scheme would be based on making friends and sharing a sense of humour.

We were helped during the period of my convalescence. The United Missionary College, run jointly by the Church Missionary Society and our own Methodist Church had just reached the end of their college year. Among the newly qualified trained teachers was one of our own girls, Ebum Jaiyesimi, who was to be allocated to her first appointment. We were very pleased to have her appointed to the Ilorin circuit. She was the daughter of our catechist, Philip Jaiyesimi, now working at Bussa. Ebum duly arrived at Afon and lived in our compound. She did not have any language problem for we were in Yoruba speaking country. Her father in Bussa was valiantly struggling with both Hausa and Busanchi. She entered wholeheartedly into her new job which was to become an Iyawo Home: a home of preparation for marriage.

Our good friend and chief, the Daodu was pleased with the plan and gave his support. Unfortunately we did not get many girls, they were already set in the pattern of their mothers and grandmothers and saw no particular reward for being different. We, of course did not complain but we did say that we were disappointed that our well qualified teacher did not have enough to do.

Doubtless he reported our disappointment to the Emir of Ilorin and a few days later we were very surprised to see a long line of sixteen teenage girls marching up the hill in single file, followed by a local policeman. They turned into our compound and over to the new Homecraft Centre. We later heard that the Emir decreed that the headman of each compound in Afon was to provide one girl for us. A few days later, Daodu came and begged us to take more girls of the same age group who had been away at farm on the first day of the 'volunteers' round up.

So our roll now stood at 32 completely illiterate and undisciplined hefty wenches who walked around during lessons or would try to take a nap on the tables if the lesson was boring. One, who had never looked into a mirror in her life, was drawn to such an object hanging in the classroom. She stared into it and on seeing a girl's face, immediately stepped behind the mirror to talk to the girl. She came forward again and smiled at the girl who now smiled back at her. Very quickly she tumbled to the purpose of a mirror and, still smiling,

started preening her hair. Ebum, our teacher shared our delight and with great effort restored calm and got on with the lesson.

Our hilltop became busier with the daily arrival of the girls as well as the growing popularity of the dispensary. At first we had only out-patients but, as confidence grew those requiring in-patient care became less fearful and the usefulness of our small ward proved itself. There were also women responding to the availability of ante natal and welfare clinics. In addition, teachers and catechists came frequently for supplies and each quarter, we had the full circuit staff in for refresher courses lasting a full week. We encouraged the married men to bring their wives with them for this quarterly get together, some came from isolated stations and the companionship was appreciated. We ordered 20 Teak trees and a quantity of citrus plants through the Agricultural Department. Preparation of the area where these were to be planted and all the holes to be dug, kept Salimanu, our senior compound labourer and Suberu, the boy whose eyes had been very nearly closed, quite busy. Bribery was not up our street but we did offer extra rewards. During our leave we had lost nearly all of our citrus trees of a previous planting because Salimanu had taken a long rest, although on the pay roll during that leave. He had not only failed to water them but also had failed to keep grass and weeds from choking them, also several got burns from the surrounding grass when fires broke out. So this time we determined our forest would grow. We left all in the care of the labourers, each tree with a price on its head. They would receive sixpence on our return from England for every strong and healthy tree. There was not a single casualty and we gladly paid up. I think we might call it productivity.

To get back to Ebum Jaiyesimi and the Homecraft Centre. We decided to introduce weaving on wide looms as we had done in our Ilesha Homecraft Centre. I have already described this type of loom fully. Joseph, our carpenter had no difficulty in producing the looms and we were in the business of teaching weaving within a few months and looked forward in the hope that parents would want to copy the idea in their own homes.

One other reference to the Homecraft Centre. It was good to see the interest the girls took in simple needlework and other crafts. They also enjoyed repeating sentences read by Ebum, learning to pronounce words as she did. One day as we drove into our compound we were surprised to hear their voices reverently repeating:- “Baba wa ti mbe li orun. Kia bowo fun oruko Re” ”Our Father who art in heaven. Hallowed be Thy Name”).

## 16.6 More schools: Joseph Aremu

On completion of the building of our own house and of establishing ourselves as residents in the north, we turned our attention to the need for schools. Our plan was to try out the idea amongst the people. Sometimes with their aid, if they had shown any enthusiasm, a mud wall some eighteen inches high was built and a rectangular roof of grass or leaves was erected on bamboo poles to give the much needed shade and protection from rain. Sometimes, although the

local chief had approved, no volunteers came forward to undertake this simple construction work. We then had to employ labour but this amounted to very little expense for the building was very simple and the materials were available all around. Later, if the little school became a success, we would embark on a more satisfactory building.

Our first effort was in Afon itself. The Daodu had co-operated right from the start and had given us a piece of land at the entrance to Afon, a very attractive site on which we erected our first little trial school. To our surprise, one of the first pupils was Aremu, a son of Moslem parents who lived in a small village about three miles away. Equally surprising was the fact that Aremu was deformed and had great difficulty in walking. He had Polio as a young child and his body, from the waist upwards was fairly well normal, but his legs had not grown and bore the weight of his body with difficulty. Still, Aremu was very keen. He left home very early each morning to reach school in time and slowly returned home each afternoon. Further proof on his desire to learn was the fact that on Sundays, he regularly faced the journey again so that he could attend our church service and learn more.

For two years Aremu persevered and, if we had been able to afford a second teacher and thus keep within the rule of the Education Department that no teacher shall teach more than two classes, he would have stayed on at Afon school. I must include two important facts here. Aremu was much older than he looked and, despite his smallness in height was probably a teenager when he started school. During his second year at school he had prepared for baptism and, with his parents permission, I baptised him. His own choice of name was Joseph.

With his two years of schooling complete Aremu decided to leave home and go to Lagos. I do not know how he managed to walk over 200 miles, it is probable that this was his only hope of getting there. It was the general practice of youth, to seek employment in Lagos. Many of them undertook menial tasks or acted as carriers at the docks or railway or lorry stations until they could find some more permanent work. Those who failed to find work either sponged on employed people who had come from their own neighbourhood, possibly remote family connections, or, disillusioned with high hopes of becoming wealthy in Lagos they would return home where, they believed they could at least be fed. There was another section of the jobless, the ones who early in their search had got into trouble with the police. Once this happened, they would be unwise to stay in Lagos. The police circle had long memories.

Two years of Joseph Aremu's absence passed. We often thought of him but heard nothing from or about him. Then, one Sunday morning in Afon, as I was conducting the service, I noticed a youth sitting in the back row whose face was familiar. I was sure it was Aremu, but concluded that if I was right, there would be proof when the congregation would stand for the opening hymn, he would be no taller standing than sitting. I was right Joseph Aremu was back home again. At the close of the service I went and greeted him and enquired how he had got on in Lagos. He had done well in getting a job although the work was hard for him. He also had linked up with one of our many churches in the city

and had attended regularly. Now he was going to stay back home in Odo-ode.

Not long after his return Aremu came to my office. His was a strange request. He wanted me to allow him to build a little school in Odo-ode. I pointed out that even if he was able to complete a building and I provided a blackboard, chalk, table and stool, he had forgotten the most important item. Who would pay the teacher? He had his answer ready “the teacher will not need any payment; I will be the teacher”. I laughed at this and reminded him that he had only had two years at school, how could he fill that post? His reply is the whole point in including the story of Joseph Aremu here. “True” he said “but I do know two years more than the children in my village”. What could I do? I certainly could not register a school like that but, neither had I the heart to refuse his sincere request, so I ‘lent’ him a blackboard, table, stool and even a handbell.

## 16.7 Visit from the Medical Secretary

We were glad to welcome the Missionary Society’s Medical Secretary, Dr Ralph Bolton, accompanied by a very enthusiastic honorary worker, Vernon Booth, an expert photographer. They spent three days with us and we filled the time in taking them to as much as we could of just ordinary days programmes no window dressing.

I have been reading again the pages of our monthly magazine “The Kingdom Overseas” in which Dr Bolton published an article under the descriptive title by which we were known: “Partners in Pioneering”. He gives his impression of the value of our joint medical, evangelistic and educational work; of the tremendous value of the Mobile Unit; of the Mass Literacy work started by Dr Frank Laubach; of meeting two chiefs who came to have lunch in our house and of their departure after lunch on their gaily caparisoned horses followed by their staff, on foot. He concludes with an account of our visit to pay our respects to the Emir of Ilorin in his lordly palace and of an evening open-air meeting and film show.

Vernon Booth took a lot of photographs and one, showing the Mobile Unit where Joyce was seeing patients while I was teaching reading from the Laubach chart, became a label on the Missionary Society’s collecting box used in hundreds of homes throughout the United Kingdom.

# Chapter 17

## Mutual respect

### 17.1 Friendly relations with Moslems

We do not deny the fact that there are attractions to the Moslem Faith. Our church bell clangs out on Sunday mornings and evenings but, in bigger centres of population, the Moslem muezzin loudly calls the faithful to prayer five times every day. Christians generally do not wear any form of uniform but, for the Moslem, white robes and turban are universal. Often I have stood in the vast market place of Ilorin with its impressive large white domed palace of the Emir. I have been an observer at the prayer meeting marking the end of the fast of Ramadan. Thousands of white robed Moslems stand in lines, filling the wide area, then all kneel and bow forward touching their foreheads on the sandy ground. Then rising and again bowing, many times but always in unison. It is a moving scene. Sadly, there are no women in view.

All this has added to the nominal roll of followers. Koranic schools have a very limited curriculum: reading in Arabic or reciting from memory the Koran. As one passes a Koranic School, often on the verandah of a house, there is the continuous loud shouting as the learners learn. From both of these methods of propagation it would appear that the wide growth of the Moslem Faith is automatic attraction rather than by conviction and, if there is no alternative available, folk of animistic and fetish background join the ranks of the white robed mass.

Writing of the impressive scene of Moslems at worship reminds me of two items to retell, one serious and one humorous.

So often we heard the meuzzin call the faithful to prayer five times a day. It makes one sad to recall the large number of Christian churches the doors of which are closed after worship and remain closed until the next occasion for worship. True, we have many dual purpose buildings which are open most of the days, for educational or social purposes, or even as a source of rent from variety of users. Too often we forgot the true purpose, the house of prayer.

Children are the same all over the world. As I stood in Ilorin observing the

Ramadan prayers, a small boy, complete in white robes was almost shaking with quiet laughter as he awaited the next time the row in front of him would kneel and then bow forwards with their foreheads on the ground. In his fingers he had a pin poised to stab a sitting target. Like our children, his mind was not geared to the purpose of the solemn occasion.

We have been amazed at the tolerance of the Emir and most Chiefs. When Lord Lugard promulgated the law of no Christian intrusion into the Moslem Faith in the Northern Provinces, without the approval and invitation of the Chief, this was interpreted differently by different European District Officers (official advisers to the chiefs). I have heard of a Senior District Officer sending a note to a junior officer demanding that he stop playing a record of hymn singing on his gramophone on a Sunday. Indeed the godless often went to extremes. This stupid attitude gave birth to the following light hearted effort of a poet:-

I wish I were a Casowary  
On the plains of Timbuctoo I then would  
eat a missionary Coat, hat and hymnbook too.

This is not to suggest that all District Officers were baddies. The vast majority known to me gave all the help I needed in obtaining land for mission purposes. Many approved of our Sunday evening services in the European Club and attended and took a hearty part in the singing of well known hymns and tunes.

I digressed from the tolerance of the Emir and Chiefs. Our Christians in Ilorin had as their meeting place a large shop which they rented. This served for Sunday services and all their weekday activities. As their numbers grew, I first contacted the Resident Magistrate. He was quite ready to give his support to any application we would make to the Emir. A special visit to the Emir resulted in his pleasure to allow us to build a church within the boundary of Ilorin. This was an amazing concession for permission on any previous application had very definitely been restricted to land outside the boundary. All that remained now was to fill in the forms and get his rubber stamp on them.

There was yet another surprise to come. When we had cleared the site and made all the arrangements, we called once more on the Emir to report that we were ready to build and that we would be having a short ceremony at the stone laying. He said that he would be glad to attend the stone laying ceremony. Actually he did more than that. He, a staunch and I believe devoted Moslem, showed his friendship by laying the foundation stone, in the presence of the Resident Magistrate, the Administrative staff and the delighted Christian community. I have never heard of anything like this before, the stone laying of a Christian Church being performed by an Emir. I think it may be unique.

Gidado did not start school until he was a well developed youth. There was no school at all within reach. In his second year in Infants Class 2 he said he wanted to prepare for baptism. We found him to be very keen indeed and as he was now able to read and there was no doubt of his genuine desire, it was as an adult that I baptised him. He got married when he was in Standard 1, took our advice and, rather than be a married man, nearly six feet high, amongst a crowd of small children, he came to Afon to learn weaving. Here also he did

well, got his weaving certificate and set up a loom of his own in his own village. One day his elderly father, a bearded Moslem, came to report that Thomas, (his son's Christian name) had been opening up Christian work in a neighbouring village and wanted to start a class for such adults and young people who were ready to join our church. We noticed and were surprised to hear him say "our church". It was the first indication that the old man was perhaps like one of old who was a disciple secretly because of the Jews. It was a lovely tribute of an old Moslem to the prayer and hard work of his Christian son. We have visited the neighbouring village often and today, the Bale (headman), six other adults and many children are attending the instruction classes run by Thomas.

## 17.2 The Ilorin midnight market

From our new home at Afon there was a laterite road through to Ilorin, the Provincial capital, a distance of 14 miles. The very large area in front of the Emir's palace was the site of an extraordinary night market. From an hour before dark every evening, the market gradually filled up with women who spread out their stalls on mats. Each woman had arrived bearing a large head-load of whatever she wanted to sell. There was no licencing regulation but sellers of vegetables had an area and similarly other produce and products could be found by those who frequented the "midnight market" as it was called.

As night fell, all the women lit their little oil lamps and others who were arriving late, came into the area with their lamps already alight. It was a wonderful transformation, what had been a wide open space in the afternoon now looked like a fairyland. Trading began and continued until quite a late hour. We have been privileged to climb on to the platform of the Emir's palace and to get an aerial view of the market. It is a sight worth seeing.

Apart from the midnight market, there were several stores open through the day. Most sold building materials and dealt in buying-in produce for forwarding to Lagos and eventual export. There was one good store which stocked quite a reasonable variety of European groceries in tins. This is where we used to do our shopping. Then there was the Kano train which travelled every two days. This had a cold store on board and meat, even ice cream could be bought. The trouble was that the train always arrived an hour after midnight so it meant a very late night shopping. Still, it was popular for the Europeans. Living 14 miles away, we did not often make use of it.

## 17.3 Ologbondoroko

On that 14 mile stretch of dirt road we passed a large village called Laduba and nearer Ilorin is a much larger place known as Ologbondoroko. We frequently called in to salute the chiefs of these places but because of the agreement introduced by Lord Lugard that Christians would not undertake any work in the north unless they had been invited by the chiefs to come to their town or vil-

lage, we were just friendmakers. However, if and when the opportunity came, we had every intention of trying to open a school in the bigger of two places. The opportunity came. On one of our visits, I had our cine camera with me and with pleasure responded to the request of the Mogaji (Chief) to take his photo. Other lesser chiefs and people wanted to be snapped also. When this operation was over they very naturally asked when they would be able to “picture”. I explained that this was a very wonderful camera and that if I were to let them see, it would have to be after dark, when I would hang a white cloth on a tree and they would not only see their faces but also their movements. That did it, they couldn’t wait, and at once issued a very sincere invitation to come back to them. We felt that Lord Lugard would have said it was all right.

The film was a great success. In order to make the evening worthwhile, we tucked in other places we had visited and also a Bible story which was well received. We treated any sick folk who came or were brought to the open air clinic and when we felt we were good enough friends and that the door was open, we suggested that it would be good to have a little school where we would teach more subjects than the Koranic teacher did. We applied through the Emir and the Education Department and then discussed the necessity to get a small piece of land, not for us but for the local people who would want to send their children to school or attend any other classes we might start.

Now all this friend making and introduction had taken months and as we had already introduced our oval dual-purpose buildings from the harmonium/bell fund, we decided to build one of these on the site. It was just beside the road and in good view of all passers by.

There were some southerners living in or near to Ologbondoroko. They were traders who went the rounds of the five day markets spreading out their rolls of cloth. Some of these men were Christians. They had their families with them so when we got permission to open a school, they were very pleased to give their children the chance of attending school which was not normally possible for the gypsy life they lived. We welcomed the ten or twelve children and hoped they would be a nucleus and also be an attraction to help swell our numbers in the school. It did not turn out to be so. Later, we arranged that the teacher we had sent would conduct a short service on Sundays in this dual purpose building. Again, the plan was welcomed by the trading ‘foreigners’ but the true natives took no interest. This was a very great disappointment. Some people did pause as they passed on their way to farm. They quietly watched and listened as we worshipped. We felt that we must not regard the whole move as a failure, we must continue with the little school and the Sunday service even if only supported by people from the south. So we continued month after month.

## 17.4 Abraham Aiyedun

One Sunday morning I was taking the Service when a very large local man, dressed in a splendid native robe came into the church and sat down. He listened intently. After the service I shook hands with him, welcomed him and

tried to find out why he had come. He answered very clearly "I want to become a Christian". I was greatly surprised. We had been praying for a breakthrough for so long, I confess my guilt in wondering if it would ever come. Very quickly however I told him how pleased I was. We would do all we could to tell him what it means to become a Christian, how we would teach him to read so that he could go on learning for himself. Then one day when he would show that he understood and was ready, I would baptise him and give him a new name. Aiyedun said he understood all I had said of what he would learn and that he was ready to start at once.

Now, at this very time, we had been asked to give hospitality to a very famous visitor and his team. Dr Frank Laubach was the inventor of a new approach to reading and was successful in introducing his Mass Literacy method into many languages. We were proud to be his helpers as he tackled the Yoruba language.

His system was based on an alphabet of the essential sounds used by speakers in their own tongue, consonants and vowels. Then he chose a very well known object beginning with a letter which produced that required sound. By a very strange coincidence, in no way connected with a certain well known shoe manufacturer, the Yoruba word for shoe is 'bata'. Now he simply drew the outline of a shoe standing upright, and people gazing at Laubach's illustration can easily get the "b" sound when he looks at, and later when he thinks of, 'bata'. When he and his artist had produced a complete chart of an alphabet that covered all the Yoruba sounds, Dr Laubach asked me to produce someone whom I knew had never been to school and had no knowledge of letters or reading. I produced our compound labourer, Salimanu. He was willing to be the guinea pig and in three days mastered the chart. Amazingly, in one week Salimanu was able to read the 23rd Psalm. Of course he did not understand it, but he would do that later. The idea and the result was so wonderful that I immediately chose some of our catechists, taught them the method and how to use it. Soon Mass Literacy work among adults began and became recognised and widespread.

There was no limit to Frank Laubach's patience and tact. Older learners naturally were more sensitive, particularly in the presence of younger and quicker learners. But there was never any embarrassment. If an older learner made a mistake and instead of a 'b' gave a "d" sound to bata he would never say "No" and correct the mistake. Quietly he would say "Yes", "bata". Quickly the older learner would adjust and would not make that mistake again.

We started a Mass Literacy Group in Ologbodoroko. It proved to be a great help to our new friend Aiyedun. To encourage the group the Resident Magistrate of the Province came to a meeting of the Chiefs and other Moslems. We had offered a prize to the first successful learner. To our great satisfaction, the winner was Aiyedun, the one who had decided to become a Christian. Our church was the meeting place.

Abraham was a very happy man. He was always regular in attendance at Church. He spent a lot of time in becoming fluent in his reading and soon got down to learning to write also. Then he decided that he would like to come to Afon each day and learn to become a weaver. The weaving class in the Homecraft Centre was doing well and we could fit him in too. This craft would

give Abraham a source of income back in Ologbondoroko.

So it appeared that all was going well in Ologbondoroko. The breakthrough was made, now others must follow. But they did not follow. Abraham remained faithful and we continued praying and working.

One morning we received the tragic news. No, Abraham had not died, but it was discovered he was a leper. The younger Moslems made hay whilst the sun shone. They went around chanting. "Don't follow Aiyedun. He became a Christian. Allah is not pleased and Aiyedun now is a leper".

Poor Abraham. We went to see him but he had gone, disappeared. The shock, the stigma, the taunting of the Moslems was too much for him to bear and, alone, he had gone away to hide his sorrow. If anyone knew where he had gone they would not tell us. We kept on enquiring, we searched. One day we were told that outside a certain distant village a leper had settled in a little grass shelter. We trekked there and someone pointed the path which took us to a shelter, but there was no one about. I called out "Abraham". We had found him. He came out, wearing the robe in which he had been baptised, carrying his Bible with his finger holding the place he had been reading. He had lost weight, his robe was now soiled and crumpled. We talked together and prayed together. Abraham still believed.

Abraham's tormentors, back in Ologbondoroko continued working and making it extremely difficult for any other person to become a Christian. One day, Abraham received a message saying his father had died. Now his father had been one of the chiefs and Abraham, the eldest of the family, was next in line for appointment but, Abraham was a leper, he could not return to Ologbondoroko. Yet Abraham still believed. Soon afterwards he received another message, Abraham's wife had gone off with another man. She could no longer endure the stigma of being a wife of a leper. But Abraham still believed. Then news reached him that his house in Ologbondoroko had been burnt down. He could not go to rescue any of his belongings: he was a leper. Still, Abraham did not lose his faith.

We visited Abraham frequently, each time trying to persuade him to come with us and enter the Leper Colony at the Ogbomosho Hospital. Finally, he agreed and became a resident in much more pleasant quarters. The remarkable development in the treatment of leprosy had already been showing dramatic results. Isolation was still necessary but, instead of the frequent large injections, tablets were taken under the supervision of the medical staff. Abraham co-operated with the hospital staff and we began to think of and look forward to the day when he could return to Ologbondoroko bearing a certificate stating that he was "clean". What would his Moslem folk do then?

Our time for retirement from Nigeria arrived and with sad hearts we said goodbye to all the Africans we had come to know in the very many years we had been with them. Our work was taken over by a very keen young couple. He was a minister as well as an engineer, she was a nurse. So the happy partnership in evangelism and healing would continue.

We were invited to return for the Conference of 1962 when the Methodist Church became autonomous. The ten years since our retirement had brought

about many changes. Signs of greater growth had come as independence from the London-based Missionary Society put increasing responsibility on African personnel to raise their own finances, appoint their own officers and continue existing policies or change to something new.

During this short visit we did not get time to return to Ologbondoroko nor did we get much information from that part of our old field.

#### 17.4.1 Return in 1976

Our next return visit to Nigeria was in 1976 some 24 years after we had retired. This time one of my old schoolboys who had been extremely successful in business, kindly put at our disposal one of his cars, an air-conditioned Mercedes plus a liveried driver. We could go anywhere we chose. We mapped out a tour of our old pioneer area since we established the first circuit in the north. We made sure of getting to Ologbondoroko this time. We expected to see a big development of church and school work. But there was none. Tall elephant grass, six or eight feet high, obscured the beautiful little school/church. When we got to it the roof had caved in and covered the neat little polished seats. Abraham was not there. He had not returned. All his connections with Ologbondoroko had been severed, against his will. His father had died and he was denied his place as a chief. His wife had deserted him. His home had been burned, almost certainly by arson. In the face of all these catastrophes he cannot have had any desire to go back. We were unable even to find out what had happened to him. The missionary had been transferred to the far north end of the Borgu Circuit which is the territory we pioneered up to the bank of the Niger. Closing the story of Abraham Aiyedun and Ologbondoroko, it was a disappointment, but the truth of a claim became more apparent. "Out of ten converts in Nigeria, one becomes a Christian but nine become Moslems". I believe that Abraham lived, and probably died as a faithful Christian.

### 17.5 Lost in the bush

I have made many references to transport and the need we had for really suitable means of getting all the equipment we used to the very many towns and villages we visited. In the north, because of the sparsity of trees it was possible to get to places where there was no road. Pedestrians always walked in single file. The Fulani cattle owners also followed the same trails but of course their animals beat down grass and shrubs and left wide traces which we used for motor transport.

I have not yet referred to our bicycles. It required considerable skill to ride along the narrow pedestrian tracks, they kept fairly straight but the sand became very dry and deeper than a cyclist anticipated. This could, and did, result in an unexpected tumble. Despite the high number of times we have been thrown off, we bear no scars and had no cracked or broken bones. I had had

an old bike for years. When Joyce took up cycling we were able to purchase a brand new Raleigh for six pounds.

One day I was due to go on trek but had a lot of paper work to attend to before I could get away. Joyce was staying on in Afon. Cook had his loads ready so, as I was cycling and knew the way, I sent him off with the carriers. I left Afon on my bike after lunch. I reckoned that I would overtake Joe, the cook, in a couple of hours, but I didn't. There were quite a few dried up beds of streams which I did not seem to remember. I began to enquire of anyone coming towards me if they had seen Joe and the carriers. No one had seen them. It was now late afternoon and still the track I followed had no expected landmarks.

So near to the equator days and nights were almost equal. I kept looking at my watch and my anxiety increased as six o'clock approached. Obviously, I had taken a wrong track fairly soon after I had left Afon. There were of course dozens of junctions. It is rather like a railway track, the engine driver is all right so long as the points have been set. Somewhere I had not seen the point and had pedalled on along the wrong track diverging ever more widely from the correct route.

The short dusk gave way to night, there was no moonlight but, worse still, I had been so confident I would overtake the carriers that foolishly I had broken a rule and had set out without drinking water. We dared not drink any water that had not been well boiled and filtered. The carriers had a good supply in my loads, I had none.

I was lost. There was no use in pushing the bike on through the darkness. The odd animal noises began as they set out to prowl after darkness. Should I hope to find a tree and lodge in its branches? The other alternative was to sleep, or rather to spend the night with ants and other creepy crawlies plus mosquitoes and other winged predators and hope that no larger animal would pick up my scent.

No, or very few self respecting Africans are out along a bush path after dark. I spent a completely miserable two hours, then I definitely heard voices. When walking in single file conversation amongst the walkers is always loud and clear so that number five or six can be heard by the leader. I was thankful and overjoyed. I certainly would not enquire into morals nor the honesty of the approaching company, they were human beings. It seemed an age before they came. The five men were alarmed to find a white man out there. I explained. No, they had not seen Joe nor the carriers. No, they did not know the village at which I would meet Joe, but if I cared to follow them home, they would find a very knowledgeable man who doubtless would be ready to help me for a consideration. Consideration? I was quite willing to mortgage a week's stipend (just under four pounds sterling at that time), I started offering less. So we set out for home, their home. It was a long walk but eventually we got there. True to their estimation, there was a knowledgeable gentleman who appeared to be eager to lead me to my destination and quite satisfied with my mortgage plans. He could find a little hurricane lamp, we did not have to discuss the cost of the paraffin oil.

Mr 'consideration' and I got to my destination about midnight. To my

horror I learned that neither Joe nor the carriers had arrived and there was no water to drink. This was really serious as I had not swallowed a drop nor eaten a bit for eleven hours. The Chief kindly said I could sleep on his floor, gave me a large earthen pot in which to boil some water and one yam to eat, when cooked. I boiled the water well and as patiently as possible. I watched while it cooled sufficiently to drink it. I do not recommend the drinking of tepid rather smelly water. In the dim light of a native lamp I could not distinguish its colour, probably deep brown. As I was cooking the yam, I thought I heard voices. Could it be Joe and the carriers? It was. I rushed out to welcome them. They too had taken a wrong turning. We were all extremely tired. We had food together and I reduced the quantity of prepared water the carriers had carried. Further bliss, I was elevated from the flat hard floor to the heights and comfort of my own camp bed. From inside my mosquito net I listened to the flying insects outside but not for long. Thankfully sleep made me forget the whole day's journey.

Another mode of transport to which I have made little reference is the horse. The omission is understandable for, in the southern provinces, chiefs alone and not many of them, had horses. It was different in the north where a horse could move freely without having to stumble over tree roots and cope with the very crooked route of a forest bush path. The Durbars of which we read, where dozens of horsemen charge about and race, are confined to the North. Here a kindly Emir was almost certain to lend us a couple of horses to save the fag of long walks. Incidentally, the kindly Emir would also send at least one 'chaperon' to see to our welfare and probably to the horses welfare also.

We were due to go north from Bussa and were offered two horses. Joyce decided not to accompany me, but was very concerned about the journey and enquired if the horses were gentle. We were told they were very gentle animals, but probably as only one would be in use I had better ride the brown one for he was very "Hunkali" (gentle), so I mounted Hunkali. Before I got my second foot in its stirrup, Hunkali reared and did his best to see I would never get it in, worse, he succeeded in dislodging my first foot. I did not know that I smelled but Hunkali thought that I did. We have all watched a Rodeo show on TV and got an idea of the power of an irritated horse and the powerlessness of a rider to remain upright but then, in those days, TV had not arrived to give Hunkali any ideas, it can only have been original sin. The horse won and while he paused for breath I slid to the ground. I quickly mounted the second, not so gentle horse. He did not seem to object to any smell so with head held high I rode past the still trembling and foaming Hunkali.

## 17.6 West of Bussa: Crocs and elephant

All our travels and investigations had been northerly. We were now in Bussa on the Niger and I decided to take time to move westwards so, in company with Philip, the catechist we set out for the border of Nigeria with French Dahomey on foot. We found that any villages we came to were very small and far between

indeed, very large areas were completely uninhabited by human beings and were the happy hunting grounds of the animal kingdom.

We came to a lovely, fairly shallow river and estimated we could get across without having to swim. We would bundle our clothes and hold them above our heads. As we were preparing for this cooling exercise we suddenly heard a loud splash on our right and looking around quickly were just in time to see the second crocodile as it too splashed into the water. They went downstream and what we had hoped would be a leisurely crossing became a single man's dash while the other kept a sharp look-out for any brothers or sisters of the croc family. We didn't see anything big but from the occasional tread and other unmistakable evidence animals leave behind them, we knew we were in elephant country. Our long walk was unproductive, the few human contacts we made when they had overcome their natural desire to flee into the bush at the sight of a white man made us feel sure there were no large settlements anywhere near. We decided to return to Bussa and in doing so took a southern route in order to explore different territory from our outward journey.

Later we learned that our own Missionary Society's workers in French Dahomey had undertaken exactly the same kind of sortie in order to explore how far the Busanchi language, spoken by their people on their side of the border extended. Of course their finding would be in the interests of a French translation and would not be of much help to us.

On arrival in Bussa, Joyce had been reading the monthly mail which our messenger had brought. He had to travel 180 miles to the nearest Post Office on his cycle and then 180 miles back again. Our method of coping with our mail differed widely, whilst Joyce picked out family letters and read them first, I glanced through the less interesting material and then quietly got in a chair and restfully read the family news.

After a welcome home again and large glasses of orange juice, I sat down to read. Almost the first obviously business looking envelope I opened was a letter which called for hoots of laughter. Accompanied by telling illustrations it read:-

'Dear Sir,

We are addressing this letter to you as one who leads a sedentary life.'

I had just sat down having walked well over 100 miles in a week: sedentary life? I was being advised to invest in a special corset to cope with and cover those inevitable bulges which come to men in the wrong places. I didn't place any order with the enterprising firm. My personal experience and knowledge of most Methodist Ministers is that we are of the lean kind.

One exception to the lean kind who worked in the East End of London got into an already full bus one day. A little Cockney girl sitting beside her mother was told to stand up and give the corpulent gentleman a seat. On doing so, our parson friend thanked her and offered her a seat on his knee. She accepted and squeezed on to what was left of that part of his limb. He asked her what was her name and was simply told, Mary. Oh said he, "I've got a little Mary too". This brought forth the next utterance of the child "Not 'arf you 'ave".

Soon after this we had agreed to a visit from a company of young students from our Wesley College. They were being sent so that they could experience

what life was like out in the Circuits. We took them to the Niger.

Their leader, a young minister on the staff, was thrilled with everything he saw. Not so for the students. They just could not believe that the Borgu people did not understand their Yoruba tongue. They tried speaking very slowly and then they tried speaking very loudly, but still the people could not understand. Here, in their own Nigeria they had to have every word translated. Worse, sometimes they had to work through two interpreters for some of the lesser known but distinct languages of the River people. We certainly showed them what they had thought ridiculous: a Nigerian who could not understand their Yoruba.

## 17.7 1949 Elizabeth born

It may have been noticed that for some pages back I have been trekking without Joyce. The reason really is a very little one; our third child was born on 15th July, 1949. We had some very good friends at the American Baptist Hospital in Ogbomosho. Elizabeth Joyce, an 8.5lbs infant was born with more hair than any of the staff had seen. I wrote in a circular letter to our relatives "for some weeks she has been studying her hands with great interest but a few days ago she has discovered that she has a voice and now her waking hours are spent in experimenting with this new discovery which slides up and down the scale and at times skids off it altogether, to her obvious surprise". I see that I omitted any reference to interruptions to our sleep by that same little voice.

Elizabeth Joyce was baptised by the Rev Frank Longley, the Superintendent Minister of the circuit which includes Ogbomosho where she was born.

Christmas that year, 1949, was spent in Afon. We invited several colleagues in education work, they were better able to travel because of the longer Christmas break. We decided to stage a Nativity Play and got wonderful co-operation from the little church, medical and school staff as well as the Moslem pupils and our own compound labourers. The Play would be in our church and we made full use of its many arches instead of windows, and widened the communion table beneath the large central arch in the end wall. This gave elevation to the scene where Mary, the Babe and Joseph would be placed. The entire cast including the baby was African. The black angels came and went at the right time. The narrator spoke slowly and clearly. The real live sheep devoured as much of our palm leaf 'walls' around the lowly cattle shed, as they could get within reach of their tethers.

The Daodu and the lesser chiefs were all present, the village folk included many women, crowded round each opening in our oval shaped building. It was very obvious that all onlookers were much impressed by all they saw, by the singing of carols in their own language and by the story as read by the narrator. When the Christians followed the three kings in their bright robes of coloured blankets and Africans and Europeans knelt together before the manger in silence, we could hear the Daodu repeating several times the words "Itan Jesu" the story of Jesus "Itan Jesu" the story of Jesus.

Has ever a Nativity Play ended without the words “O come all ye faithful”? That Christmas Eve also echoed those words in song, and many of the performers continued to hum the tune or sing the words as the village folk returned in the darkness to their homes.

## 17.8 1950: Leave

Our leave in 1950 was different from all the others. In 1946 and again in 1948, Peter, Joyce and I had to endure the pangs of parting. After an all too brief furlough period when we were a united family, now five in number, we knew that those pangs would return again. This year they would be greater for the time had come when Anthony, now six years of age must stay in school in England as well as Peter.

Because of age and illness, neither of their grandmothers could take responsibility for the boys, in any case we did not feel that they should be asked to do so. Happily we had the very satisfactory arrangement in Miss Woods Nursery Hotel in Herne Bay, and Joyce’s college friend, Dr Katherine Evans who was a very willing ‘universal aunt’.

There was a very definite snag. No self respecting lad of eleven, in the Preparatory Class of a well known English Public School takes kindly to having to record his holiday address as ‘Nursery Hotel’. We grieved for the shame Peter must have felt and made the decision that we must start buying a house and giving both boys an address all their own.

The financial aspect was a great worry to me. I had no reserve backing, my parent’s eight grown children had already had our endowment in the form of a first rate secondary schooling in Wesley College, Dublin. True I had a wife who was a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons. Her missionary years had earned for her the princely sum of three pounds a week. After our marriage, while she engaged fully in medical activities in pioneering and helping with surgery when needed at our hospital, for eighteen years she received no salary, grant nor allowances. I felt my anxiety was justified. We started looking for a small house near Herne Bay.

When Joyce was a girl, her parents used to rent a house in Birchington during the summer so to that village we went. We looked over lots of properties advertised by estate agents and, after much searching we short-listed three. One fairly remote from the sea, another several roads nearer but the third, which was our real dream was on the sea front.

Joyce’s family were keen Temperance workers and amongst their many friends was Alfred Coucher who was an official in the Temperance Permanent Building Society, also a one time Mayor of Marylebone. He gladly offered to advise on our short list. Secretly we longed for the delightful four bedroom house, with nothing between house and beach except a mowed green maintained by the Council as part of a continuous open space, a very great asset to any holiday resort. But the price was 1,000 pounds more than the other properties.

Alfred came and gave the three careful consideration and advised we buy

our seaside choice. He did not query that extra 1,000 pounds stating that when people come for a holiday beside the sea, the nearer they can be to the sea is the first choice they will have in renting. Our position would quickly be filled each year while the other properties could well lie empty if the season proved to be bad.

So with a big helping of faith we signed for a mortgage with the Temperance Permanent Building Society. The children's excitement was great and, as frequently as we could we passed the house to have another look. The former owners moved out on the agreed date and we were able to make decisions as to which room would be chosen by the boys. Elizabeth was then a year old and obviously could not be consulted.

Peter chose a bedroom with a beautiful sea view through its front bay and side windows. We shall never forget his joy when he went to bed the first night, he declared "Isn't God good to give me a room all to myself". His four years in boarding school and the Nursery Hotel had provided only dormitory accommodation.

The decision to buy "Pitnacree" was inspired. As Alfred had said, we never lacked good tenants who were able and paid good rents. The property was managed and maintained by an excellent estate agent and happily the income from rent not only paid the mortgage, but also enabled us to put in central heating and double glazing. We have indeed much cause for thanksgiving for the 34 years we were the owners. It also made possible the purchase of our very comfortable flat in Bournemouth without any need for mortgage.

In spite of the amount of time taken in house buying, there were still other occupations and pursuits. We had to meet our missionary deputation programme, there was the long list of stores to be bought and purchases requested by our African friends as well of course, as visits to our relatives and friends in England and Ireland.

As the time of our departure grew nearer we were aware of the change in Peter and now also in Anthony's demeanour. They became quieter and more clinging. In truth, they feared the coming separation. At school Peter had passed through a difficult stage. His letters and reports had been showing his unhappiness at separation. Then the awful time came for us to return to West Africa and we tried to say goodbye. His distress as well as ours was so great that I promised "Peter, this is the last time we will leave you, when we come home again in 1952 we will stay at home". He bravely accepted this. We were glad soon to see that his reports showed progress. His class work and his cello playing improved. As for us, the promise had been made and our task now was to prepare for winding up our work and be able to hand over to a successor.



## Chapter 18

# The final tour

The story of our return to Nigeria and our final tour must include some references to bring up to date the current circuit medical activities, the second half of the work of Stephen, of Philip Jaiyesimi and other colleagues. These items require a new chapter.

### 18.1 Joseph Olaleye Fadahunsi

When I was Transferred to the Ilesha Circuit in 1931 one of the responsibilities I inherited was the management of many schools and a staff of around 100 teachers. The largest of the four Government Assisted Schools were Otapete, in Ilesha town. On the staff was a junior untrained teacher, Joseph Olaleye Fadahunsi. His wife, Abigail also taught in the Infant School. They were keen Church members. Joseph earned the fat salary of one pound, seven and sixpence per month.

There was however one obvious problem which increased as the months passed. Joseph was not happy in teaching. I too had the feeling that his career lay in some other direction. After a couple of years he told the whole story of his weariness in school work and asked if I could help him in getting other work.

The big commercial firms in Nigeria were John Holts, the French Company, Miller Bros, McIvors and Patterson Zachonis. There was a merger of several, excluding Holts and the French Co. and the new group, The United Africa Company, controlled by Lever Bros. became a very large organisation.

These giant exporters of cocoa, cotton, palm oil, palm kernels, ground nuts and oil, were also the principal importers of building materials, cement, corrugated roofing, hardware and all sorts of cloth and other manufactured goods. They had agents all over the country, trading under the firm's name, who bought and despatched raw materials to the coast for export, and sold their company's imported goods.

The Swiss Lutheran Church had a missionary organisation known as The Basle Mission. They had a large commercial wing and traded as The Union

Trading Co (UTC). The staff, enlisted by the Mission was made up of trading missionaries with a definite Lutheran Church background whose work resulted in considerable profits going in to the work of the church. We were very friendly with members of the staff in Ibadan and in Lagos and many times entertained these folk, many of whom were married, for a weekend or during a holiday. I mentioned my desire to get employment for Joseph Fadahunsi and Max Rosen in Ibadan investigated and gave permission for Joseph to open a store in Ilesha with a large UTC name over his door. He would buy cocoa principally but would also carry out other trading lines of the company.

Joseph was very pleased and thankful. He had found what he wanted. He bought lots of cocoa from farmers, then hired lorries and forwarded his purchases to the coast where UTC would grade it and with thousands of tons from all their agencies would export. Joseph was doing well but not entirely satisfied as he hired lorry after lorry to convey the cocoa to Lagos. He wished he had the capital to buy a lorry and get the transport profits as well as those from buying. He made credit arrangements and bought a lorry. As he had control of all he bought, he was never short of a load. Profits made it possible to buy a second lorry and a third until Joseph became a successful carrier as well as UTC buying and selling again. He contracted for other buyers. He became recognised and respected business man in Ilesha. He did not allow his business to interfere with his church life, in fact he became more and more useful.

The years passed and the time came for our retirement from Nigeria. I will be writing later of our busy years in England until retirement from the ministry came when I had completed more than the 40 years in active service. During a seven year term in the Margate Circuit, I answered the phone one morning, a lady whose voice I did not recognise asked if I were Mr Ludlow. She was Abigail Fadahunsi, speaking from London. I expressed my surprise and great pleasure. She told me that Joseph was in Australia at the International Air Transport Association fare fixing conference, he represented Nigerian Airways, of which he is Chairman. He would be back before Sunday and they would like to come to see us and to attend morning service in my church. I enquired about transport and was assured that they had their own car available. I then asked for their London address so that I could contact them if their was any need. They were staying in the Dorchester, Park Lane.

On Sunday morning they arrived in very good time, with their English chauffeur, Joseph and Abigail looked splendid in their sumptuous African robes. During the service, I welcomed them and Joseph spoke for a short time on the value of what missionaries and the Home Church had done for his country. We had a very happy day.

Their next call was to Dublin. They contacted my sister Elsie, who knew them very well when over thirty years she was most of the time Matron of the Wesley Guild Hospital, Ilesha. They insisted on her being their guest on several outings. One of these, arranged by Aer Lingus, was a tour of Guinness's Brewery. At the end of the tour the party was entertained with samples of the Guinness products. Joseph, in a loud voice said "No thank you, we are methodists, we do not drink alcohol".

Further promotion for Joseph lay ahead. He rose to the very top and became His Excellency, Governor of Western Nigeria. During this period, which lasted right up to Nigerian Independence, the Queen visited the country and Joseph was knighted. On our next visit to Nigeria, we were guests of Sir Olaleye and Lady Abigail Fadahunsi in their large retirement home a mile from the school where, years ago, an unhappy junior teacher longed for a different career. He found it.

## 18.2 Medical addenda

For twenty years Joyce and I were "Partners in Pioneering". We worked so closely together that we never thought of departments. She was a Local Preacher and attended all the Church meetings as I did. She conducted services as arranged on our Plan, as I did. She was very much interested in schools and did a tremendous lot in the large number of which I was manager. We trekked together walking thousands of miles in the thick forests of the South and in the savannah grass lands of the North. In medicine too, we planned our transport loads of carriers to perch on their heads or their cycles. I became her anaesthetist and dispenser.

Because of all this, in these memoirs I have written what I remembered of medical interest and information without making separate chapters. I now find that I have notes of many such medical occasions left over which I feel I must include here, even if the chronological order may not be recognised. Here is the surgery, the medical practitioner and the partner in pioneering in action.

We had already left Bussa after a long visit and were returning south to Afon. A man came to the Bussa Catechist's house too late to see the doctor. There was no guarantee of the date of our next visit so he decided he would follow us. There was a problem. From just above his knee he had a football size lump which swung about at every step. He used a five foot long pole to help him keep his balance and, grasping the pole with both hands he walked with his legs widely splayed.

One day, more than two weeks later, he walked into our compound at Afon, a mere 200 miles on foot with the ever swinging pendulum. He told his story, he had so many times heard of the doctor's skill he had come to her so that she could remove the lump. After examination, she first ordered a complete rest, then she would do all she could do to help him.

When operating day arrived, Nurse Wende was in general attendance. I was at the head end, administering the anaesthetic whilst Joyce undertook the surgeon's job just above the patient's knee. It has always been our practice to say a short prayer, aloud, before an operation. All went well and when the man came round again it took some time for him to realise that the neat bandage was not merely covering his big lump; it had gone. A very grateful friend stayed with us for several weeks before setting out on his 200 mile walk homewards. By this time, he had lost the need for holding his pole and was able to balance perfectly without it and without the swinging football.

Operations performed in the Mobile Unit always attracted a crowd of interested onlookers. Provided they did not require any privacy, we got as much air as possible by leaving doors and windows wide open. Otherwise, of course, we would use our curtains, electric light and fan.

Often the crowd of onlookers would include a Mr Knowall who had seen a previous operation and was thrilled not only to keep up a running commentary but even to tell in advance what was going to happen. When the patient was lying down, Mr Knowall would start. "First the white man is going to sprinkle special medicine which will make the sick man dead", whereupon the next of kin would rush forward to extract a sick living body instead of one that is dead. Mr Knowall anticipated this excitement and in a loud voice would continue "It's all right. When he is dead, the doctor will do her work and when she has finished, they will wake him up again." Still apprehensive, but temporarily appeased, the family waits until the 'body' is returned to them, fully alive.

During the years of our touring medical work, practically all of the medicines prescribed were in liquid form, we imported concentrated mixtures and diluted them as required. In addition there were many pills. Even in those early days, there were few homes in England which at some time had not had a box of Beechams Pills or Carters Little Liver Pills or the more commonplace aspirin, the doctor's prescription usually turned out to be a bottle of medicine. We carried row upon row of concentrated mixtures in flat sided bottles which were the most economical in space. We required patients to fetch their own bottle, properly rinsed and clean. When Stephen got to the handing out of the concentrated liquid with correct volume of water already added, he would pass it through the hatch and loudly repeat the dosage several times: "shake the bottle and take a spoonful three times a day; you have enough to last seven days." All this would be repeated by the patient. Next day, or perhaps two days later the patient would return asking for a refill and declaring "it was so good, I took it all at once".

In most of our pioneer work we made no charge for professional service nor for the medicine. In more advanced places we did make a small charge of 'toro' (threepence) for each bottle of medicine. Sometimes we had the patient who secretly would offer to pay more in order to get stronger medicine. He had to learn that doctor always provided the best medicine she had for his needs.

Apart from the following, we have never seen an African woman on a horse. No wonder that Joyce suddenly called out to me to look at the road up to our compound from Afon. True enough, a real woman on a real horse, carefully led by a man. The poor woman looked terribly wasted and ill. Joyce ran over from our house to the dispensary to see what it was all about.

The woman was stiff and unable to walk or even take a step. Helped by the man who led the horse, we carried the patient to a bed. Doctor made her usual thorough examination and wrote down the case history. Usually a sick person is kept at home for a long time, 'cared for' by the witch doctor. When he has done his worst if the presence of a doctor at Afon is known, the relatives may then think of getting a second opinion and carry the patient in a hammock or, in this unique case on a horse. I write "the horse" for it probably is the only

one available for a great distance.

With good food and nursing the woman very slowly began to respond to a series of injections, her limbs began to loosen. Many days passed before she could be helped to sit up, then to hang her legs over the side of the bed and eventually to swing her legs. She protested strongly as each advance move was suggested but was gradually told she must try. Finally she got to the stage of learning to walk again.

Every day we had prayers in the dispensary and often included a Bible story. Our friend always listened carefully. One Sunday, it was our Harvest Thanksgiving in the church. Before leaving for the morning service, Joyce did her round of the in-patients. The old woman was sitting on her bed swinging her legs. She searched under her pillow and then handed a 'toro' to Joyce and in Yoruba said "Today is your Ikore (Harvest Thanksgiving). Give this to your God."

One of the products of the work we opened up in Amodu, where I had stationed E.A. Ogungbe, after his training as a Sub-Pastor in Wesley College, was a youth called Jimoh. He was a teenager in our little 'infant' school and was later prepared for Baptism by the Sub-Pastor (now Rev E.A. Ogungbe). I baptised this youth, Solomon Jimoh. I decided to give him an opportunity in a village: Oke-eso, seven miles from our Afon house. Joyce takes up the story from here:-

It was Solomon one morning, who rode up to our little dispensary at Afon with a big girl, probably 12-13, sitting on the cross bar of his bicycle. Dismounting, and after the usual salutations, he announced "I have brought Abiba to see the doctor. I have told her parents she will make her better." He then lifted Abiba off the bike and placed her on the ground where she immediately moved around on her hands and knees. A bright and happy face, full of hope but sadly with deformed legs, she could not possibly stand. Simply, the story was as follows:-

Solomon when visiting around the village to which he was newly appointed discovered Abiba, a grown girl but only able to crawl. His immediate reaction was to tell the parents to take her to the doctor at Afon, she would make her better. The parents said it was no good. They had spent all their money, chickens, goats and the like to pay all the local native doctors, but no one could do anything. Abiba had not walked for ten years and she would never walk. Solomon who obviously believed in miracles was not deterred. He talked, he argued but to no effect. His last card was to offer to take her the seven miles on his bike to see the doctor. They would need no money. To keep him quiet they agreed so Abiba arrived!

As I listened to Solomon's story and later examined Abiba with her thin withered legs my heart sank for he, in absolute faith had promised so much, while I realised we could do so little.

Abiba was born a normal healthy baby and ran around her home and village as toddlers do. Then one day she was stricken with fever and lay quiet and helpless, a victim of poliomyelitis. After many days and much native medicine the fever subsided, Abiba recovered except for her legs from her knees downwards, she could not move. Sitting at the door of her hut, watching the village children play she eventually began to drag herself out to get near them and slowly found she could crawl on hands and knees. This she had done for ten years. Her little feet, small and undeveloped, had been held up to prevent them getting sore and her knees had become fixed at an acute angle so she could no longer straighten her legs which were atrophied from the knees down.

There was nothing wrong with the rest of Abiba. She was now a healthy well developed 12 year old, eager to live life to the full. What a problem, no X-rays, no facilities needed to explore the possibilities of restoring some movement to her legs or even straightening them, yet Solomon had promised. We had at that time, at Afon, a Homecraft Training Centre where local girls attended daily for pre-marriage training in domestic subjects and the 3 R's. A few girls from distant villages lived in with the trained teacher from United Missionary College, Ibadan. We suggested to Solomon that Abiba stay with me while investigations took place. She could join in the classes, share the community life and thus be prepared for further treatment if the door opened.

So she stayed and we prayed. The parents willingly agreed. They saw no future for her in the village. Who would marry her? For three months she lived in the Homecraft Centre, a happy helpful youngster who amazingly took part in all the activities. She was adept at sweeping floors with the simple native broom or bunch of twigs!

At this time there were no X-rays or orthopaedic expertise available at Wesley Guild Hospital either, the only orthopaedic hospital was in Lagos, 300 miles away. It had been built after the Second World War to rehabilitate injured soldiers returning from the Burma Campaign. We decided to seek help there but were informed there was no bed available nor likely to be in the near future. We still prayed.

Synod, at that time always held in Lagos, was due so the idea came that if we took Abiba with us, she could attend as an out-patient during the three weeks of Synod and perhaps, perhaps, the powers that be would admit her.

So we returned to Abiba's parents, taking Abiba in the Baby Austin we used when there were no roads, to ask if they would agree, and if one of them would accompany her to Lagos. All the way to the village Abiba sang lustily some of the choruses she had learned in her

own Yoruba language, "Inu mi dun pupo, Inu mi dun pupo, Nitiri mo mo Olorun fe mi Inu mi dun pupo" I'm very happy (lit. my stomach is sweet) I'm very happy because I know God loves me so, I'm very happy"). Arrived at Oke-eso, the parents were willing for me to take Abiba and gave consent for any treatment or operation but on no account would they come too.

So to Lagos we went. The three months experience in the Homecraft Centre proved valuable in helping Abiba to adapt to life so different from her village experiences and we realised how this interim period was an answer to prayer. We took Abiba to the hospital where the expert examined her, pronounced it might be possible to straighten her legs but there was no chance of admission then. More prayer and before the end of the three weeks when once again we explained the problem of long distance etc. at last the authorities found a bed and Abiba remained in hospital.

That was in January 1952. In May we were leaving for England on retirement from Nigeria. When in Lagos we went to see Abiba still in hospital. One leg had been straightened but a hectic temperature had followed and a further operation had to be postponed. When we said "goodbye" Abiba asked us to take a message to the boys and girls in your country who collect money to send you out here: the J.M.A. collectors of whom she had been told.

Regretfully we left her but gave thanks for the prayers which had so abundantly been answered. Solomon's promise to the parents was half fulfilled!

The story continued, for eventually the second operation was completed callipers were fitted and one day Abiba stood erect. Long months of physiotherapy and learning to walk again, first with crutches and then with sticks followed. At last Abiba was ready for discharge. Rev Raymond Rowlands who had taken over the circuit when my husband left sent the nurse in charge of the little dispensary down to Lagos to accompany Abiba back. The train (only one in two days) arrived in Ilorin (14 miles away) on Whit Sunday morning. Mr Rowlands went to meet them at the station.

Waiting on the verandah and around the dispensary were Abiba's parents, the chief and almost the whole population of Oke-eso plus the Daodu (the District Chief of Afon) and his chiefs and followers. The car arrived and the door opened, Abiba, with two sticks to help her, began to walk the short path to the dispensary. The crowd gasped, then roared, then clapped, danced and even turned somersaults as they beheld the miracle of Abiba walking and then when calm was restored, said very quietly "Shall we say thank you to God who made this possible." There was complete silence as Christians and Moslems together gave thanks to the one true God.

A simple lad's absolute faith had been honoured. Solomon's promise was kept.

### 18.3 Stephen

Earlier in these memoirs I have told of Stephen's arrival in Ilesha from his native Kukurukuland. He got a job in our Hospital working as a labourer. When the new lady doctor arrived, Sister Liony had picked Stephen as a likely lad to become a steward in the house. He became an excellent servant and a trusted friend and colleague in all our work, especially Joyce's medical service.

He had an extraordinary ability in picking up languages and became a valued interpreter. I want to complete his story from the time he embarked on a new career.

We had extended the work into the Northern Provinces and had appointed a young man to Kaiama, one of the Emirates in which we were anxious to open up work. This was a very big responsibility to place on the shoulders of a man of any age. He would live entirely among Moslems, try to establish a school and to study Busanchi. All had gone well at first but I had made a mistake in appointing an unmarried man in the place. The consequences of this slip made it very hard to regain trust of the Kaiama community.

The vacancy was constantly a subject for prayer. One day I spoke to Joyce and said I felt that the man for the job was Stephen. She could hardly believe that I was serious, not because of any question of his suitability. Stephen had become so reliable and relied upon in her medical work, it was difficult to think of letting him go. The more she faced up to it the more she agreed that it was the right choice, that is if he would agree.

We were together for the interview. I spoke of our sorrow at what had happened in Kaiama. Stephen, of course, knew all about it. I reminded him that we had all been praying for someone who would fill the vacancy. He must be, before anything else, a man who loved the Lord and would do his utmost to turn this temporary defeat to victory. "We believe, Stephen, that you are the man" "Me?" said the astonished Stephen "I could not do that I have not any education, only two years in Infant School". I told him we did not want any quick decision. He should pray about it and talk about it to Comfort, his wife and then when he had come to any conclusion, he should talk to us again.

A few days later he came to talk. "By myself I cannot do this thing but, if God wants me to do so and doctor and you feel it is right, I will go to Kaiama".

The Emir was delighted to hear the news for he knew Stephen so well and he really respected his loyalty to the Mission and praised the way he worked so closely with the doctor in helping sick people. He also knew that the people of Kaiama would be very glad.

In his earlier days we had noted his extraordinary gift as an interpreter, he was now to be given a whole new batch of the many languages of the River tribes, as well as Hausa, the lingua franca of the North. Patiently he would write down what a word sounded like until he could find someone to help him

get its full meaning.

With the help of the Emir's Chief Clerk we had been able to write down a translation of simple choruses such as "I am H.A.P.P.Y." This in the Bussa tongue became "Ma no sheke pura". This little verse became well known to Stephen's friends as he sang the words with a smiling face. In time it became the nickname by which Stephen was known over a very wide area: "Ma no sheke pura" (Stephen, the happy one).

We made a box which he could fit on the carrier of his bike. It contained dressings and bandages, made from old bed sheets sent out by folk at home, boracic powder, an eye bath, tweezers and the simplest of aids to Stephen's already healing touch. He conducted worship on Sundays, literacy classes and preparation classes for catechumens. His addresses were based on the parables and miracles of Jesus. He also made use of material he had heard us use as he interpreted on past occasions. This with frequent days out in the villages fully occupied his time. It was a great joy for us when we visited Kaiama to see the progress he had made and the influence of the always clean and tidy house and family which Comfort and he had raised. They had eleven children: a tribute to the parental care and love in a country with a regrettably high infant mortality. This family, now all adults, include a Methodist Bishop, a headmaster, teachers, nurses, accountants. All are qualified professionally.

Ten years after we retired from Nigeria we had the pleasure of revisiting that country and went to Kaiama. Stephen and Comfort were still there. He was sitting in a folding chair outside his house, reading his Bible. He wore steel rim glasses perched near the end of his nose. He showed more than ten years wear. Opposite his house was a well built Dispensary and the Mission House of the European Nursing Sister appointed by our Methodist Missionary Society. In the ranks of the Methodist Church Ministry was one of the sons of the old Moslem Emir of Kaiama. All these were fruits of Stephen's untiring devotion and service.

We never saw Stephen after that visit. Cancer had demanded its heavy price. But the man who "could not go to Kaiama because of his lack of education" yet did go when convinced that God wanted him to go, had lived and died, many hundreds of miles from his Kukuruku birthplace, in full assurance of a new and everlasting life.

## 18.4 Cine films

The Cine Kodak we bought with wedding present cheques not only gave us much fun but also was a very great help in our work. We had bought a few secondhand films of Charlie Chaplin and the like and watched them so often that we knew Charlie's moves in advance. We found later that our own home-made films also provided amusement. Even in the remote parts in our circuits, wherever we could get the car through the bush, we were able to make use of our outfit. The projector had two lamps, one which we used nearly every time, was lit from the 12 volt battery but for this, I had to turn a handle to move the

film along. The picture, in order to be bright enough to see, had to be small. If we could use the 100 volt lamp, we had a transformer which enabled us to plug in to mains and sit back and watch whilst the power turned the handle as well as supplied a strong enough light to throw a bigger picture on the screen. This luxury was only possible on visits to Lagos or the very few places where there was a mains supply of current. We can forget this luxury for, in our up country tours we had to depend on the car battery alone and put up with the smaller picture. It was easy to hang one of our bed sheets over a convenient branch of a tree in a market place. It was a much more difficult job to organise our audience, usually a big crowd, so that they could all get a glimpse of what was going on. When the film began the onlookers were astonished to see that the picture was alive.

I have already told how the taking of a film of the chiefs in Ologbondoroko had led to a long awaited invitation to visit the place and later to begin work there with the granting of a piece of land for a school.

It was a happy day when the Mobile Unit arrived. The extra equipment we had been able to purchase with cheques which had come in from keenly interested friends, included not only a Bell & Howell 16 mm sound projector, but also a petrol driven generator which supplied electricity and gave splendid bright and clear pictures on a large screen. We were greatly helped by the British Council in their free supply of good yet simple instruction and information coloured films.

We could be sure of maximum attendance for our open air meetings. When everything was ready we would play some suitable music and keep it going whilst we attended to seating the audience in rows on the ground. Then, we would put on a film probably one which we ourselves had made of the local chiefs and scenes. Perhaps I have already mentioned one old chap who sat and laughed at the faces of the chiefs as they appeared smiling at him from our bed sheet. Then came a face he did not recognise but it was funny anyhow so he shrieked with mirth until his neighbour poke him in the ribs and said "That's you".

Then there was the elderly woman, sitting on the grass near the projector. At the end of the film I asked her how she had enjoyed it. Rubbing her eyes she said that all she had seen was a very bright light. Poor soul, she had sat through the whole film looking into the projector instead of turning round to see the screen. I do hope that she had got something out of the Bible story which always followed and with which we closed the evening's show.

## 18.5 Philip Jaiyesimi

I must turn over another page in the Philip Jaiyesimi Saga, and bring this chapter to an end. Philip was like Zaccheus in stature but had been well named after the Evangelist who had explained the way of everlasting life to the Ethiopian treasurer of Queen Candace. I have already told of his offer to live and work in distant Bussa, and of his travels up and down the River Niger, not forgetting our joint landing in Yimo, the leopard endangered village.

Philip carried out his duties faithfully. He gave his Bussawa listeners much amusement as he made mistake after mistake in his pronunciation of words in their language. I, too, have done this but confess that I did not follow the laughter with the same grace as he did.

One day I received a letter from Philip. He asked that when we planned our next visit to Bussa could we please spare time as he wanted to present some adults whom he had prepared for baptism. I was thrilled and arranged to bring forward the date of our next visit.

We duly arrived. Philip had often glanced at the horizon to see any trace of rising dust, the sign of an approaching vehicle. When we did get to Bussa, Philip was waiting for us, he had his candidates for baptism with him, three Bussa men and two women. Obviously he expected that I would start examining these people as soon as we alighted from the Mobile Unit. Our thoughts as to programme were slightly different. After two full days on the road, including the negotiating of bridgeless rivers which, in this dry season meant climbing down one bank of the dried river, crossing its bed and then finding a safe gradient to get up the other bank, it was evening time on the second day and we had to unpack, set up camp etc. We spent some time in talking with Philip and made it clear to the candidates that we were very pleased to meet them and that we had undertaken the journey especially for them. We settled that the next morning would be the best time to get on with the work.

In the Southern Provinces it was expected that a candidate for baptism should be able to read in Yoruba, his own language. This could mean a year or more, until the Laubach Mass Literacy Campaign. Now, although we were working on reducing the Bussawa language in writing, it would be a long time before there were any positive results. We had to cut out this desirable qualification on the banks of the Niger. We listened as the candidates repeated the Lord's Prayer in their own tongue. They also answered very simple questions on their very simple faith. I was quite happy to accept all five for baptism. Philip asked that it should take place on Sunday during the morning service.

Because of the intense heat the Service began at an early hour. The church, like the dwelling houses, was circular. The thatch roof rested on the mud walls and rose to a centre point on a tall pole which gave the thatch a slope sufficient to cope with heavy rain and prevent water from entering. Usually there were leaks due to thin patches in the thatching, but these were promptly stuffed with spare thatch.

The church had been built exactly the same as a dwelling house and had no windows, or open spaces in the walls. It did have a space for entrance which had a rolled up piece of grass mat suspended above it. This when unrolled, provided the only cover for privacy and security.

When we entered the church, the congregation was already there, sitting in rows on the mud floor. However, as we had come into pitch darkness from the brilliant tropical sunshine outside, we could not see them. Gradually as our sight adjusted to the dark, we could first see the whites of eyes and of teeth and later the outline of figures of the twenty worshippers.

Philip had provided a rather well-used table and on it had placed an enamel

bowl of water for the baptism. The Service followed simple order, choruses in Bussanchi had been memorised, a Bible story was freely translated from the Yoruba Bible which was owned and daily studied by Philip, a prayer was followed by the Lord's Prayer in which the candidates loudly joined, displaying their recently acquired knowledge. I took one of the better known parables and Philip did his best to get its meaning over, then explained what baptism meant and what exactly we would be doing.

The mighty River Niger flows past at the end of our church compound. Although it still has one thousand miles to flow before it reaches the sea, it is nearly a mile wide. Now, with this great expanse of water shimmering fifty yards away, I could not proceed with the baptism using a bowl of water in an extremely dark room. I asked Philip to translate that like Jesus himself was baptised in the River Jordan, today's baptism would be in the River Niger.

Philip led the candidates and their followers in single file to the water's edge, then he and I together walked in to waist depth and one by one I baptised the five candidates by immersion.

We had not reached the waters of Lake Chad, the dream of John Milum and his stalwart companions, men of vision and resolve of over half a century earlier. But, after years of delays, disappointments and striving to gain a Christian foothold amongst the Bussawa on the banks of the Niger, it had happened and we all rejoiced and gave thanks to these five, the first fruits of Christ's Church in the Borgu Emirate.

Philip and his wife continued to serve for over ten years in this remote Northern station for which we had such great difficulty in finding volunteers. The Bakares, the Jaiyesimis and the Ludlows were privileged to be the pioneers. Others followed.

## Chapter 19

# A new life in England

### 19.1 The Methodist Church in Ireland

For many centuries Ireland has been sending out sons and daughters as missionaries to carry the Gospel to other lands. Since the latter half of the 18th century, the newly formed Methodist Church in Ireland has gladly shared in this activity but, instead of organising its own small missionary society it has been a partner with the British Conference in the Methodist Missionary Society. So when I entered the Ministry of the Methodist Church in Ireland, it was in that country that I gained my first three years experience in circuit ministry, received my theological training and was ordained. However, as I had offered and was accepted for service overseas, the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, as it was until Methodist Union in 1933 and then became the Methodist Missionary Society (MMS) controlled my movements and was responsible for keeping missionary candidates in our Irish Theological College for a third year. Our contemporaries, including my brother Day, who had offered to serve in Ireland were given only two years in college because of the strain on accommodation and staff. (For accuracy of records, Methodist Union in Ireland had already become effective at the turn of the century.)

As the years passed and I married an English wife whose home was in London, we tended to spend more time in England during our furloughs. Years later, when our son Peter had to be left behind for educational reasons, we searched carefully for the best school. We looked at Wesley College, Dublin and then at the huge 'Methody' in Belfast, but finally decided on Kent College, Canterbury to be followed by our Kingswood School in Bath, where later he was joined by his brother Anthony.

All this, together with the fact that we had embarked on a mortgage for our own house in Birchington, Kent, had made me seek an official transfer from Ireland to the British Methodist Conference. This transfer raised no problems and simplified things for us now that we had come to the end of our service in Nigeria.

## 19.2 The ‘Duologue’: Partners in preaching

We developed the ‘Duologue’ in 1952.

This method of preaching made it possible to add new interest and a lot of fun to the old stereotyped missionary anniversary and enabled us to get over lots more information, each of us on our own subject. Instead of two addresses, we took it in turn to speak. Perhaps I would start but, if my story transgressed on to Joyce’s subject, she would coolly cut in on medical stories or on women and girls. Then equally sharply, I would await my opportunity and give five minutes or so on church, education, transport etc. This kept the audience awake and interested. We found that people enjoyed a laugh at a missionary meeting as much as elsewhere. This method tended to make our Duologues much longer but it did enable us to get over far more information and it gave our audience a frequent change of voice. The Duologue idea has been taken up by the B.B.C. in news bulletins and is also widely used elsewhere.

When we returned from Nigeria in 1952 we decided to use the descriptive title we had used for years overseas: “Partners in Pioneering”.

Allen Birtwhistle who had been a young Science graduate teaching under the MMS in Lagos, candidated for the Methodist Ministry. After his training and gaining experience he was appointed to the London Mission House staff in charge of work in the UK amongst young people. He had an additional gift in art and used this in production of many clever and attractive posters and also in the production of the MMS collecting box which bore pictures of our Mobile Medical Unit and of work through the Laubach Literacy Campaign. He very quickly booked us for the 1952 Missionary Conference at Lowestoft, where we were given an hour each day for the week. This meant five duologues.

Dr Ralph Bolton, the Medical Secretary of the MMS wrote to me stating that shortage of doctors on leave made it very difficult for him to arrange the medical sessions at the Laymen’s Conference at Swanwick “So I am writing to ask you if you will become a medical worker (as you so often were) for the period of Swanwick”. I would speak on front line medical evangelism. I was glad to oblige and evidently had a reasonably good time for, as a result of Swanwick and our joint performance at Lowestoft, invitations from many parts of the country poured in.

I was due to enter the work of the Home Church in September, the Missionary Society however intervened and invited us to remain on their staff for a further year and be at their beck and call for appointments anywhere. We were pleased to accept this invitation. The MMS paid rent on our house in Birchington and throughout the year we made for home as often as possible. We always went together and our visits included a week or two in Ireland several times, a week in the Channel Isles in the French Circuit, the Moray Firth from Aberdeen to Inverness, Cornwall, Wales, East Anglia and all sorts of places between. We did mad things like going home after a meeting in Sheffield or Swansea, travelling through the night and getting in by daylight, but it was HOME.

The acceptability of the Duologue method resulted, in addition to our official MMS appointments, requests for numerous privately arranged meetings. We

sometimes went singly to address afternoon Womens Meetings in the same towns and about the same times. This led on one occasion to our accepting invitations to address two meetings in Oxford. We found that the two churches were in neighbouring streets, in fact, very nearly backing each other: so much so that I could hear the women singing in Joyce's meeting and probably her women could hear my louder voice when speaking.

I have turned over pages of jottings I made of those days.

In a Welsh city the chairman at our duologue was no less than the Mayor. Now this mayor had the very unfortunate habit of dropping off to sleep if a speech were too long. He knew of this failing and has often joked about it. After his introduction of the speakers he settled down comfortably, but when he eventually finished what was a longer effort than usual, he pulled out his watch from his waistcoat pocket and said "It isn't, it can't be, an hour and twenty minutes and I have not been to sleep".

In Manchester, the Missionary fortnight was coupled with the circuit Eisteddfod. Each of the ten weekday evenings in a different church in the circuit, all packed to the doors, had an hour of competitions, instrumental and vocal, then followed an hour for their annual missionary meeting. This was a grand idea but it meant that the captive audience included many people who followed to every church in turn and that meant for us the preparation of ten completely different duologues.

Every weekend meant afternoon Sunday Schools as well as morning and evening services and often a Question hour at the close of the day. Very often there had been a Saturday night tea and meeting to follow, or possibly on the Monday night, in the same church.

We were invited to a North London Church: Willoughby Road. I conducted morning service and kept to a fairly tight time schedule so as to allow the maximum for the missionary address. There was a clock directly facing the pulpit, probably on the gallery, ensured that I would stop in time. Joyce told me afterwards that I had been leisurely in the first half, much slower than usual, then suddenly I had pressed the accelerator and fairly dashed through the remainder of my talk (which she had heard before) and arrived at the end, almost breathlessly announcing the closing hymn. The explanation? Five minutes after I started speaking, the clock stopped. Now, I alone could see that timepiece and suddenly realised that it was the same time as when I had begun the story of a young man who had become a Christian in the face of much opposition from family and companions. That story should have ended many minutes earlier, hence the accelerator. When I apologised and explained about what had happened with the clock, folk were most understanding. I did not hear one single comment about the overcooked joint at home, but did hear the expressions of regret that I had finished so soon, they wanted more. An oft repeated remark was the expressed wish that on missionary anniversaries, speakers could forget an ordinary sermon and take the congregation to places where the front line work was being done. But then, the number of missionary speakers on furlough is small and of those who are available, many have been engaged in educational work which does not necessarily give the same first hand

thrill.

Our hostess was in charge of afternoon Sunday School and during lunch asked Joyce if she would like to visit the School and possibly say a few words. Joyce jumped at the idea. I rested at home. On their return, our hostess burst into the room and said “My goodness, your wife CAN talk”. I showed no surprise, I already KNEW.

Chairmen differed greatly, from the experienced to the beginner. One gentleman was very particular as to the correct pronunciation of Ilesha, where we had spent 16 years. In advance he asked should he say Eye-lee-sha or EE-lay-sha. We assured him that the latter was correct. He came to the introduction of the speakers and said that they came from Elisha (the Old Testament prophet’s name) then turning round he smiled and said “I’ve got it right haven’t I?”

In the eighteen months (April 1952 to September 1953) we had the privilege of speaking in over 200 different churches, all over the U.K., Ireland and the Channel Isles. We met the most wonderful groups of people with tremendous variety of talent, dedication and culture. It was a thrill to speak in churches big and small, in packed Central Halls and remote chapels. Everywhere, people were ready to listen and wanted to hear as much as possible of the Christian Church in West Africa.

### 19.3 Speaking in the Channel Islands

In preparation for one of our two visits to the Channel Isles (French and English circuits) Joyce had a hair do. With pleasurable anticipation she told her hairdresser of our forthcoming visit to Guernsey and, as it was around Easter time after a very cold winter, she looked forward to wearing lighter clothing. The girl immediately changed the outlook for she was born and bred in Guernsey, and said “Take with you the warmest clothes you have, remember Guernsey is a small island and the Atlantic winds sweep every inch of it.” Forewarned, our suitcase was repacked and we set out for the Antarctic. The island was cold but the warmth of our French host and hostess was outstanding. We did not have to worry about the Patois, for although they were of French stock, had a French name, lived in our French Circuit, they were completely bi-lingual.

Our host was a very big man, in height and girth, who had for many years worked in a quarry before taking to tomato growing. His wife equalled him in size and neither of them ever felt cold, being so well covered. We slept in the guest room over the drawing room, which had a fire only on Sundays. Twin beds were covered with ample duvets. We took it in turn to be the first to get into bed and warm it up a bit then slept in one of the beds. The trouble came next morning for our hostess brought in a cup of tea. So that she would not find us using only one bed, again we took it in turn to brave the cold and transfer to the other bed before her knock would come on the door.

The cooking was excellent and our midday dinners were served on overlaid plates of meat, potatoes and amongst other vegetables, topped with a whole cauliflower dripping with a rich sauce. I do not remember ever seeing the pattern

on those dinner plates as I never succeeded in digging to the bottom of the generous supply. A large helping of pudding followed and, thank God, a large cup of tea to help reduce the feeling of being full above safety level.

An all too short rest came next until it was time to prepare for our evening duologue. Now our week-long visit was the occasion for the Annual Missionary Anniversary of the six or eight churches in the French Circuit. Each evening followed the same pattern. It started with a huge tea in a home connected with the church in which tonight's meeting would be held. To this our week-long home host and hostess were invited, The Ministers of the circuit, The Overseas Missionary Secretary, the Treasurer, the Chairman of tonight's meeting, the Organist, the Soloist and others. We faced large helpings of cold meats and salads, then a rich trifle. At this stage, already having reached the above referred to 'danger level' we still had to have a slice of Guernsey gache. In none of the many homes did we find anyone who understood the word 'small'. Already defeated, there was no alternative but to surrender and eat it. It is a lovely rich fruit cake, but really a meal in itself and certainly not an 'afters' as in Guernsey.

After all this, too full for words, we were wheeled to the meeting i.e. in a car. I would emphasise, speaking with feeling, another good point about our duologue method. It meant that the one who was not speaking had the opportunity to sit quietly until his or her turn came round.

Add to the generosity and care of all those listed above, devotion, keenness, loyalty, and multiply it by 7 or 8, and you get the Channel Islands atmosphere. I would also congratulate the Ministers of the Circuit who, night after night managed to find something fresh to say as they handed the speakers over to the chairman of the evening and then managed to sit and listen to those 7 or 8 duologues.

## 19.4 Joyce awarded the MBE

Apart from the conferences, travels and meetings there was one outstanding event in 1952. Joyce was awarded the M.B.E. in recognition of her outstanding medical work in Nigeria. As we were in England, she would receive this award from the Queen herself at an Investiture in Buckingham Palace.

Two persons were invited to accompany each one being honoured. Obviously Peter and I would attend. Moss Bros were very busy with the hire of so many grey top hats, tail coats and striped trousers to those who wanted to give the impression that they wore such garments frequently at important dress occasions. We did not need to support the firm for I wore my clerical garb and Peter his school Sunday suit. Joyce, of course had to buy her outfit. We never even thought of being able to hire for a lady but since then we know it is quite in order to do so. Ladies usually think they will be able to use the new outfit on other occasions.

We parked the car as near as we could to Buckingham Palace and then got a taxi which dropped us at the gates around which and all along the tall railings a crowd of interested onlookers stood. Most people clutching their

identity papers must have been thrilled, as we were, to be able to cross that large forecourt sacred to the splendidly uniformed guards with their tall bearskins, or the passage of Royal and official cars. We arrived eventually at the arch which is the last point TV watchers get of Her Majesty as she passes through. Here, having nothing to declare, we were directed across the inner courtyard to the covered entrance to the Palace proper. Joyce was directed straight on whilst Peter and I turned left and climbed the long red carpeted stairs and eventually reached the large Hall where the Investiture would take place.

We were indeed fortunate, a kindly official separated us from the file of relatives being directed to the body of the hall. He said that Peter would get a better view in the front, and led us to some raised seats backing the side wall and thus we would be looking straight on to the dais where everything was to be seen and almost within touching distance. The long waiting was whiled away with the bright music from a military band in the musicians gallery. Meanwhile, all those to be honoured were receiving directions and rules of procedure. On being called each would enter the hall, turn sharp left and halt directly in front of Her Majesty to whom they would bow or curtsy. After the reading of the citation of each, he or she would take about ten steps forward. Here the Queen would do her part, shake hands, speak some words of gratitude and hang the decoration on the recipient, who would then take those ten steps backwards, bow or curtsy again, turn right and then left and leave by the door behind the dais.

At the appointed hour we all stood while the Queen entered and the Lord Chamberlain took up his position. The band struck up and we all sang the National Anthem, then without any formal opening, the recipients were called individually. The above rules of procedure ran smoothly, except in one or two cases where, probably overcome by excitement the recipient forgot to take ten paces backwards, turned a back on the Queen and beat a hasty retreat as possible to the security of the withdrawing room.

Joyce was not one of these exceptions, she went through the drill without fault and graciously smiled as she spoke or listened to the Queen's comment. I forgot to say that in the preparation a small hook was pinned on to each person being decorated. This made it easier to hang on the medal without danger of pricking the royal fingers.

Two comments remain. Peter was especially thrilled as knighthoods were bestowed. A small cushioned stool with one side frame raised high enough to hold firmly, was placed in front of the Queen. A plain 'Mr' went forward, knelt on the cushion while Her Majesty touched each of his shoulders with a sword and commanded him to "Arise, Sir George" or whatever was his name.

The other comment concerned a very uncomfortable gentleman who blushed almost to the roots of his hair as he stepped forward for his award. The Queen held out her hand. He grasped it and levered her arm up and down like a village pump. I could see the muscles tighten on her cheek in an obvious but successful effort to prevent a grin or other sign of amusement. On completion of such a definite thanks or goodbye, he forgot the rest, turned his back on the Queen and almost ran to the exit. I feel sure that at the royal luncheon which followed, the

incident of the village pump must have been one of the items in conversation.

We, the spectators, reunited with our wives, husbands, or other relatives who had been decorated in the inner courtyard. Official photographers reaped a rich harvest and doubtless many a husband told his wife not to forget to return his garb to Moss Bros before a further day's rent was demanded.

## 19.5 A new appointment in Devon

In Methodism, one of the many methods wherein we differ from the Church of England and some of the Free Churches is that there are no interregnums, that is the period, sometimes a year or more where a parish can be without a minister before his successor is appointed. Our Methodist method is that all outgoing ministers vacate their manse occupancy and official duties in August and their successors are in charge as from the first Sunday in September. Many men are invited to their new appointment well in advance, others do not wish to accept invitations but leave their appointment to the guidance and decision of our Stationing Committee which is in the position to see the greatest need and the best man available to meet it.

I belonged to the latter group and although I received a number of interesting invitations, I awaited the decision of Conference. At the close of church year, the Superintendent of the South Devon Mission died suddenly. I was appointed to take charge of that large area which stretched from Widdicombe on the Moor to Salcombe on the sea. It had some forty churches and a ministerial staff of five, supported by a large and heavily worked band of Local Preachers. Our Home Mission Department paid a large annual grant to finance this large area but increasingly felt the need to transfer that responsibility to the local community. I was asked to do my best to transform matters and make the SDM self supporting. I would live in Totnes, midway between the Moor and Salcombe.

Following the death of the late Superintendent, a missionary of the Church of South India who was on furlough volunteered to fill as much as he could of the vacancy until my arrival. He very kindly wrote and left for me a large file of helpful items and tips. Under the heading of 'Ministerial garb' he drew attention to the fact that Methodism had not yet arrived at a universally acceptable type of clerical dress. I quote: "Most ministers may have worn black or dark lounge suits, following the frock coat era, some more venturesome have donned Geneva gowns. Our SDM staff differ widely (proper names changed), Smith wears a plain Geneva gown, Jones adds his BD hood to his gown, I continue as we do in the Church of South India and go the whole hog with cassock and surplice, while old Brown wears nothing at all." I have belonged to the Brown brigade for the first sixty years of my ministry. I cannot foresee any radical change in my attitude until hopefully being "clothed in white".

The appointment to Devon marked the end of our Nigerian days and belonging to the Methodist Missionary Society for over a quarter of a century, but does not end this section of my Memoirs. I must record happenings under three

headings: 1953, 1962 and 1976.

## 19.6 Problems in the north: 1953

In preparation for the 1986 Bi Centenary Celebrations of the MMS, the Chairman of the Officers Meeting in London invited those who had served overseas in earlier years to send in an account of our work and experiences long ago. After pages covering my years of 1929–1953, and Joyce, with her medical experiences of two years less, I turned to correspondence with my successor. I feel the best way to report here a very unwelcome turn in events connected with our northern work is to copy pertinent lines from those submitted to the Chairman of the Officers Meeting in 1986.

When we left Nigeria, we were succeeded by the Rev Raymond Rowlands and his wife. Before ordination, he had obtained a degree in Engineering and his wife was a qualified nurse. They were keen evangelists and pioneers, eager to take on this exciting work. It could be taken that all had gone well during our years in the North, but that would be to fail to realise that there was a constant tug for staff and funds to enrich the work in the south, even at the expense and loss of any advance in the struggling northern circuit. I have already written of schemes like Omo-aran where, through the help of a friendly Government Education Officer, we were asked to take over completely a full secondary boarding school just over the northern border. Government would guarantee an adequate annual grant. This would have been a great help to our acceptance and establishment in the north. The Standing Committee of our Mission in Lagos met to consider the offer. They came down on the side of those who felt that this would lessen the number of teachers available for the south. The offer was rejected.

Then in 1953, there came a very unpleasant interruption to our northern circuit after a visit from the Chairman of the District, accompanied by one of the hospital doctors (both Europeans). They came to view the prospects and future financial and manpower needs of the circuit. They engaged in discussion with the leaders of a mission in adjoining territory and came away with the amazing ‘one man’ recommendation (the Chairman’s (the doctor was only looking at arrangements for hospital supervision) that we should withdraw from the whole area. It was unfortunate that the senior African Minister appointed was unable to travel through illness, so there was no African opinion whatsoever. The Standing Committee in Lagos, not one of whose members knew anything whatsoever of an area 500 miles up country simply adopted the recommendation.

This proposal that we once more withdraw from the north and concentrate on the south reminded me of John Milum’s humiliation and grief in 1880 when he was recalled from the Niger to work in the south.

There was however a happy conclusion, my successor, the Superintendent of the Ilor and Borgu circuit was bitterly opposed to the recommendation. He sent me a cry of despair and asked me to see Tom Beetham, our Secretary for

Africa. I gladly did this and whatever I could in all directions. Meanwhile, African annoyance was growing and in January 1955 I received another letter from my successor: "We are thrilled to tell of the answer to our prayers about the northern work in Borgu. The District Synod, after a full discussion, decided by a very strong vote that the pioneer work should be developed and that the whole area be now regarded as a 'Mission Field of the Nigerian Church'.

And the response of the M.M.S. in Marylebone Road, London?

- A Nursing Sister was appointed for work in Kaiama.
- A Ministerial Missionary was appointed to live in Wawa.

And the response from the Nigerian Church?

- An African Minister was appointed to work in Bussa.
- Mike Royle, a qualified Agricultural worker was sent to Kaiama.

Since John Milum's day the Sudan Interior and the Sudan United Missions and other churches have fully occupied the territory north of the River Niger, so we shall never reach Lake Chad. But the barrier that stuck our Church to the south has been broken. We did add 300 miles towards Chad without encroaching on any other missionary society.



## Chapter 20

# Return visits

### 20.1 1962

Nigeria had become Independent in 1960. Preparation had been made carefully. There were some 50,000 young men and women with full secondary schooling, and many graduates, ready to fill offices formerly taken by Europeans. Africanisation proceeded smoothly. The Union Jack was replaced by the vertical green, white, green of the new national flag. A new National Anthem replaced God save the Queen. Many departments had already changed hands e.g. the Director of Medical Services had for several years been an African. Others followed without resentment on either side.

The Methodist Church did not lag far behind and prepared enthusiastically for autonomy in 1962.

Those preparations included a short list of older retired missionaries. We were both invited to attend a big inaugural conference in Lagos. We were very pleased to accept.

The conference in Lagos was a very grand occasion. Those of us who could go back over thirty years were very happy to see the amazing growth in the Church and to witness the official birth of the “Methodist Church in Nigeria”. No longer a European Chairman along with other men and women from overseas occupying the positions of importance. We all stood as the Revd. Joseph Sorernakum B.D. was welcomed as the first President of the Nigerian Conference, along with the Secretary and other officials, all nationals.

This Session was led by the President of the British Conference. The Revd. Leslie Davison supported by his Vice President Lowry Creed, Headmaster of Kingswood School. The legal documents from the British Conference were duly handed over and from that ceremony onwards, the first Nigerian President took up his presidential duties.

I notice a sense of shock and shame amongst some of our English congregations when we point out that we recall days when our Missionary Prayer Manual listed the names of 100 workers sent out to Nigeria from the Home Church which

met the entire cost of salaries, passages, and allowances. Today's list is reduced to one. She is a social worker in Uzuakoli Leper Colony. This is no matter for shock, or shame. African personnel is sufficient to fill, and much more than fill the positions held by those 100 from the United Kingdom and Ireland. We rejoice at this growth and changes.

We had a very pleasant extra reason for this re-visit. Anthony, our younger son had completed his schooling at Kingswood and had a year to spare before entering London University's King's College. He offered that year to the Voluntary Service Overseas organisation. He was willing to go anywhere in the world. It seemed to us as almost incredible for, without any wire pulling whatsoever, he was appointed to Nigeria. More extraordinary still, he was to join the staff of the Methodist Grammar School at Imesi-ile.

More than thirty years earlier, I had begged parents in Imesi-ile to let us have at least one child from each compound. The work had grown and grown through the ranks of secondary modern to the now full status of Grammar School. The well qualified African Principal was one of those boys who thirty years ago had been sent to school by a reluctant parent. It would have seemed out of this world to think then that one of our own sons would serve on the staff headed by that Infant Class-One African learner. Yet it was so. One other European (Roy Bowcock) was also on the staff and shared his house with Anthony.

We of course got a great reception everywhere we went. The Imesi-ile dispensary was going strong and had also a European Sister, another far cry from the days when Joyce placed the first African nurse and Bernice had trudged through the dangers of the thick forest by day or amidst the spine chilling noises of the night. Joyce's faith and initiative had been wonderfully blessed. The chiefs and people of Imesi-ile rejoice that she opened her first country dispensary and stationed a nurse there.

We too were glad, as our visit to Imesi ended, that we sped along the road in an hour instead of our day long 26 miles walks of long ago.

In Ilesha too, growth had taken place in church, schools and hospital. Dr Andrew Pearson took us round his fine new buildings. As we emerged from the operating theatre, Joyce very naturally compared the crude mud building which thirty years earlier had the title "The Theatre". Amongst early operations she referred to was one done on a young boy with a very large mass of T.B. glands. Nearby, a man was standing in the shade of a beautiful flamboyant tree. He obviously heard what Joyce said for he walked up to us. He was Sunday Gureje the very one from whom she had removed the T.B. glands. He displayed his neat scar where his neck had been stitched up when he was a boy. Anthony commented "It's good to know Mother that they did not all die".

We paid one other visit that stands in my memory. Igbo-ora was the first place I was sent to learn the language. Apart from one farmer who had a helpful knowledge of English, Yoruba was the only language spoken.

The development which had taken place since those early days was remarkable. Frank and Jessie Longley entertained us in their Mission House. Church buildings and schools were to be seen in most villages and English was spoken by large numbers of the younger generation. Two items, I want to report:-

Igbo-ora was the first place where I had been able to practise the crash medical training in Livingstone College, London. One delicate young woman had been brought to me. She suffered much through Guineaworm. I had been taught to wind these revolting, apparently, yards of white worm round a match stick. We must never stretch one to breaking point, that could cause an ulcer. I remember winding up this girl's worm an inch or two each day probably a total of two feet long. Now, Frank who had been told the tale many times, presented a middle aged woman who wanted to say thanks. I was humbly grateful.

Frank had taken us to salute the chief. He was out at farm that evening, we went again to find him. We wended our way through narrow muddy passages with the aid of a bush lamp. As we drew near his door we were amazed to hear Big Ben strike seven, followed by "This is the BBC World Service. Here is the news."

Progress? Well, a terrific change any way in thirty odd years.

Amos Solarin was one of the young African Ministers of whom we were very fond. I had the pleasure to bring him forward as a candidate for the Ministry. He had done well in his training and afterwards. He was appointed to Ilesha, where I stationed him in our largest church. During the war he served as a Chaplain in Burma. He was awarded the M.B.E.

At the 1962 Conference, it was grand to meet him and his wife again. He had invited us to have dinner one evening at a Lagos hotel, we were very glad to accept. Round the table the four of us talked of big changes in Nigeria. Amos was now Superintendent Minister in one of the large Lagos circuits.

## 20.2 1976: Changes in Lagos

It was a great pleasure to visit Nigeria once more. My sister, Elsie, who had served Ilesha Hospital, mostly as Matron for over thirty years, was visiting us and one evening we talked of Nigeria and of our hope to revisit. Casually we asked "Would you like to come with us?" Now, despite her years, she is remarkably active. It was no surprise therefore when she came down to breakfast next morning to hear that she would accompany us. In due course the three of us flew to Lagos.

There have been tremendous changes in Nigeria since Independence in 1960.

Oil had been discovered earlier but now its rich harvest had become apparent. The first fruits were obvious in traffic. The roads just could not cope. Dr Andrew Pearson met us and the fourteen mile drive to the Lagos Marina took us exactly two hours. We had breakfast en route for, with bumper to bumper, long stops were frequent and we enjoyed our novel picnic. A start had been made with a circular fly-over round the island similar to the elevated system in parts of London. This was fine once access had been gained but congestion ruled at all access and exit points.

Through a failure in one Department, (some critics unkindly suggested corruption) it became easy to obtain an import licence for cement. Profits on all building supplies were considerable. The result was that wharfs at Apapa

could not cope with the handling of the stuff and, as we flew over the harbour I counted twenty cement ships at anchor. Some had been there for months.

Our splendid large Mission Compound which had been the site for our Boys High School, Girls High School (MGHS) and the residence of the Mission Chairman, was all changed. The half which had been MGHS and Chairman's residence was now 'Wesley House', an eight or ten floor block with all the accommodation needed for Conference Headquarters, committees, bookshop, chapel, presidential offices and accommodation etc. The other half of the compound had a fifteen or more, floor building. This is occupied by Shell and becomes church property on the expiry of the lease.

Whilst the layout and the tremendous potential value of the buildings impressed us, we were conscious of nostalgia. The Chairman's House, old and with rusting corrugated sheets had been the place we stayed in Lagos. When Vivian Simpson was the accountant, his room was there. The room in which his pet monkey climbed up the rods of his mosquito net and from this elevated position squeezed a trail of toothpaste at us. Then there was the evening when the Chairman's wife was away, George Martlew of the Boys High School was organising the dinner. He entered the lounge from the Dining room and announced that the meal was ready. The Chairman correctly indicated that his guest the Bishop should lead the procession, but Bishop Jones stepped aside and said "oh no, after you". Again the Chairman waved the Bishop forward with another "after you". This had gone far enough for George who, I think came from Yorkshire, saying loudly "Don't be daft" he stepped out and led the way into dinner.

Another Chairman had a wife who was a stickler for everyone being in time for each meal and soundly reprimanded any unfortunate young missionary who was late. In those early days our District Synod was a very small affair. One lunchtime the only late arrival was the Chairman himself. The lady of the house was more and more annoyed, finally she asked the next senior to say grace. Then the Chairman arrived to be hailed with a broadside "you are late" he answered "Yes dear I am sorry". Still fuming she demanded "Why are you late?" Grasping a cablegram in his hand the Chairman held it out to her. "I've just heard that my father has died."

That old Mission House faced the Lagoon, a truly enviable spot, catching the gentle afternoon breeze that made life bearable in terribly hot and sticky Lagos.

### 20.3 A tour inland

Another reminder of the old days came with an invitation to take part in the nineteenth anniversary of our Olowogbowo church. This large airy building had come to the end of its life. A fine new complex is to replace the corrugated sheet roofed place of worship. I was glad to have a part in the closing services of the old building where I had led worship many years before when on our annual three weeks of Synod meetings in Lagos.

During the first part of our tour inland we were guests of Andrew and Jean Pearson and in their car we left Lagos. On the road we were simply amazed to see a three wheel push cycle van bearing a well known label "Stop me and buy one" miles inland how well we recalled our annual visits to Lagos where one of the thrills was a visit to the Cold Store. This was the one and only place where it was possible to get a quick ice cream and I mean the word quick, for it melted very easily and we could not prolong the delightful experiences.

We continued our journey to Igbo-ora and next day to Ibadan where Andrew Pearson had arranged to hand us over to Syd Elton who was to be the host in Ilesha. We duly met and were welcomed. After some shopping Syd Elton had planned we would lunch at the University. Now Ade Oyo, where the University is built is four to five miles from the centre of Ibadan. The traffic was so heavy that instead of getting to the Cafeteria before it closed at 2.00 pm we arrived a whole hour later. Five miles of bumper to bumper, and no lunch. We set out on the remaining 70 miles to Ilesha where we arrived in time for evening meal.

The Eltons were very kind to us and Elsie was to stay with them over Christmas whilst we continued our journey to Zambia. Meanwhile we all three, stayed with them.

There had been sad events at our hospital where, normally we would have been staying. There were now no European staff.

With the great influx of money from the sale of oil, a very unwise proposal was made by a man called Ojiji. He moved that every Government worker should get 100% increase in salary. The result was chaotic. Thousands of teachers and others rushed to buy cars. We have already seen the effect in bumper to bumper conditions. But, while the commercial firms could pay the 100% by doubling the price of commodities the Missions just could not compete. In our Ilesha Hospital were two union-backed employees who loudly voiced the demand for their Ojiji rise. Poor Andrew Pearson was not believed when he said he had no money, a strike was called until he could pay out the money which he was alleged to hold. At length, he escaped by climbing over a wall. Work had almost come to a halt, the African Matron was helpless and the Hospital virtually closed. The remaining European staff moved out. Andrew later got a leading job training African doctors in new buildings put up in a big rural complex at Igbo-ora the place I had been sent to study Yoruba in the early days.

The two agitators had since gone and work under Government control had restarted. We were able to visit the hospital. It was sad to see some of the splendid buildings made possible with special funds from Holland, now empty and idle. We still have a Christian Chaplain for staff and patients but all the old missionary zeal and purpose has gone. One of the unwelcome changes.

It was good to be able to visit Imesi-ile again and the schools and work in Ilesha. Very interesting to us was the fact that our mission house, now the residence of our African Superintendent Minister, is still called "Ludilo compound" unchanged for forty years. We were glad to find in a country with such high infant mortality and with such a poor life expectancy age, many of our friends, now old friends, were still alive and active. Sir Olaleye and Lady Abigail Fadahunsi, Isaac Ajanaku and many teachers, now retired. Otapete church in

Ilesha is still a full church, with its hundreds of pairs of sandals, arranged in rows on the concrete forecourt, God's words to Moses are respected "Take off your sandals because you are standing on holy ground". I was glad to take the opportunity of addressing the large congregation.

When Isaac Ajanaku heard that we wanted to go to and through the northern pioneer circuit, he generously placed at our disposal one of his cars, an air conditioned Mercedes and a liveried chauffeur. Isaac had made a lot of money in transport and his furniture factory although he had never shone academically as a boy in our Otapete School. Of a very generous nature he had helped in the building of a large new church on the style of Westminster Central Hall, not yet complete but with galleries it will seat over 2000. He also donated its large pipe organ. This had already arrived, stored in wooden crates.

So, very comfortably seated in his luxurious Mercedes we sped northwards. Instead of open windows to catch the breeze and the heavy dust, we sat with tightly closed windows breathing in cool and cold air thanks to his air conditioning.

## 20.4 Visit to Offa

Our first stop was over the north/south border at Offa. We visited our mission compound and the new church being built there. It was a pleasure to find Joseph Toriola as the occupant of the manse. Trained at Wesley College he had had a long career as a catechist and teacher and had been a true friend and colleague through our pioneer years and now twenty four years after we left he was still actively engaged in the work.

The big appointment of that day was a reception at the Offa Grammar School. I have told the story of its beginning (14.1). Not only does it cover a full secondary school curriculum with a large all-African staff of qualified teachers in science and other subjects, but it now had become co-educational.

The Oloffa and his chiefs with the Board of Management sat on the platform in the large "Ludlow" hall. Speeches of welcome and a programme put on by the Staff and pupils lasted for more than an hour.

One item of great amusement to us three was the official greeting. My sister Elsie, who had served for over thirty years in our Ilesha Hospital is some six years older than I am. Remarkably, she has still got a good head of hair but without any stray grey hairs. So she looks a lot younger. So much so that we were welcomed as the Rev R.N. Ludlow, our founder, his wife Doctor J.R. Ludlow and their daughter Miss Ludlow. We did put this point right, tactfully I hope, as we replied to their welcomes.

Then came the presentations. I was given an eighteen inch wooden carving of the Offa wrestlers. This stands on the window sill in our Study. The official address, copied on parchment-like material by a skilled signwriter would be followed later by an album of the many photographs being taken of the happy day.

It was a long way back when I had appointed our own trained teacher,

Solomon Ajayi, and opened a Middle Class I in a church building. Later, the day when I pegged out the land site and dimensions of the initial block of class rooms. We had no problems of religions. Many pupils were Moslems but despite my offer to arrange for a Moslem instructor to take his flock separately, the Board and Chiefs had said "No". So Religious Instruction Christian fashion was attended by all.

## 20.5 North to the new Bussa

Because of our Travel Time Table we just could not include a lot of places where we had opened up this pioneer field. But we must include a few visits in the non-Yoruba speaking area and particularly Kaiama and Bussa.

Our route was different and we followed a well sign-posted road marked 'Kanji Dam'. The old Bussa where we had such wonderful treks, excitements and good relations with the fine Emir of those days had all gone and were now deep beneath the head race of water. Only the memory of those days was fresh, of Philip Jaiyesimi and that grand day when the first five adult Bussawa were baptised in the mighty river.

The site chosen for the Niger Dam was at the river's narrowest point above the Rapids where Mungo Park had been ambushed and killed. A new Bussa had been built and access from the Ilorin to the Sokoto Province was by a good road built across the tailrace and near to the high dam with its multiple turbines and generating plants.

In our time, it would have been beyond belief that the great river, which we had crossed so often in frail canoes, could be channeled into the bottle-necked canal directing that almost one mile width of water into waiting turbines. Not only had the inevitable pylons reached out in several directions to carry electricity throughout Nigeria, but also for many miles great banks had been heaped and concreted to hold back the powerful waters. Old Bussa was no more. Numerous villages had been allotted new sites outside the dikes or protecting mounds.

So we entered the New Bussa. The old isolated and quiet town where we had had to have a chain of interpreters to get our message over to the Emir and his people had given way to a large cosmopolitan centre.

The European consortium which had recognised the work of the Church and had designed and built a very modern place of worship for us. This tended to cater more for their large number of employees from many nations and tribes, than for the scattered Borgawa originals unaccustomed to bustling neighbours.

We were very glad to find amidst the changes, that the new Emir appointed was Musa, son of our old friend. He was a boy in our early visits to Bussa and his father was very proud of the boy's ability to handle his horse. We had taken a cine shot of the lad and on each visit the Emir used to ask if we could show him the film, we always obliged. Musa was well versed in English. He too, like his father, was a good Emir.

Another advance under Independence was surprising to us. The Government

Health Department had declared war upon Onchocerciasis, River Blindness. We actually watched a large, strong canoe, laden with drums of DDT or other fluids pushed out to cross the Niger. As the crew poled the canoe others unscrewed the bung stoppers and discharge the chemical into the water in confidence this would kill the bugs causing River Blindness. Remembering Ojiji, the village of the blind, we prayed they would succeed.

The church accepted this new challenge and had made Bussa a Ministerial appointment. We were delighted to meet again the Rev Michael Osinuga. Mike's father was my first cook. He had produced his small son one day and asked if I could help to send him to school, i.e. pay the school fees. In return he would do all I required as steward and messenger. I kept this up for some time and much later was glad to bring Michael forward as a candidate for the Ministry. He had been sent to this appointment five hundred miles north of his birthplace. I do not like the word incumbent, it suggests resting, reclining, to describe Mike's job in far away Bussa, we must find a more suitable word for activity.

We went southwards from Bussa and came to Wawa, the place from where even the chief with his people beat a hasty retreat to the bush on our first arrival there. A white face was somehow frightening and portentous. Now as we drove along a made up, dusty laterite road, a neat building had a signpost "Methodist Church Wawa". Our Mission House was the home of the Circuit Agricultural worker.

## 20.6 Then to Kaiama

On to Kaiama. We were sad that Stephen, faithful friend and colleague was no longer there. After his death his wife and children had gone to live near Offa. But there was the Dispensary and Maternity Centre with its European Sister. We were guests of the appointed Missionary Superintendent of the Borgu Mission. His wife and he and their little son made us very much at home in their Mission House.

The old Emir had been replaced but we paid our respects to the new Emir who was well informed of all that had happened since we first visited and started work there.

We returned to Ilesha, packed up and took our leave of the Eltons who had kindly given us such wonderful hospitality. Elsie stayed with them until after Christmas but we had to curtail all we wanted to do in Ilesha in order that we get our planes south to Zambia for Christmas with our daughter Elizabeth and family. We were glad however to fit in a Sunday at church and lunch at a reception given by Sir Olaley and Lady Abigail Fadahunsi also a dinner given in his hotel, by our good friend Isaac Ajanaku.

## **20.7 1993: The golden jubilee of Offa Gramar School**

In 1992 I received a wonderful surprise: an invitation to take part in the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the first non-government Community Grammar School in Northern Nigeria was received with two First Class air tickets. With my African friends I had started this school in 1943. It is now a huge school with a very high reputation, catering for both girls and boys from a wide catchment area.

The first week in February 1993 was a tremendous occasion for us all.