

# ALBERT SCHWEITZER

PHILOSOPHER · THEOLOGIAN

MUSICIAN · DOCTOR

## *Some Biographical Notes*

*Compiled by*

C. T. CAMPION

M.A. (OXON.)



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## I. DR ALBERT SCHWEITZER

BY W. MONTGOMERY

*(Reprinted by permission, with alterations and additions, from the  
"St Martin's Review" of October 1925)*

THE first impression that Dr Schweitzer makes is that of power—power of mind, of body, and, above all, of personality.

Six feet of solid manhood, with a constitution on which eight years of tropical Africa have produced no visible effect; a mind which has given him high eminence in three of the most exacting of intellectual pursuits—philosophical theology, music, and medicine—a personality that grips and holds all those who come in contact with him; such are the characteristics of a man whose name first became known to Londoners generally about six years ago, when, after delivering a course of lectures at Oxford, he was invited to give an organ recital in Westminster Abbey.

But if the first impression is of power, the second is of charm, for the power is of the easy unselfconscious order, and the undeniable dominance has no hint of arrogance or self-assertion; it comes unsought.

Brown-haired, blue-eyed, with a pleasantly 'rounded' voice, and a quiet sense of humour, he has none of those Germanic characteristics which we think of in their extreme form as Prussian, and he is, in fact, an Alsatian, speaking French as fluently as German.

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A student at Strassburg, Berlin, and Paris, whose earliest interests had been philosophical, Dr Schweitzer was a Lecturer in Theology at the first-named university when, some twenty years ago, he startled the theological world with a book which is known to English readers under the title of *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, and which, subversive though it was of much valued doctrine, is a deeply religious book; no one could doubt the depth and sincerity of the writer's religious convictions. A year or two later he followed this up with a similar book: *Paul and his Interpreters*, and another on *The Mysticism of S. Paul* is shortly to complete the exposition of his view of Early Christianity.

Meanwhile, concurrently with his theological studies, he had been deeply occupied with music. He had been organist to the Paris Bach Society, the Bach-Concerts of the Church of St Wilhelm in Strassburg and of the Onféo Cataea in Barcelona, he had given recitals in most of the capitals of Europe, he had written a large and important book on Bach, and he had, incidentally, invented some technical improvements in organ-construction.

But of still more human interest is the fact that the conviction had gradually been borne in upon him that for him, thinker and artist as he was, with a future of the highest interest and distinction before him in Europe, the path of duty lay elsewhere. Not in the least a fanatic or a visionary, not even an "enthusiast" in the eighteenth-century sense of the term, he yet felt himself drawn by an irresistible call to go out and work as a bringer of help and health to some portion of the primitive populations of the world.

Once the conviction was formed he set about

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carrying it out in the most practical way. He qualified in Medicine, taking his degree at Strassburg, and a further course in Tropical Medicine at Paris.

The unorthodox nature of his theological views put a difficulty in the way of his acceptance by a missionary society as a helper on the ordinary footing, but finally he was able to conclude a satisfactory agreement with the Mission Evangélique of Paris—readers of Miss Kingsley's *Travels* will recollect her exceptional praise of this Society—and in 1913 he went out with his wife, who is a trained nurse, to the Society's station at Lambaréné on the Ogowe river in French Equatorial Africa. There the Society gave him, in return for his medical services to their staff, European and native, a site with a house and a hospital building, both of the primitive character usual in those parts, and he performed his first operations in a disused fowl-house! For his medical work he was solely responsible, and the funds for it have to be raised entirely by himself. To a considerable extent they have been provided by a series of organ recitals in Europe, given before he went out, and during a visit home.

The war was of course a serious interruption to his work, but he and Frau Schweitzer were not removed from Lambaréné till 1917, when they were interned for a time in France. The inevitable lapsing of all the work at Lambaréné was a bitter disappointment, but the Doctor's mental activity, at any rate, was not hindered, and he found time for writing. By 1924 he had published two volumes of a series of four which he had planned. The first is entitled *The Decay and Restoration of Civilisation* and the second *Civilisation*

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*and Ethics.* The latter contains a striking outline of the history of Ethics, leading up to an interesting and original theory of his own. For Schweitzer the fundamental principle of ethics is "Reverence for Life," from the moral and spiritual life of man at one end of the scale to the humblest existence at the other. The comprehensiveness of the doctrine, and at the same time the sane reservations under which it is held, will be clear from one illustration: "The husbandman who has rightly mowed down a thousand blossoms in his meadow in providing fodder for his cattle must not on his homeward way *wantonly* switch off the head of a single flower." It is impossible, of course, to give any sufficient exposition of his doctrine here, but this slight indication will perhaps suggest to readers whether it is likely to interest them or not.

And now we come to the second crisis in his career. His work in Central Africa had been interrupted through no fault of his own; his hold on European thought had been strengthened by his later publications; he had various offers of professorships, and his wife's health made it impossible for her to return to the Tropics for the moment; might he not legitimately settle down to a life of scholarship and comparative ease? But he did not so see his duty. He felt bound to go back. At first there were difficulties with the French authorities about his return to Lambaréné, and he applied for, and obtained, permission to establish a hospital in the British Cameroons, but later the way was opened for his return to his original work. He found the hospital in ruins, and had to set to work on a laborious task of reconstruction, with all supplies vastly more difficult to obtain than

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before the War. And there he stayed working from April 1924 to July 1927, nearly a twelvemonth longer than any European ought to remain in that climate without a holiday in Europe, first coming slowly to the important decision that a new, larger, and better hospital must be provided on a new site; then planning the new hospital; and then during its construction acting as architect, clerk of works, foreman, transport agent, carpenter's assistant, and in any other capacity that was needed, while his two younger colleagues carried on without interruption the medical and surgical work. Finally he stayed on weeks and months longer to ensure that the work was completed without any serious, and perhaps irremediable, mistakes, and that there should be no hitch or flaw in the transference of the site from the ownership of the French government to his own.

At last, in August 1927, he re-appeared in Europe entirely unannounced even to his wife and nine-year-old daughter, who met him unexpectedly in Strassburg, where they had gone from their home at Königsfeld in the Black Forest to pay a visit to a dentist! Then the first week of September saw him reading a paper at a congress at Gland, near Geneva, on the subject of "Human Rights in Colonisation," a work undertaken from a sense of duty at a time when he ought to have been enjoying a holiday with complete rest.

The extracts which follow<sup>1</sup> are meant, with this essay, to give to those who are as yet unacquainted with the history of the undertaking some idea of the

<sup>1</sup> The extracts are taken, by kind permission of the publishers, from *Memoirs of Childhood and Youth* (Allen and Unwin, 1924, 3s. 6d.), and *On the Edge of the Primeval Forest* (Black, 1922, 6s.).

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self-sacrificing work which our philosopher, theologian, and musician so quietly began and has, with the help of his wife during the first period and of a slowly increasing staff of helpers during the second period, so perseveringly carried through. At the same time they will rouse interest in, and admiration of, the great personality behind it all.

In conclusion, it is a pleasure to record how increased efficiency and stability have been given to the beneficent work of the hospital by the staff of helpers which has gradually collected round Dr Schweitzer. We can but give a list of them here ; the record of their work will be found in a new volume which will be published, it is hoped, before long by Messrs A. & C. Black under the title of *More from the Primeval Forest*.

The Doctor was accompanied on his voyage by a young man, Noel Gillespie, who gave invaluable help during the first months, but had to return in August to finish his course at Oxford.

The first permanent helper arrived on 18th July 1924, Fräulein Mathilde Kottmann, a trained nurse from Strassburg, whose time, however, was almost wholly occupied with household duties instead of nursing.

Next, on 19th October, Dr Victor Nessmann, whose father was an Alsatian pastor, and a fellow-student of Dr Schweitzer's at Strassburg, arrived.

In March 1925 came Dr Mark Lauterburg of Berne, and in October, Fräulein Emma Hausknecht, a teacher from Alsace, who had promised long before to come out to help Dr Schweitzer, and who now set Nurse Kottmann free to work in the hospital.



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In the spring of that year, too, much skilled help in effecting needed repairs was received from a zealous young Swiss, Herr Rudolf Schatzmann.

In April 1926 Dr Nessmann's place was taken by Dr F. Trencz, also from Strassburg, and also the son of an Alsatian pastor. Unfortunately he could only stay for a year, as he had to return to Europe to do his military service. He used his knowledge, and much skill, in arranging the laboratory excellently for bacteriological work. His successor was Dr Ernest Mündler of Lausanne, who came in March 1927.

The work of nurse, in the operating-room especially, was undertaken from the spring of 1926 till July 1927 by Dr Lauterburg's sister, Fräulein Martha Lauterburg.

A lady of British Columbia, Mrs Lilian Russell, who arrived in March 1927 with Dr Mündler, is occupied with the oversight and feeding of the patients, while she also superintends the work done in the garden and the plantations which surround the hospital.

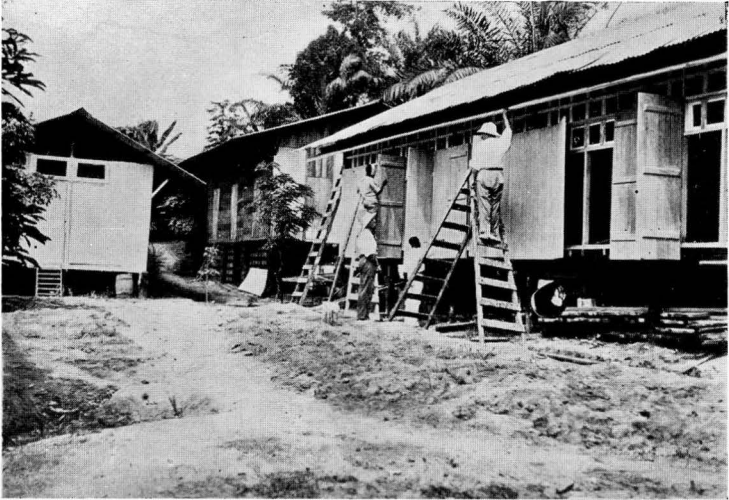
In August 1927, after three and a half years of work and responsibility at Lambaréné, Dr Schweitzer returned to Europe, accompanied by Fräulein Kottmann, and Fräulein Lauterburg. The staff they left at work consisted of three doctors, and two nurses, with Fräulein Hausknecht and Mrs Russell, but in September there started for Lambaréné to replace Fräulein Kottmann and Fräulein Lauterburg two Swiss nurses, Mlle Isabelle Chappuis of Lausanne, and Fräulein Hélène Wiedner of Aarau.

Towards Christmas Dr Lauterburg will be set free for return to Europe, by a doctor from Switzerland,

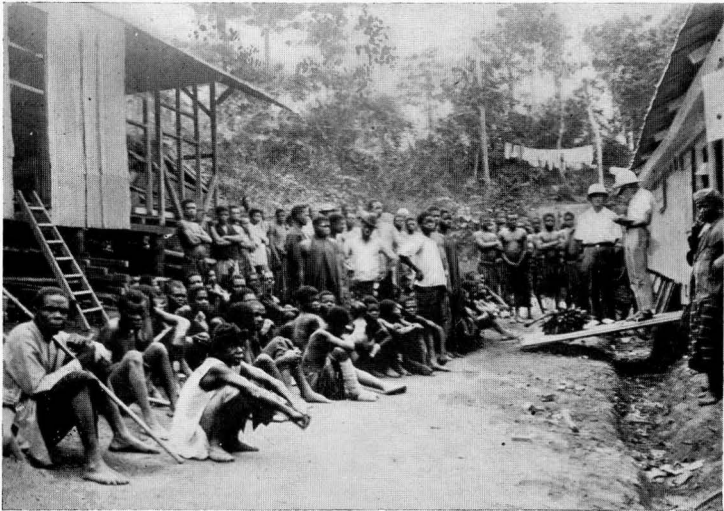
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and in the spring of 1928 Fräulein Kottmann will go out again and set Fräulein Hausknecht free.

It remains to say a few words about the new hospital, to live and work in which is an inexpressible relief after the small, dark, and inconvenient buildings of the old one, which was built to house forty patients, but which, when it was abandoned, was overcrowded with about one hundred and sixty ! The new site was cleared—no inconsiderable task—between November 1925 and February 1926; the building was carried out under much difficulty in getting at one time materials, at another workers, but on 21st January 1927 came the happy day when the removal, carried out entirely by water, at last began. The new hospital can accommodate some two hundred native patients and ten white ones, and has a central building which contains the consulting-room, the operating-room, and the dispensary. The hospital as a whole forms a long line of buildings running parallel to the river, farthest upstream being the houses where the staff live. Then come three wards for ordinary patients, and one for dysentery cases, this being farthest downstream, so that the patients cannot contaminate the river-water for anyone else in the hospital. At some distance away, so that the noise they make cannot disturb other patients, are eight small huts for the insane. There are ten buildings in all, each about 90 feet long and 18 feet wide and running East and West, so that, thanks to the verandahs, the sun never strikes the side walls. Doors and windows are of wire-netting, which lets air in, but has meshes small enough to keep out mosquitoes, and one of the strictest of the hospital rules is that all white residents shall be



PAINING ONE OF THE NEW HOSPITAL BUILDINGS



THE MONTHLY ROLL-CALL OF THE SICK

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indoors with windows closed by 6 p.m. Thanks to this, not a single member of the staff has up to now been incapacitated by malaria.

So much for the present, but future possibilities have not been forgotten. The new buildings are so constructed that they can be taken to pieces, if necessary, for the population is such a shifting one that at some future date a removal to yet another site may be found to be a necessity.

## II. THE DOCTOR IN CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH<sup>1</sup>

### *Mausche and Tolerance.*

ON this, my first meeting with an author, there followed a second and greater experience. A Jew from a neighbouring village, Mausche by name, who dealt in land and cattle, used to come occasionally through Günsbach with his donkey-cart. As there was at that time no Jew living in the village, this was always something of an event for the boys ; they used to run after him and jeer at him. One day, in order to announce to the world that I was beginning to feel myself grown up, I could not help joining them, although I did not really understand what it all meant ; so I ran along with the rest behind him and his donkey-cart, shouting: " Mausche, Mausche ! " The most daring of them used to fold the corner of their shirt or jacket to look like a pig's ear, and spring with that as close to him as they could. In this way we followed him out of the village as far as the bridge, but Mausche, with his freckles and grey beard, drove on as unperturbed as his donkey, except that he would turn round and look at us with an embarrassed but good-natured smile. This smile overpowered me. From Mausche it was that I first learnt what it means to keep silent

<sup>1</sup> Most of the extracts in this section are taken from *Memoirs of Childhood and Youth* (Allen and Unwin, 3s. 6d.), and *On the Edge of the Primeval Forest* (A. & C. Black, 6s.). By kind permission of the publishers.

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under persecution, and he thus gave me a most valuable lesson. From that day forward I used to greet him politely, and later, when I was in the secondary school (the Gymnasium), I made it my practice to shake hands and walk a little way along with him, though he never learnt what he really was to me. He had the reputation of being a usurer and a property-jobber, but I never tried to find out whether this was true or not. To me he has always been just "Mausche" with the tolerant smile, the smile which even to-day compels me to be patient when I should like to rage and storm.

### *Feeling for Animal Life.*

As far back as I can remember I was saddened by the amount of misery I saw in the world around me. Youth's unqualified *joie de vivre* I never really knew, and I believe that to be the case with many children, even though they appear outwardly merry and quite free from care.

One thing that specially saddened me was that the unfortunate animals had to suffer so much pain and misery. The sight of an old limping horse, lugged forward by one man while another kept beating it with a stick to get it to the knacker's yard at Colmar, haunted me for weeks.

It was quite incomprehensible to me—this was before I began going to school—why in my evening prayers I should pray for human beings only. So when my mother had prayed with me and had kissed me good night, I used silently to add a prayer that

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I had composed myself for all living creatures. It ran thus: "O heavenly Father, protect and bless all things that have breath; guard them from all evil, and let them sleep in peace."

A deep impression was made on me by something which happened during my seventh or eighth year. Henry Bräsch and I had with strips of india-rubber made ourselves catapults, with which we could shoot small stones. It was spring and the end of Lent, when one morning Henry said to me: "Come along, let's go on to the Rebberg and shoot some birds!" This was to me a terrible proposal, but I did not venture to refuse for fear he should laugh at me. We got close to a tree which was still without any leaves, and on which the birds were singing beautifully to greet the morning, without showing the least fear of us. Then, stooping like a Red Indian hunter, my companion put a bullet in the leather of his catapult and took aim. In obedience to his nod of command I did the same, though with terrible twinges of conscience, vowing to myself that I would shoot directly he did. At that very moment the church bells began to ring, mingling their music with the songs of the birds and the sunshine. It was the Warning-bell, which began half an hour before the regular peal-ringing, and for me it was a voice from heaven. I shooped the birds away so that they flew to where they were safe from my companion's catapult, and then I fled home. And ever since then, when the Passion-tide bells ring out to the leafless trees and the sunshine, I reflect with a rush of grateful emotion how on that day their music drove deep into my heart the commandment: "Thou shalt not kill."

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From that day onward I took courage to emancipate myself from the fear of men, and whenever my inner convictions were at stake I let other people's opinions weigh less with me than they had done previously. I tried also to unlearn my former dread of being laughed at by my schoolfellows. This early influence upon me of the commandment not to kill or torture other creatures is the great experience of my childhood and youth. By the side of that all others are insignificant.

### *Musical Development.*

In my second school-year we used to have twice a week a lesson in penmanship from the master, who just before that gave a singing-lesson to the big boys. Now it happened one day that we had come over from the infant school too early, so that we had to wait outside the class-room, and when they began the vocal duet, "In the mill by the stream below there I was sitting in quiet thought," followed by "Beautiful forest, who planted you there?" I had to hold on to the wall to prevent myself from falling. The charm of the two-part harmony of the songs thrilled me all over to my very marrow, and similarly, the first time I heard brass instruments playing together I almost fainted from excess of pleasure. Violin music, however, with its different quality of tone, I did not find beautiful, and I only got to like it gradually.

My music-master at Mülhausen, however, found at first little pleasure in teaching me. His name was



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Eugen Münch, and he had just come from the High School for Music at Berlin to be organist to the Reformed Congregation at S. Stephen's. "Albert Schweitzer is my thorn in the flesh," he used to say. This was the result partly of the fact that in the hours my aunt compelled me to spend at the piano I used to play all sorts of music at sight, and to improvise, instead of learning properly the pieces he had given me, and partly of the fact that I shrank from playing before my music-master with real feeling. I could not bring myself to display to him all that I felt while playing a beautiful piece of music, and I am sure that many music-students feel the same. Thus it was that I irritated him with my "wooden playing." But one day when, still mastered by this prejudice, I had ground out a badly-practised sonata of Mozart's, he angrily opened a volume of Mendelssohn at the Song without Words in E natural. "Really, you don't deserve to have such beautiful music given you to play. You'll come and spoil this Lied ohne Worte for me, just like everything else. If a boy has no feeling, I certainly can't give him any!" "Oho," thought I to myself, "I'll show you whether I have any feeling or not!" And the whole week through I carefully practised this piece, which I had so often played by myself. I even did what no one had ever got me to do yet; I found out by experiment the best fingering, and wrote it above the notes. In the next lesson when finger-exercises and scales were all finished, I braced myself up and played the Lied ohne Worte just as my very soul bade me. My teacher said little, but putting his hands firmly on my shoulders, he moved me from the piano and himself played over a

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Lied ohne Worte that was new to me. Next I was given a piece of Beethoven's, and a few lessons later I was found worthy to begin upon Bach. Then after a few more lessons it was disclosed to me that after my confirmation I should be allowed to have lessons on the big and beautiful organ in S. Stephen's.

Thus there came to fulfilment a dream long cherished in secret, for from long, long before it had been my ambition to get to the organ. And this ambition had been born in me. My mother's father, Pastor Schillinger of Mühlbach, had been deeply interested in organs and organ-building, and whenever he found himself in a strange town, its organs were the first things that he went to look at. He is said to have been a very fine improvisator. My father, too, possessed this gift. When a child I listened to him for hours together as he sat, in the dusk, at the old square piano that he had inherited from grandfather Schillinger, and gave rein to his imagination. But he never liked Bach's music.

Thanks to the kindness of Daddy Iltis, and because he was very glad to have a substitute, I had already, while a boy, got admitted to the use of the organ in Günsbach church, and when I was only nine had taken his place at it for services. But now, when I was fifteen, I was to learn the scientific use of the pedals on an organ with three keyboards and sixty-two stops under a great organist, for such Eugen Münch was! I could scarcely credit my good fortune.

When I was sixteen I was allowed to take Eugen Münch's place at services, and not long after that I for the first time sat at the organ at a concert; my teacher trusted me to play the organ accompaniment

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of Brahm's *Requiem*, which he gave with the choir of the church. Then for the first time I knew the joy, which I have so often tasted since then, of letting the organ send the flood of its own special tones to mingle with the clanging music of choir and orchestra. But the fine old organ in S. Stephen's, Mülhausen, has been, alas! since the death of Eugen Münch, restored and modernised in such barbarous fashion that the marvellous tone which it then possessed has been completely lost.

### III. THE WORK AT LAMBARÈNE

#### *The Early Operations.*

THAT I had no place in which to examine and treat the sick worried me much. Into my own room I could not take them for fear of infection. One arranges at once in Africa (so the missionaries impressed on me from the beginning) that the blacks shall be in the white people's quarters as little as possible. This is a necessary part of one's care for oneself. So I treated and bandaged the sick in the open air before the house, and when the usual evening storm came on, everything had to be hastily carried into the verandah.

Under the pressure of this discomfort I decided to promote to the rank of hospital the building which my predecessor in the house, Mr Morel, the missionary, had used as a fowl-house. I got some shelves fixed on the walls, installed an old camp-bed, and covered the worst of the dirt with whitewash, feeling myself more than fortunate. It was, indeed, horribly close in the little windowless room, and the bad state of the roof made it necessary to wear my sun-helmet all day, but when the storm came on I did not have to move everything under cover. I felt proud the first time I heard the rain rattling on the roof, and it seemed incredible that I could go quietly on with my bandaging.

Work was now fairly started. My wife had charge of the instruments and made the necessary preparations for the surgical operations, at which she served as

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assistant, and she also looked after the bandages and the washing of the linen. Consultations begin about 8.30, the patients waiting in the shade of my house in front of the fowl-house, which is my surgery, and every morning one of the assistants reads out:—

### THE DOCTOR'S STANDING ORDERS.

1. Spitting near the Doctor's house is strictly forbidden.
2. Those who are waiting must not talk to each other loudly.
3. Patients and their friends must bring with them food enough for one day, as they cannot all be treated early in the day.
4. Any one who spends the night in the station without the Doctor's permission will be sent away without any medicine. (It happened not infrequently that patients from a distance crowded into the schoolboy's dormitory, turned them out, and took their places.)
5. All bottles and tin boxes in which medicines are given must be returned.
6. In the middle of the month, when the steamer has gone up the river, none but urgent cases can be seen till the steamer has gone down again, as the Doctor is then writing to Europe to get more of his valuable medicines. (The steamer brings the mails from Europe about the middle of the month, and on its return takes our letters down to the coast.)

These six commandments are read out every day very carefully in the dialects of both the Galoas and the Pahouins, so that no long discussion can arise afterwards. Those present accompany each sentence with a nod, which indicates that they understand, and at the finish comes a request that the Doctor's words shall be made known in all the villages, both on the river and on the lakes.

A great deal of time is lost trying to make them

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understand how the medicines are to be taken. Over and over again the interpreter tells them, and they repeat it after him; it is written also on the bottle or box, so that they can hear the directions again from anyone in their village who can read, but in the end I am never sure that they do not empty the bottle at one go, and eat the ointment, and rub the powders into their skin. I get, on the average, from thirty to forty people a day to treat, and the chief complaints are skin diseases of various sorts, malaria, sleeping sickness, elephantiasis, heart complaints, suppurating injuries to the bones (osteomyelitis) and tropical dysentery. To stop the discharge from the sores, the natives cover the place with powder made from the bark of a certain tree. This hardens gradually into a paste which hinders the escape of the pus, and, of course, makes the case much worse.

My work is rendered much harder by the fact that I can keep so few medicines in the fowl-house. For almost every patient I have to cross the court to my dispensary, there to weigh out or to prepare the medicine needed, which is very fatiguing and wastes much time. I am worried too by the fact that I have hardly any medicines left, for my *clientèle* is much more numerous than I expected, and my quinine, antipyrin, bromide of potassium, salol, and dermatol are almost exhausted.

Yet what do all these disagreeables count for compared with the joy of being here working and helping? However limited one's means are, how much one can do with them! Just to see the joy of those who are plagued with sores, when these have been cleanly bandaged up and they no longer have to drag their poor bleeding

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feet through the mud, makes it worth while to work here. How I should like all my helpers to be able to see on Mondays and Thursdays—the days set apart for the bandaging of sores—the freshly bandaged patients walking or being carried down the hill, and wish they could have watched the eloquent gestures with which an old woman with heart complaint described how, thanks to digitalis, she could once more breathe and sleep, because the medicine had made “the worm” crawl right away down to her feet!

As I look back over the work of two months and a half, I can only say that a doctor is needed, terribly needed, here; that for a huge distance round the natives avail themselves of his help, and that with comparatively small means he can accomplish a quite disproportionate amount of good. The need is terrible. “Here, among us, everybody is ill,” said a young man to me a few days ago. “Our country devours its own children,” was the remark of an old chief.

### *Hernia.*

As to operations, one undertakes, naturally, in the forest only such as are urgent, and which promise a successful result. The one I have had to perform oftenest is that for hernia, a thing which affects the negroes in Central Africa much more than it does white people, though why this should be so we do not know. They also suffer much oftener than white people from strangulated hernia, in which the intestine becomes constricted and blocked, so that it can no longer empty itself. It then becomes enormously

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inflated by the gases which form, and this causes terrible pain. Then after several days' torture death takes place, unless the intestine can be got back through the rupture into the abdomen. Our ancestors were well acquainted with this terrible method of dying, but we no longer see it in Europe because every case is operated upon as soon as ever it is recognised. "Let not the sun go down upon your—strangulated hernia" is the maxim continually impressed upon medical students. But in Africa this terrible death is quite common. There are few negroes who have not, as boys, seen some man rolling in the sand of his hut, and howling with agony till death came to release him. So now, the moment a man feels that his rupture is a strangulated one—rupture is far rarer among women—he begs his friends to put him in a canoe and bring him to me.

How can I describe my feelings when a poor fellow is brought to me in this condition? I am the only person within hundreds of miles who can help him. Because I am here and am supplied by friends with the necessary means, he can be saved, like those who came before him in the same condition, and those who will come after him, while otherwise he would have fallen a victim to the torture. This does not mean merely that I can save his life. We must all die. But that I can save him from days of torture, that is what I feel as my great and ever new privilege. Pain is a more terrible lord of mankind than even Death himself.

So when the poor moaning creature comes, I lay my hand on his forehead and say to him: "Don't be afraid! In an hour's time you shall be put to sleep,



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and when you wake you won't feel any more pain." Very soon he is given an injection of omnipon; the doctor's wife is called to the hospital, and, with Joseph's help, she makes everything ready for the operation. When that is to begin, she administers the anæsthetic, and Joseph, in a long pair of rubber gloves, acts as assistant.

The operation is finished, and in the hardly lighted dormitory I watch for the sick man's awaking. Scarcely has he recovered consciousness when he stares about him and ejaculates again and again: "I've no more pain! I've no more pain!" . . . His hand feels for mine and will not let it go. Then I begin to tell him and the others who are in the room that it is the Lord Jesus who has told the doctor and his wife to come to the Ogowe, and that white people in Europe give them the money to live here and cure the sick negroes. Then I have to answer questions as to who these white people are, where they live, and how they know that the natives suffer so much from sickness. The African sun is shining through the coffee bushes into the dark shed, but we, black and white, sit side by side and feel that we know by experience the meaning of the words: "And all ye are brethren" (Matthew xxiii, 8). Would that my generous friends in Europe could come out here and live through one such hour!

### *Whites and Blacks.*

A word now about the relations between the whites and the blacks. What must be the general character of the intercourse between them? Am I to treat the black man as my equal or as my inferior? I must

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show him that I can respect the dignity of human personality in every one, and this attitude in me he must be able to see for himself; but the essential thing is that there shall be a real feeling of brotherliness. How far this is to find complete expression in the sayings and doings of daily life must be settled by circumstances. The negro is a child, and with children nothing can be done without the use of authority. We must, therefore, so arrange the circumstances of daily life that my natural authority can find expression. With regard to the negroes, then, I have coined the formula: "I am your brother, it is true, but your elder brother."

The combination of friendliness with authority is therefore the great secret of successful intercourse. A missionary, Mr R——, left his mission some years ago to live among the negroes as their brother absolutely. He built himself a small house near a village between Lambaréné and N'gômô, and wished to be recognised as a member of the village. From that day his life became a misery. With his abandonment of the social interval between white and black he lost all his influence; his word was no longer taken as the "white man's word," but he had to argue every point with them as if he were merely their equal.

The prevention of unsuitable freedom is, however, only the external and technical part, so to say, of the problem of authority. A white man can have real authority only if the native respects him. No one must imagine that the child of nature looks up to us merely because we know more, or can do more, than he can. This superiority is so obvious to him that it ceases to be taken into account. It is by no means

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the case that the white man is to the negro an imposing person because he possesses railways and steamers, can fly in the air, or travel under water. "White people are clever and can do anything they want to," says Joseph. The negro is not in a position to estimate what these technical conquests of nature mean as proofs of mental and spiritual superiority, but on one point he has an unerring intuition, and that is on the question whether any particular white man is a real, moral personality or not. If the native feels that he is this, moral authority is possible; if not, it is simply impossible to create it. The child of nature, not having been artificialised and spoilt as we have been, has only elementary standards of judgment, and he measures us by the most elementary of them all, the moral standard. Where he finds goodness, justice, and genuineness of character, real worth and dignity, that is, behind the external dignity given by social circumstances, he bows and acknowledges his master; where he does not find them he remains really defiant in spite of all appearance of submission, and says to himself: "This white is no more of a man than I am, for he is not a better one than I am."

I am not thinking merely of the fact that many unsuitable, and not a few quite unworthy men, go out into the colonies of all nations. I wish to emphasise the further fact that even the morally best and the idealists find it difficult out here to be what they wish to be. We all get exhausted in the terrible contest between the European worker who bears the responsibility and is always in a hurry, and the child of nature who does not know what responsibility is, and who is never in a hurry.

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My wife and I were once very much delighted with a newly-arrived trader, because in the conversations we had with him he was always insisting on kindness towards the natives, and would not allow the slightest ill-treatment of them by his foremen. The next spring, however, he had the following experience. Lying in a pond some sixty miles from here he had a large quantity of mahogany, but he was summoned to Lambaréné to clear off some urgent correspondence just as the water began to rise. He ordered his foremen and labourers to be sure to use the two or three days of high water to get all the timber, if possible, into the river. When the water had fallen he went back to the place and found that nothing whatever had been done! The men had smoked and drunk and danced; the timber, which had already lain too long in the pond, was almost completely ruined, and he was responsible to his company for the loss. His men had been thoughtless and indifferent because they did not fear him enough. This experience changed him entirely, and now he laughs at those who think it is possible to do anything with the natives without employing relentless severity.

The greater the responsibility that rests on a white man, the greater the danger of his becoming hard towards the natives. We on a mission-staff are too easily inclined to be self-righteous with regard to the other whites. We have not got to obtain such and such results from the natives by the end of the year, as the officials and traders have to, and therefore this exhausting contest is not so hard a one for us as it is for them. I no longer venture to judge my fellows, now that I have learnt something of the soul

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of the white man who is in business, from those who lay as patients under my roof, and whose talk has led me to suspect that those who now talk savagely about the natives may have come out to Africa full of idealism, but in the daily contest have become weary and hopeless, losing little by little what they once possessed of spirituality.

That it is so hard to keep oneself really humane, and so to be a standard-bearer of civilisation, that is the tragic element in the problem of the relations between white and coloured men in Equatorial Africa.

### *Results and Lessons.*

How shall I sum up the resulting experience of these four and a half years? On the whole it has confirmed my view of the considerations which drew me from the world of learning and art to the primæval forest. "The natives who live in the bosom of Nature are never so ill as we are, and do not feel pain so much." That is what my friends used to say to me to try to keep me at home, but I have come to see that such statements are not true. Out here there prevail most of the diseases which we know in Europe, and several of them—those hideous ones, I mean, which we brought here—produce, if possible, more misery than they do amongst us. And the child of Nature feels them as we do, for to be human means to be subject to the power of that terrible lord whose name is Pain.

Physical misery is great everywhere out here. Are we justified in shutting our eyes and ignoring it

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because our European newspapers tell us nothing about it? We civilised people have been spoiled. If any one of us is ill, the doctor comes at once. Is an operation necessary, the door of some hospital or other opens to us immediately. But let every one reflect on the meaning of the fact that out here millions and millions live without help, or hope of it. Every day thousands endure terrible sufferings though medical science could avert them. Will each of my readers think what the last ten years of his family history would have been if they had been passed without medical or surgical help of any sort? It is time that we should wake from slumber and face our responsibilities!

Believing it, as I do, to be my life's task to fight on behalf of the sick under far-off stars, I appeal to the sympathy which Jesus and religion call for, but at the same time I call to my help also our most fundamental ideas and reasonings. We ought to see the work that needs doing for the coloured folk in their misery, not as a mere "good work," but as a duty that must not be shirked.

Ever since the world's far-off lands were discovered, what has been the conduct of the white peoples to the coloured ones? What is the meaning of the simple fact that this or that people has died out, that others are dying out, and that the condition of others is getting worse and worse as a result of their discovery by men who "profess and call themselves Christians," *i.e.*, followers of Jesus? Who can describe the injustice and the cruelties that in the course of centuries they have suffered at the hands of Europeans? Who can measure the misery produced

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among them by the fiery drinks and the hideous diseases that we have taken to them? If a record could be compiled of all that has happened between the white and the coloured races, it would make a book containing numbers of pages, referring to recent as well as to early times, which the reader would have to turn over unread, because their contents would be too horrible.

We and our civilisation are burdened, really, with a great debt. We are not free to confer benefits on these men, or not, as we please; it is our duty. Anything we give them is not benevolence but atonement. For every one who scattered injury some one ought to go out to take help, and when we have done all that is in our power, we shall not have atoned for the thousandth part of our guilt. That is the foundation from which all deliberations about "works of mercy" out there must begin.

It goes without saying that governments must help with the atonement, but they cannot do so till there already exists in society a conviction on the subject. A government alone can never discharge the duties of humanitarianism; from the nature of the case that rests with society and individuals.

A government can, indeed, send out as many colonial doctors as it has at its disposal, and as the colonial budgets are able to pay for. But it is well known that there are great colonising powers which cannot find even enough doctors to fill the places of those already working in their colonies, though there are far from sufficient to cope with the need. So again, we see, the real burden of the humanitarian work must fall upon society and its individual members.

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We must have doctors who go among the coloured peoples of their own accord and are ready to put up with all that is meant by absence from home and civilisation. I can say from experience that they will find a rich reward for all that they renounce in the good that they can do.

I can say, moreover, from my own experience and from that of all colonial doctors, that a single doctor out here with the most modest equipment means very much for very many. Just with quinine and arsenic for malaria, with novarsenobenzol for the various diseases which spread through ulcerating sores, with emetin for dysentery, and with sufficient skill and apparatus for the most necessary operations, he can in a single year free from the power of suffering and death hundreds of men who must otherwise have succumbed to their fate in despair. The advance of tropical medicine during the last twenty years gives us a power over the sufferings of the men of far-off lands which borders on the miraculous. The good which a doctor in the position described can accomplish surpasses a hundredfold what he gives of his own life, and the cost of the material support that he must have.

Is not this really a call to us?



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