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THEODORE LEIGHTON PENNELL, M.D., F.R.C.S.

Born, October, 1867.

Died at Bannu, March 20, 1912.

PENNELL

OF

BANNU

BY

A. L.

WITH WHICH IS INCLUDED A PAPER BY
MAJOR-GENERAL G. K. SCOTT-MONCRIEFF, C.B., C.I.E.
REPRINTED FROM 'BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE'
BY KIND PERMISSION

SECOND IMPRESSION.

LONDON
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PREFACE

THE following brief sketch has been prepared at the request of the Committee of the Church Missionary Society in response to a desire expressed in many quarters for some account of the life and work of Dr. Pennell in a form suitable for wide circulation.

It is written with the earnest hope that some amongst its readers may be constrained to follow Pennell's most stimulating example and give themselves to medical mission work, or at least to seek to forward the cause which he held so dear.

A book of this size cannot attempt to provide much of interesting detail or incident. A wealth of incident, however, is to be found in that fascinating volume by Dr. Pennell himself, *Among the Wild Tribes of the Afghan Frontier* (published by Messrs. Seeley, Service & Co.); while further stores of yet deeper interest will doubtless be available on the publication, in a few months' time, of the full biography, by the one best able to prepare it.

The reason for the inclusion of General Scott-Moncrieff's paper (from *Blackwood's Magazine* of

last July) will, it is hoped, be obvious to all who read it. An account written by a fellow-missionary must almost of necessity be somewhat partial, and this very vivid impression of Dr. Pennell's personality from the point of view of the responsible Government official has a special value both as supplementing that which precedes it and as correcting the popular idea that official opinion is always adverse to missionaries and their work.

It was with the warmly expressed hope that thereby the influence of Dr. Pennell's example might be extended, that both publisher (Mr. William Blackwood) and author gave their kind consent to the reprinting of the article in question.

A. L.

PUTNEY; *September 1912.*

PRONUNCIATION OF INDIAN WORDS AND NAMES

ā pronounced like 'a' in *above*, or 'u' in *cut*.

ā " " " 'a' in *half*.

ī " " " 'i' in *bit*.

ī " " " 'ee' in *feel*.

ū " " " 'u' in *full*.

ū " " " 'oo' in *cool*.

Amritsar = Āmrītsār

Afghan = Āfghān

Afghanistan = Āfghānistān

Afridi = Āfrīdī

Ali Musjid = Āli Māsjīd

Amir = Āmīr

Bannu = Bānnū

Chakkai = Chākkāi ('ai' as in *aisle*)

Dera Ghazi Khan = Derā Ghāzī Khān (*Dera* rhymes with *Clara*)

Dera Ismail Khan = Derā Ismail Khān ('ai' as in *mail*)

Durbar = Dārbār

Fakir = Fākīr

Farangi = Fārāngī

Fazl Khan = Fāzl Khān

Hakim = Hākim

Hujra = Hūjrā

Injil = Īnjil

Isa Khel = Īsā Khel ('e' like 'ai' in *mail*)

Jahan Khan = Jāhān Khān

Jamrud = Jāmrūd

Kabul = Kābul

Kaisar-i-hind = Kāisār-i-hind

Kalima = Kālimā

Karachi = Kārāchī

Karak = Kārāk

Koran = Korān

Kurram = Kūrrām

Malakand = Mālākānd

Multan = Mūltān

Padri = Pādrī

Pathan = Pāt-hān

Peshawar = Peshāwār (accent on second syllable)

Punjab = Pānjāb

Pushtu = Pāshṭū

Sadhu = Sād-hū

Sarwar Khan = Sārwār Khān

Sheikh Mahmoud = Sheikh Māhmūd ('ei' like 'ai' in *mail*)

Srinagar = Sīrīnāgār (accent on third syllable)

Suleiman = Sūleimān ('ei' like 'ai' in *aisle*)

Tank = Tānk

Tochi = Tochī

Thal = T-hāl

Waziri = Wāzīrī

PENNELL OF BANNU

PART I

CHAPTER I

THEODORE LEIGHTON PENNELL was born at Clifton, in October 1867. His father, Dr. John Wilson Croker Pennell, had for many years been engaged in medical practice at Rio de Janeiro; but he retired from professional work, and shortly afterwards died in London, when his son was as yet only a child. Mrs. Pennell was the daughter of Mr. Swinfen Jordan, a merchant of Rio de Janeiro. She came to England when seventeen years of age, was educated at the Cheltenham Ladies' College, and obtained very useful experience in district work at Manchester before her marriage in 1866. She was a woman of extraordinary force of character as well as of great intellectual gifts, and she resolved, on her husband's death, to devote herself wholly to the education and training of her boy.

Mrs. Pennell's one great desire was that her son should not only be a true-hearted Christian, but that he should be willing, when the time

came, to devote himself to God's service as a foreign missionary. It speaks much for the strength of her influence over him, as also for the wisdom which she showed in the gradual development of her training, that she was so completely successful in impressing her own ideals upon him. Dr. Pennell himself wrote in later years :—

She made it her daily prayer and aim to bring up her son in the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, and to set before him, as the highest ideal of service, the life of an Ambassador of Christ to nations that know Him not ; and to this end, books of travel and exploration, and biographies of missionaries and pioneers, were always at hand for filling up the intervals of study and affording that blend of adventure with missionary enterprise which is so dear to a boy's imagination. Burton, Speke, Livingstone, Stanley, and Cameron were the heroes of those days, but every story was pointed with its missionary application, till so much missionary enthusiasm was aroused in mother and son that it seemed hard to have to wait for maturer years before going out to the foreign field.

Very early in the boy's life, the Person of Jesus Christ must have been presented before him in such fashion that there followed that individual grip upon heart and life which is so far more effectual as a motive for service than the inculcation of theological doctrine. It was surely the fact that the devotion both of mother and son united in, and centred upon, the Person of Christ, that prevented their intense affection for each other from issuing in selfishness.

It was owing to Mrs. Pennell's wise influence that her son was led to choose a medical training as that which would give him the best equipment for future work as a missionary. He obtained an entrance

exhibition at University College, London, where he entered as a medical student in 1885. Here, his career was a singularly brilliant one, for, apart from scholarships and medals at his own medical school, he obtained high honours at his degree examinations at London University. In 1890 he gained the M.B. degree with honours, scholarship, and gold medal; and in the following year obtained the M.D. degree, once again carrying off the gold medal, a highly prized distinction.

Pennell was a very steady and careful worker, but the examination results which have been mentioned were attained without any apparent undue strain or excessive effort. He was not too busy to spare time for scientific and other hobbies, and above all he did not neglect opportunities for Christian service which presented themselves during his student days. Almost from the first he was secretary and leader of the Christian Association connected with University College; and he never failed to be present, as the writer well remembers, at the various inter-hospital meetings held in connexion with the London Medical Prayer Union. Further, he became the moving spirit amongst a small group of fellow-students in the management of a club and gymnasium for working boys, which absorbed a good deal of his time and energy during the latter part of his course.

After qualification, Dr. Pennell held various appointments at University College Hospital, including the important resident one of House Physician, and finally, in 1892, he passed the

examination for F.R.C.S., Eng. Amongst the letters testimonial written at the time of his offering to the Church Missionary Society were two from leading members of the hospital staff. Sir Thomas Barlow wrote : ' He has taken a distinguished place in his collegiate course, and, what is of more importance, in the medical degree examination in the University of London he has taken a very good position indeed.' And Dr. Frederick Roberts said : ' Mr. T. L. Pennell has been the most distinguished student of his year, and is in every respect a noble character.'

At the close of his college course; therefore, we find Pennell with a professional equipment, both intellectual and practical which, taken with his brilliant examination record, was sufficient to assure him of high success at home, in whatever direction he might choose to seek it. Doubtless there were not wanting friends who, with the best intentions for his welfare, tried to persuade him that his very successes were a clear indication that he was not meant to be a missionary ; that abilities such as his should be used for the attainment of wide influence—of course for good—in the homeland, instead of being wasted upon ignorant and uncivilized people. Pennell seems not to have faltered for a moment in his resolve ; academic successes and the honour which they bring did not bulk large on his horizon, and the ambitions which have changed the purpose of many an intending missionary made but little appeal to him. It was not in any spirit of self-renunciation that

he had dedicated his life to the service of Jesus Christ, it was because he believed it to be the most glorious and joyous career that he could possibly choose, and it was his ambition to fit himself for the claims which it would make.

Those who knew Pennell during his student days remember him as a quiet, reserved man who made no secret of his strong religious convictions, and who won the high esteem of all whose respect was worth having, as much by the naturalness with which he lived up to his profession as by the ease with which he out-distanced them at examinations. In appearance he was tall and somewhat slightly built, showing nothing of that robustness of physique which one would look for in a Frontier pioneer. Had he been called to fill some important educational post, such as that of professor in a missionary medical college, where his intellectual gifts would have come more prominently to the fore, he would doubtless have done so with superlative success; and the fact that the brilliant student developed into the courageous and resourceful pioneer showed him to be possessed of adaptability in unusual degree.

Towards the end of 1890, he entered into correspondence with the C.M.S. authorities at Salisbury Square with a view to offering himself for foreign missionary work. The following extract from a letter, written at this time to Dr. Eugene Stock, gives his own account of the motives which led him to choose a missionary career :—

As early as I can recollect, my parents brought me up in the fear and love of God, and taught me that to contribute,

as an instrument in God's hand, to the advance of His Kingdom and to its recognition among men, was the highest privilege I could wish to obtain. Since then, personal experience has clinched this view, which I have never seen reason to modify. This being so, I was taught that foreign missions were the best way of carrying it into practice, and since I have been able to judge for myself, the needs of the foreign field have seemed to me to entirely transcend those of the home one (as things stand at present), and that I should be much more usefully employed there than here. It has, therefore, always been my hope to have some day the privilege of serving abroad.

There was, of course, no hesitation on the part of the Church Missionary Society in accepting Dr. Pennell's offer of service, but it was thought well that he should spend a term at Islington College for theological study. During the last two years of his time at hospital he had been severely ill from pneumonia and again from tonsillitis, and to those responsible for deciding his location, his physical strength did not seem to warrant his being sent to Africa or to any unhealthy or isolated post. He was finally located to the Punjab Mission, where it was hoped that he would find scope for his special professional abilities in some sphere where he would have the training of native medical mission workers. The good intentions of the Committee were, however not to be realized, since in the event Dr. Pennell found himself in a station where the exigencies of the work both involved a considerable degree of isolation and called for the endurance of very much of physical hardship.

The close bonds of mutual sympathy and co-operation between Pennell and his widowed mother

had remained, becoming even more intimate during his years in London, and the problem of separation was solved by them in a manner as happy as it was unusual. United in the years of preparation, they resolved to be united in service ; and so the widowed mother, now in the fifty-seventh year of her age, accompanied her son to India in October, 1892, leaving England, it is believed, with the deliberate intention of spending the remainder of her life as a missionary.

Judged by ordinary standards, such a decision would have seemed the reverse of wise ; and probably those who acquiesced in it, as the only solution of a difficulty, did so with feelings of apprehension lest the freedom and usefulness of the younger worker should be curtailed by the necessary limitations of one so nearly approaching old age. How unfounded these fears were the event amply proved ; and the sort of spirit with which the mother looked forward to life abroad may be judged from a short extract from a letter, in which she discussed the question of Bannu as the future location, with reference to doubts which had been expressed as to its suitability :—

Dr. M—— told my son that Bannu was a very *good* climate. If we listen to the opinion of every one, we should always find a ‘lion’ in some part of the path ! And people vary so in their ideas as to what is a ‘good’ or a ‘bad’ place to go to.

Mrs. Pennell was emphatically not the sort of woman to soften the fibre of her son’s character or to shield him from the difficulties and hardships inseparable from the career which he had chosen.

CHAPTER II

AFTER a few preliminary months spent at Dera Ismail Khan, and occupied for the most part with language study, Pennell and his mother found themselves, in the spring of 1893, at the small Frontier city of Bannu, ready to enter upon the work for which during so many years they had both been preparing.

What was this work to be? By arrangement with the other missionary bodies labouring in North India the responsibility for the evangelization of the whole of the North-West Frontier, from Kashmir down to Karachi, had been given to the Church Missionary Society. From various centres along this extended border-line the Gospel had been preached during some thirty-five years in cities and villages by such notable evangelists as French, Bruce, Hughes, Maxwell Gordon, and Jukes. The efforts of these devoted men met with no very considerable response even from the Mohammedan population of the districts on the British side of the border; whilst as regards the various tribes of Pathans inhabiting the Frontier hills, and the peoples of the countries lying beyond those hills, there seemed neither sign nor prospect of success. During the

preceding decade, the medical missions at Srinagar (Kashmir), Tank, Quetta, and Dera Ghazi Khan had conclusively proved their extreme value in dealing with this difficult problem of Frontier evangelization, and from the missionaries at work in the three remaining border mission stations of Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan, and Peshawar there came urgent appeals for the establishment of medical missions. These appeals came at a time when there was a great increase of interest in medical missions at home ; and within five years each of these three important border cities had its mission hospital—that at Bannu being the first to be started.

A vivid description of the district and people will be found in the paper which accompanies this sketch. Pennell was himself doubtless familiar with Herbert Edwardes's not very flattering description of the Bannu citizen and Waziri clansman, and knew from the first what sort of folk they were amongst whom his lot was cast. The keen young doctor, fresh from active responsibilities in a great London hospital, had now to face a problem greater than any which his examination experiences had held—how best to use the powers of healing which he possessed in order to obtain influence, personal and spiritual, over rough Mohammedan highlanders, ignorant, superstitious, and suspicious of any advances which he might make. It was perhaps fortunate that he was left free to work out his own ideals in his own way, independent for the most part of guidance from others. The workers who had immediately preceded him had been

engaged in the immensely important work of translation of the Scriptures into Pushtu, the language of the Frontier, and just at that time but little active evangelistic work was being done.

It was not long before Pennell decided upon a line of policy, essentially Pauline in nature, which, though it has had many exponents in China, has been regarded as almost impracticable in India, owing mainly to our position as members of the ruling race. He seems to have said to himself—adapting words of St. Paul—‘To the Pathans I will become as a Pathan, that I may gain the Pathans.’ He adopted Afghan costume, mixed with the people continually on terms of close familiarity, and made it his constant endeavour to acquaint himself as far as possible with their manners and customs and habits of thought, as well as with their language. It would almost appear that he placed before himself a picture of what a truly Christlike Pathan might be, and then steadily set himself to approximate to this ideal, so that to converts and inquirers he might say, ‘Be ye followers of me even as I also am of Christ.’

Nor did this approximation involve any serious concessions of what is truly admirable of British characteristics. The Pathan at best, as those who know him will readily admit, is a thorough gentleman, at worst he is a magnificent savage. There is a splendid foundation upon which to build a noble Christian character, a foundation of manly courage and grit, needing the addition of Christian forbearance and humility; a foundation, too, of refine-

ment as shown in social customs and personal habits, needing, however, the purity and holiness of life and thought which for East and West alike came only with Christ. Some such combination as this it was which Pennell showed as he lived before and amongst the rough Waziri tribesmen, and his example, backed up as it was by a personality which could not fail to attract, and by a sympathy which showed itself continually in loving deeds, evoked, as will be seen, a response of intensely loyal affection in the hearts of thousands of those whom he wished to reach.

With ideals such as these, and with the determination which Pennell evinced to shrink from no sacrifice which their practical realization might involve, his career as a missionary would have been a notable one even had he not been a doctor. As it was, however, he possessed that which, in its power to disarm suspicion, and to remove barriers of religious or racial antipathy, stands surely without a rival. In his medical skill, Pennell had the ready means whereby he could bring his Christian love into contact with people otherwise wholly inaccessible, and make it practically operative upon them. He lost no time in opening a small mission hospital in the precincts of the mission house and church, adapting some existing buildings and erecting others in a very simple and inexpensive style. Of this hospital, Mrs. Pennell was from the very first matron, housekeeper, and indispensable helper. The hospital was situated just outside the town of Bannu, and was equally accessible both for the people of the city and district and for the Waziri tribesmen who

came to the market centre in order to dispose of their scanty produce, to make purchases of clothing or tools, or to have interviews with Government officials. Gradually the fame of the 'Padri-doctor' began to spread far and wide, and people flocked to the hospital from long distances in search of the healing which was unobtainable in their own homes.

It was not long before the Bannu Medical Mission fulfilled the hopes of those upon whose representations it had been established, by becoming a means of disseminating Christian influence and Gospel truth in the regions far beyond the Frontier, especially in the closed land of Afghanistan. The evangelistic missionary working on the Indian N.-W. Frontier is at a very early stage in his career confronted with an intangible but none the less real obstacle to his work in the shape of the regulations of the Indian Government, which prohibit any European from crossing the Frontier without special sanction from the political officer of the section concerned. This prohibition as regards Afghanistan is the result of the strong anti-foreign policy of the Amir of Kabul; while as regards the intervening tribal territories, which are independent, it is due to the anxiety to avoid the possibility of outrages against Europeans with their sequel of a punitive expedition, costly but necessary if British prestige is to be maintained.

It is with especial regard to this 'closed door' to Afghanistan and Central Asia that the Frontier medical missions have been established. Bannu, situated within easy reach of the mouth of the Tochi Pass, one of the great trade routes from the North-

West into India, is a commercial centre which is visited by multitudes of travellers who come from Ghazni, Jalalabad, Kabul and beyond. It was soon noised abroad in the cities and villages of far distant trans-Frontier regions that at Bannu there was a *Farangi hakim* whose cures were little short of miraculous and who was kind and loving in his treatment of all who came to him, whether rich or poor. Traveller patients from far away discovered that the 'Padri-doctor' not only found time to do what was needful for their healing, but that he also got into personal contact with them; while the attractiveness of his personality made them for the most part very willing to listen to the teaching which he gave.

But perhaps the most important part of Pennell's work was away from the hospital. He was not long in finding out that in order to get near to the people he must visit them in their own villages and meet with them in their own homes. Leaving the hospital in the charge of an Indian house-surgeon—or, later on, of a European colleague—and accompanied by one or two helpers with drugs and surgical necessaries, he would travel about from village to village amongst the wild, rugged hills adjacent to the Frontier, at times being allowed by special arrangement to visit places over the border. It was mainly in order to disarm the suspicions of the border tribesmen amongst whom he itinerated, and to whom the spectacle of a non-official European was unusual, that he decided within a year or two of beginning work to adopt the Pathan costume. This

practice was a very unusual one for missionaries in India; but for Pennell, working as he did amongst ignorant and suspicious people, its advisability was amply justified by results, and he adhered to it throughout his missionary life.

During these itinerations, by the simplicity of his arrangements, by his readiness to accept the hospitality of those whom he met, both rich and poor, and by his cheery contentment with his lot whether of comfort or hardship, Pennell showed clearly that he meant so to order his life and conduct as to dissociate himself from the ruling class of Europeans and to draw as near as possible in friendly contact with the tribesmen themselves. This desire on his part was quickly recognized and reciprocated. Practically every European in such a district as that under consideration is in some way connected with the Government, and any advance towards familiarity tends to be regarded with suspicion. Gradually the Waziri clansmen came to agree that Pennell was not a political agent in disguise, that in fact he had no other motive but the one which he never tired of proclaiming—that of winning them to the faith which he professed. They accepted him as what he professed to be—religious teacher and friend; and were drawn to give him first their respect and then their devoted affection.

Almost from the first, owing to the transfer of the clergyman who had for many years been at the head of the Bannu Mission, Pennell found himself responsible for the well-being of the little Christian community there. In the early days of the Mission,

when life and property were far less secure and outrages more frequent, considerations of safety had led the missionaries to collect all the Christian workers and their families close around the main mission house. All the Indian Christians had their houses in the one large compound, and the church, hospital, and mission school were also situated there. This arrangement had its obvious advantages, especially when the mission doctor had to act as schoolmaster and 'Padri' also. It was, however, open to the objection that it encouraged such close supervision by and dependance upon the Europeans in charge as to foster that system of paternal rule over the Indians which has been thought to be prejudicial to their healthy, independent development.

Certainly Mrs. Pennell, as the mother of the Mission, made her influence felt very strongly, both in the ordering of the daily routine of work and in the details of the home life of the little community. Extraordinarily vigorous and energetic herself, she 'set the pace' for the whole Mission, and, as activities increased and developed, the programme of work became very strenuous. Pennell himself was a man who seldom showed signs of fatigue, and there was no room for idlers amongst his helpers. The day's work would commence at six o'clock in summer and seven in winter, with morning prayers in the church, at which all the Christians on the compound were expected to attend; but all knew that their leaders, Pennell and his mother, had been up at a still earlier hour seeking strength for the day in secret prayer.

CHAPTER III

THE attempt to gauge the value of missionary work by counting the number of individual conversions leads usually to wholly wrong conclusions, since it may often happen that a whole countryside may be influenced for Christ before a single baptism has been recorded. The most real and permanent fruit of years of work may often be hidden from human eyes. Especially, perhaps, is this true of work in Mohammedan lands where confession of Christ involves severe persecution with loss of friends and property and even danger to life. At the same time a mission which does not aim very definitely at individual conversions is not very likely to achieve any noteworthy results, and the absence of conversions should be regarded as a matter for serious examination of methods.

Pennell was not very long before he received this crowning evidence of the blessing of God upon his work. A young Afghan named Jahan Khan, whose father had died while on a visit to British territory, came to Pennell as a servant. At first bitterly

antagonistic to Christianity, he was gradually won over to a less hostile attitude. Wishing to learn to read, he mastered the alphabet; and then, in default of another lesson-book, began to read a copy of one of the Gospels in Pushtu which was given him. This riveted his attention, and its teaching, backed up by the example and help of his master, brought him at last to the point of confessing Christ. He had to endure much ill-treatment before and after his baptism, and once barely escaped with his life after a visit to his own people beyond the Frontier. He became an earnest evangelist, although his Pathan temper was long in yielding to the Holy Spirit's influence. He married, and went for some years as helper to some devoted American missionaries at Bahrein on the Persian Gulf, returning, however, later on to pass through the various departments of work in the Bannu mission hospital. He thus became fitted in due course to take charge of a branch dispensary, opened in 1905, in a very isolated post, a little Frontier town called Karak, where he had himself in earlier days experienced bitter opposition, and where ever since he has been a trusted worker. Pennell always spoke with special affection of Jahan Khan, who had through the greater part of his missionary life shared his difficulties and anxieties and had proved such a faithful disciple.

He was followed by many others, mostly young men, who gave up all to follow Christ. Of these, some are still working happily at Bannu or

elsewhere (one in a medical mission at Muscat on the Arabian Coast), one or two were 'faithful unto death,' having been murdered on account of their becoming Christians; whilst some, alas! have turned back again and denied their Saviour.

In nothing was the Christ-likeness of Pennell's spirit more apparent than in the earnest way in which he strove again and again to follow up and reclaim those who, after baptism, had turned away from Christ. The writer well remembers the case of a young student belonging to a village in the Peshawar district who became a Christian at Bannu, but who after some time had been enticed back by his relatives, and was again living in his village under conditions involving the severest temptations, to which indeed there was reason to fear that he might already have succumbed. Pennell came to Peshawar over the Kohat Pass, a distance of 120 miles by bicycle, and then started off by rail with the least possible delay. From the station he had a walk of seventeen miles to the village, with flooded rivers to wade, heavy rain falling most of the way. He returned with his companion, very weary and disappointed after a fruitless search; but he did not despair, and paid another visit to the village a fortnight later, when he had the joy of bringing his young disciple back with him.

No account of the varied activities of Pennell's life would be at all adequate which neglected to describe his educational work. His attitude re-

garding mission schools may be best expressed in his own words :—

When I first went to India, I had a prejudice against mission schools, and protested against a medical missionary having to superintend one ; but I have become convinced that the hope of India is in her mission colleges and schools, for it is in their *alumni* that we find young men, who have been able to acquire Western knowledge without losing the religious spirit, learning without moral atrophy, mental nobility without a conceited mien and disrespect for their parents, and breadth of view without disloyalty and sedition. I should like to see the Government close all their schools and colleges except those for primary and technical education, and devote the money saved to the encouragement of private effort on lines more german to the spirit of the country.*

Pennell found a mission school in existence when he came to Bannu ; and some time later, owing to the transfer of a fellow missionary, the responsibility for its superintendence fell upon his shoulders. Taking up this new work with his usual energy he found that it grew and flourished under his hand, and, further, that it began to absorb more and more of his interest, becoming an important part of the mission organization. He raised the status of the school from the ‘middle’ to the ‘entrance’ or matriculation standard, organized gymnastics and games, and developed the hostel or boarding-house system by which accommodation was provided under the missionary’s close personal supervision for boys coming from a distance. This last portion of the work he regarded as of especial importance, and with funds provided by Mrs. Pennell he built

* *Among the Wild Tribes of the Afghan Frontier*, 4th ed., p. 143.

two excellent boarding-houses close to the main school. The following paragraph shows the value which he placed on these institutions, and how in actual working they justified his expectations :—

I place great importance on the influence of the school hostels. These are the boarding-houses where those students whose homes are in the remoter parts of the district reside, and the contrast between our raw material, the uncouth, prejudiced village lad, and the finished product, the gentlemanly, affectionate student who is about to leave us, is an object lesson in itself. The boarders, though comparatively few in number, are really the nucleus of the school, and take a prominent part in matches and in school life in general quite out of proportion to their numbers. The missionary is constantly in contact with them, and they come to him at all seasons, till the relationship is more like that of a father to his family than that of a master to his students. Such students leave the hostel with friendly feelings towards Christians and Englishmen, and show themselves in after years in the hospitable and hearty reception which they accord not only to the missionary, but to others who may be visiting their village.*

The influence of Pennell's personality upon his students, and the affection which he inspired in them, were quite remarkable; and no less so was the permanence of that influence and affection, as shown by them in later years. His arrival at Peshawar or Lahore would be the signal for numerous visits from old students, now perhaps respectable young Government officials, anxious to pay their respects to their beloved principal. Sometimes they would arrange for a feast in his honour, which he, on his part, would willingly attend, embracing every opportunity of retaining and strengthening his hold upon them.

* *Among the Wild Tribes of the Afghan Frontier*, 4th ed., p. 145.

Everything that tended towards the formation of a truly manly type of character had his enthusiastic support. He was himself the leader in all the school sports—in fact, he rarely allowed himself any active recreation except such as he could take along with his boys—and he made it his aim not only to turn out good athletes, but also to develop that spirit of fair play and true sportsmanship which one associates with public-school life in England.

One who knew him well—an Indian—wrote thus of his work in the school :—

To see him with the boys in the school was such a delight. They just loved him; and wisely he did not try to quell the vigorous life—the inheritance of a thousand generations—that was in them, but he turned it into better channels, and quickened it to render service to God.

One memorable summer, in 1906, he took his football team for a long tour all round India, playing matches with various schools and colleges in the principal centres. The tour was most successful, but was marred by an unfortunate incident at its close, when, owing to an utterly unfounded suspicion of the reason of their visit, they were mobbed, and some of them severely injured, by a crowd of Bengalis in Calcutta.

Once having realized the importance of educational work, Pennell was unwilling to allow it to be separated from the activities of the medical mission. His medical colleagues were encouraged to take their share in it, and in almost every case they became scarcely less enthusiastic in it than he was himself. In short, towards the later years of his

life, those who knew him best used to wonder whether the school had not almost rivalled the mission hospital in his affections and interest. Certainly he had shown himself supremely successful in both of these widely differing forms of work.

Pennell was a great believer in the importance of bazaar preaching, both as a public witness to the truth and as a means of bringing the Gospel message to some who might never otherwise have the opportunity of hearing it. To preach openly in a crowded bazaar in a Frontier city is a task which calls for not a little personal courage, as the crowd of listeners will often contain a number of truculent characters spoiling for a disturbance and only needing the slightest encouragement from a hostile mullah to break up the meeting with actual violence. On more than one occasion Pennell and his companions were badly hustled ; once he was thrown down and might have received serious injury but for the arrival of timely assistance. Under such circumstances Pennell would take cheerily whatever befell him, answering banter with banter, but insult with courtesy, restraining, as he often found it necessary to do, the too violent loyalty of his Pathan workers, but encouraging them to be brave in confession of their faith.

One other institution calls for mention in this brief account of the varied activities of the Bannu Mission—the printing press. It was established partly in order to produce vernacular Christian literature, and partly to give employment to certain converts who needed some respectable means

of livelihood. From this press there issued for many years a small weekly paper in Pushtu, which was made the medium for disseminating not only news and useful secular information, but also moral and religious teaching—the need of a Saviour and the claims of Christ being set forth in such a way as not to prevent the circulation of the paper amongst Mohammedans.

The above are but some of the directions in which Pennell used his powers in order to fulfil to the people of the Bannu district the commission with which he believed that he had been entrusted. Into each of these varied branches of work he threw himself with all the energy which he possessed, and his enthusiasm called forth the most hearty co-operation of all those who were his fellow-workers both in hospital and school.

This chapter may fitly close with an extract from a letter from the same Indian friend whose words regarding the school have already been quoted :—

Never was such a worker—now making the dim sight clear, now amputating the leg which some vengeance had wounded beyond repair ; now addressing a group of patients and telling them of the life without pain and without end ; now preaching in the city, now teaching a class, now playing football with his boys, now diving in the bath ; and always having leisure to soothe and sympathize, never missing the hour of prayer, and always ready to walk or ride miles to see a patient.

Was it to be wondered at that this man was successful in winning the love of those for whom he spent himself so unsparingly ?

CHAPTER IV

DURING Pennell's earlier itinerations amongst the Frontier hills, it was his constant endeavour to establish relations of personal confidence and friendship with the tribesmen, and in this he attained probably more success than any other European who has ever come into contact with them. As, by the influence of his own personality and by the work carried on at the hospital, their suspicions were disarmed, he was able to travel from place to place with the certainty of finding a welcome wherever he went, of obtaining hospitality for himself and his helpers, and, best of all, of finding the opportunities which he sought for intercourse with the people and for friendly conversations and discussions upon religious topics.

On his first arrival at a village he would make his way to the Hujra or guest-house, outside which is usually a courtyard or open shady place where the men are accustomed to congregate on any occasion of interest and to spend their leisure time after the work of the day is over. Here he would be met and welcomed by the head-man of the place,

while his helpers unpacked their medical equipment. Soon a crowd of village folk would collect, bringing their sick for treatment, and encouraged thereto by the graphic accounts of some former patient or acquaintance of wonderful cures wrought in the Bannu hospital by this same 'Padri-doctor.' Then would follow some busy hours of medical work; and when this was over and the visitors had partaken of the hospitality of the village head-man, there would be an evening spent in the Hujra, where, surrounded by an entirely friendly crowd of villagers, he would discourse of the love of God shown in Christ and tell the stories of the Gospel. Sometimes there would be active opposition from the local Mohammedan mullah, but more often the latter would come to the Hujra, accompanied by his *talibs* or students, and, Koran in hand, would open a religious discussion in full expectation of effecting the discomfiture of the infidel *hakim*. Controversy with a mullah is not usually very profitable, and Pennell did not encourage it, but with advancing experience, coupled with a good working knowledge of Arabic and the Koran, he became able to hold his own when it was forced upon him.

Occasionally he would receive an urgent message from a border *malik* or chieftain summoning him to come and treat some case of critical illness or injury. He would hasten away, accompanied by the messengers who, armed with rifles, were at once guides and escort. Thus he would find himself at

times in strange surroundings and amongst wild hill-folk in whose hands the life of any other European would have been worth not a moment's purchase. But his was sacred, and he never had reason to regret his invariable practice of going unarmed on all occasions.

An interesting experience of this nature occurred during the early years of Pennell's work, when he received a summons from a noted outlaw-bandit named Sarwar Khan, who, under the nickname of Chakkai, was famous from Peshawar to Bannu, both for the number of his murders and the daring with which he defied all efforts to capture him. After a rough and difficult mountain journey Pennell found himself at a fortified village in a strong and inaccessible situation, peopled for the most part by adherents of Sarwar Khan, outlaws like their leader. After treating several sick folk in their homes he was told that his host wished to hear what he had to say about the 'Injil' (Gospel), and that he had called his mullah in order that there might be a discussion. Pennell had an excellent opportunity of stating the case for Christianity before Chakkai and his lawless friends, any one of whom, at a word from their leader, would have been ready to earn Paradise by sending a bullet through the preacher.

Perhaps never were Pennell's power of adaptability and his constant desire to break through all barriers which separate East from West more clearly shown than during a tour through India,

which he undertook in the winter of 1903-4 in the garb of a religious mendicant or sadhu. With one Indian companion, both of them dressed in the ochre-coloured costume characteristic of fakirs and sadhus all over India, and provided with bicycles, they travelled through the Punjab and as far as to Allahabad, thence to Bombay, returning by sea to Karachi, and this without taking any money or supplies for their journey. They depended upon the charity of those whom they encountered, whether Christian, Mohammedan, Hindu, or Sikh; travelled by road except when the generosity of others enabled them to go by rail or water, and not seldom had to go hungry or be content to wait upon the banks of a river, when help was not quickly forthcoming. During this tour, Pennell learned many useful lessons as to the customs and tastes of the people, and confirmed many of the opinions which he had formed early in his missionary life as to the principles and practice which hold out most promise of success in the effort to influence India for Christ.

In 1895, the first branch dispensary in connexion with the Bannu Medical Mission was opened at a small town called Sheikh Mahmoud, near Isa Khel, on the banks of the Indus. Almost from the first this was placed in the charge of a young medical assistant, the son of a landowner belonging to the same place, who had become a Christian many years previously. Fazl Khan has remained in charge of this dispensary up to the

present, and is now honoured by all the countryside, both on account of his sterling character and of his skill as a doctor.

The popularity of the Bannu hospital steadily increased, and with it the fame of the surgeon—especially for cases of blindness from cataract and for those of injury from bullet-wounds and sword-cuts, so common on the Frontier. For many years the yearly number of cases of cataract operated on at the Bannu mission hospital exceeded those dealt with at any other Frontier hospital; while the total number of 'selected major operations' at Bannu headed the list for all hospitals in the North-West Frontier Province, as given in the annual Government reports.

Pennell was a rapid and skilful operator, and gained a reputation as a surgeon amongst Europeans as well as Indians throughout the Province. In 1895, the number of in-patients was 432, and over 38,000 visits were paid by out-patients. In 1902, a new in-patient block was opened, containing wards for surgical and ophthalmic cases, thus raising the accommodation from thirty to fifty beds. By 1907 the number of in-patients had risen to 1,250, and that of out-patients' visits to over 70,000; in 1911, the latter total reached 90,000. This increase coincided with a remarkable expansion of the area from which patients were drawn, thus showing how the influence of the work was spreading.

During these years of gradual consolidation and extension of the work, Mrs. Pennell remained

at Bannu, doing all in her power to second her son's efforts and to promote the spiritual and moral well-being of the little Christian colony. Nothing was more beautiful in Pennell's character than the gentle deference with which he always treated his mother ; as in the years of preparation, so also in active work, the two were constant companions, and the superintending missionary would uphold his mother's authority even where, in matters in which no important principle was involved, her judgment did not entirely coincide with his own.

Pennell's work amongst the Frontier tribesmen was far too important in its effects not to attract the notice of the Government authorities. He soon became personally known to the political officers responsible for the administration of the district. The freedom and courage of his itinerations in the border hills at first excited their suspicions, and at one time some efforts were even made to limit him. But he soon gained their confidence and, later on, their very cordial esteem. The political value of his work as a pacifying agency was recognized as well as the beneficent nature of all that was done at the hospital and dispensaries, and in 1903 he was awarded the silver 'Kaisar-i-Hind' medal, 'for public service in India,' as a mark of appreciation of what he had done. Political considerations, however, still obliged him to restrict his trans-Frontier itinerations to places within a short distance of the border, and his constant desire to visit Afghanistan and work in the closed land was never fulfilled.

CHAPTER V

DURING the first fifteen years of his service, Pennell never visited England. He himself would have been glad to have taken furlough at home, but his mother was resolute in her determination not to return, and he did not feel able to leave her and go alone.

It was not until April 1908, that he at last consented to come home on short furlough; and eagerly he looked forward to the opportunity of meeting old friends and getting into touch once more with religious and professional life in England. It was for change rather than for rest that he came. He was the principal speaker at the annual C.M.S. Medical Mission meeting at the Queen's Hall in May, and was much in request for other missionary meetings during the summer; while much of his leisure time was occupied in the preparation of his book of personal reminiscences, *Among the Wild Tribes of the Afghan Frontier*—reference to which has already been made.

The holiday time did not pass without sorrow for Dr. Pennell. The work at Bannu had been left under the charge of Dr. S. P. Barton, who for some three years had been a devoted colleague and had

gained golden opinions from all by his work both in hospital and school. Before May was over the news came of the death from cholera of Barton's young wife, only six weeks after their marriage, and of his own desperate illness. The following month was to bring a yet more personal trial, for Mrs. Pennell, who had remained at Bannu, seemingly in good health, died after a few days' illness. It was sad indeed that this devoted servant of Christ should have been deprived in her last hours of the loving ministrations of the son who had for so many years been her inseparable companion as well as colleague. Dr. Pennell returned to India at the end of September, receiving, however, before he sailed the news of the death under very sad circumstances of Dr. Barton, who had never recovered from the shock of his bereavement and serious illness in the spring.

Shortly after his return, Dr. Pennell married Miss Alice M. Sorabji, B.Sc. (Bombay), M.B., B.Sc. (London), a member of a well-known Poona family and herself an experienced lady doctor. The work at Bannu now went forward with more energy than ever, Mrs. Pennell entering vigorously into the varied activities of the Mission and undertaking herself the zenana department in the hospital, attracting thereby a rapidly increasing attendance of women patients from far and near. During this winter two interesting visits were paid by Dr. and Mrs. Pennell to the little border outpost of Thal, at which, because of its important position close to the Frontier and commanding the extensive caravan traffic through the Kurram Valley, he had long

wished to establish a branch dispensary. The little hospital was duly built, on a site given by the people of the place, and was opened for regular medical mission work in April 1909.

The following winter opened with anxieties, for both Dr. Pennell and Miss Fagg, the nursing sister to the hospital, were seriously ill with enteric fever. Dr. Pennell's life was for some days in the greatest danger, and his Hindu and Mohammedan friends showed their affection for him by offering prayers for his recovery in temples and mosques. His life was spared, and he was ordered home to recuperate. Returning in the early autumn of 1910 Dr. and Mrs. Pennell, now with two medical colleagues, Dr. W. H. Barnett, who had joined the Mission in 1908, and Dr. A. C. J. Elwin, and the nursing sister above mentioned, had a strenuous and encouraging year of work. A new operating-room was built in memory of Dr. Barton, and preparations were set on foot for the building of a women's hospital, separated from, though in close connexion with, the main institution. This last was a direct result of the development of the zenana side of the work owing to Mrs. Pennell's efforts. Government showed its further recognition of Dr. Pennell's work by granting him the 'Kaisar-i-Hind' medal of the first class (gold).

The winter of 1911-12 was a busy and a happy one. Work was interrupted for a time in December while Dr. Pennell and his wife attended the Imperial Durbar at Delhi. On the way down they halted at Amritsar, where Pennell met with three fellow-

workers, Dr. Arthur Neve of Kashmir (on his way back after furlough), Dr. A. H. Browne of Amritsar, and the writer, in an important sub-committee called to discuss the very seriously undermanned condition of the Punjab and Frontier medical missions, and to decide how the work could be carried on in view of the approaching departure of several medical missionaries, either on furlough or on health grounds. With much regret it was decided that Bannu must spare one of its three doctors for at least some months, in order to help in the central Punjab. Dr. Pennell cheerfully acquiesced, although it meant much additional work to himself. Little did any of us think that within a few months the problem of staffing our hospitals would be made immeasurably more difficult of solution by the sudden removal of the two who remained at Bannu. At the great Durbar Dr. Pennell and the writer sat together, and shared the impressions made by that most wonderful spectacle and by the dramatic announcement by the King-Emperor which astonished every one at its close. The return journey was made by motor, and Dr. Pennell did not again leave the Frontier.

January 1912 brought with it a great joy—the consecration by the Bishop of Lahore of the little church at Karak, where Dr. Pennell's beloved son in the faith, Jahan Khan, had been patiently labouring for so many years. Never had the prospects of the work at and around Bannu seemed more encouraging than in the spring of 1912, as it brought with it the annual influx of trans-Frontier patients.

CHAPTER VI

FOR nearly twenty years the Bannu Medical Mission had been gradually increasing in the extent of its influence, and branching out in new directions of usefulness. This happy work was now to be interrupted by a tragedy as sudden as it was—to our human intelligence—disastrous. For all the Frontier medical missions the spring is the busiest season in the year ; villagers from the district around choose the weeks before the ripening harvest claims their time, to come to hospital for treatment for themselves or to bring their sick relatives, whilst trans-Frontier Afghans are anxious to get the long journey over before the extreme heat renders travel almost impossible. For the numerous cases requiring surgical treatment, in which there is no actual urgency, the spring is the time for choice.

In the middle of March the hospital with its ninety beds was crowded to overflowing with no less than 150 patients, beds being hired and placed in verandas to accommodate those for whom there was no room in the wards. All the branches of the

work were in the full rush of activity, and Dr. and Mrs. Pennell were looking forward to the visit of the Viceroy, who had consented to lay the foundation stone of the new women's hospital which had been so long and sorely needed and for the erection of which sanction had just arrived from the Home Committee.

With tragic suddenness the blow fell. There is no need to go into great detail as to what happened; in fact on some points there is uncertainty which will probably never be wholly cleared up. A very septic case had died in hospital soon after admission, and in order to avoid the risk—which with a crowded hospital and an over-pressed staff might not be slight—of another patient occupying the infected bedstead, Dr. Barnett himself removed the soiled string network which could be destroyed and easily renewed. In so doing he seems to have scratched his hand, and serious symptoms of septic poisoning rapidly ensued. Everything that Dr. Pennell's skill could suggest was done for his colleague, but in some detail of the treatment he must have himself become infected, for on the evening of Tuesday, March 19, when Barnett's case became hopeless, Pennell was suddenly attacked with similar symptoms, and within a few hours was desperately ill. Two days later the younger patient passed away, and his chief was hanging between life and death. At times it seemed as though his splendid constitution would prevail, the more so since the devoted efforts of the two army surgeons who were attending him were splendidly seconded

by his own strong desire to recover. He endured with unmurmuring patience his sufferings, which were severe, and was able in the midst of them to give detailed directions regarding the work to the two fellow-workers from the Peshawar Medical Mission who had hastened to Bannu. He was nursed with skilled and devoted care by Mrs. Pennell, helped by Miss Fagg, the nursing sister, but all was of no avail. During Friday Pennell's pulse began to fail and his condition became hopeless. He lingered on through the night, was quite conscious near the end and repeated the Twenty-third Psalm. Early in the morning of Saturday, March 23, just as the *réveillé* was sounding from the regimental lines, he ceased to breath. For him it was an awakening to a fuller life and a higher service.

Now, indeed, was the time when the affection which Pennell had inspired amongst all classes of the community, was clearly shown. It was not so much a demonstration of sympathy as a spontaneous outburst of genuine grief on the part of a multitude of people, amongst whom almost every individual had some personal reason to be grateful to their departed friend. The bungalow was besieged all day by a crowd of people longing for a last sight of the one whom they had loved so well; and when the afternoon came and the opportunity was given, there were hundreds of mourners who filed past the bed upon which the silent form was laid.

With a true instinct which could not fail in its special appeal to them, the body was clothed

in the familiar Afghan dress, signifying that as in life so in death he was as one of themselves. For them he had lived, for them now in the most literal sense he had given his life. Amongst many who, as they gazed upon his features for the last time, broke down with uncontrolled emotion, were not only impressionable students, but hardened Waziri tribesmen, warriors who would have counted it as womanish to weep on any ordinary occasion of sorrow or bereavement.

The funeral took place in the evening of the same day, in the pretty little cemetery quite near to the mission bungalow. By this time the news had spread to the nearer villages, and a great concourse of people had collected and lined the road or stood in silent grief in the precincts of the cemetery. The coffin was borne on the shoulders of willing helpers from the mission house to the grave, the bearers being for the most part past and present Indian students, while the General commanding the Bannu district and fellow-missionaries of the C.M.S. also took their turn.

Space forbids the quotation of even a selection of the very numerous resolutions of sympathy which were forwarded from various bodies, both Indian and European, or of the press notices which appeared in most of the leading papers in England as well as in India. The following tribute from the Bishop of Lahore expresses, however, thoughts that were uppermost in the hearts of most of those who knew and honoured Pennell as a fellow-worker :—

It really has been a quite magnificent life in its eagerness, its great professional ability, its utter fearlessness of

danger of whatever kind, its intense simplicity and humility, its unfailing kindness and sympathy, and, above all, in its burning devotion to the cause of the Master and Saviour Whom he loved so dearly. With such characteristics as these it is not surprising that he exerted so great an influence over the tribesmen of the dangerous border near to which he lived and worked, for they too, with all their faults, are essentially *men*, and know a real man when they see one as well as anybody. Government officials have again and again testified to the extreme value, from the point of view of English rule as well as of civilization and order in the widest aspects, of the influence he wielded all along the border ; and we know that in this, as well as in other and deeper respects, his work will not pass away, but remains amongst the permanent factors which are building up the new life in this land, and bringing nearer the day of the open establishment of the Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. So, in spite of all the sense of grief and loss, our uppermost feeling must be one of deepest thankfulness to God Who enabled His servant to live such a splendid life for our example and stimulus, and of sincerest longing that we may prove not all unworthy of so great a heritage.*

A short extract may also be given from a letter from the Chief Commissioner of the North-West Frontier Province :—

His influence was always used for good and in support of the administration, and as far as I know his relations with successive Deputy Commissioners of Bannu were uniformly excellent. . . . His death is a very serious loss to the Province, and his name will live in Bannu as long as that of Edwardes.

The blow to the work of the Bannu Mission seemed indeed a crushing one, and in the already under-staffed conditions of the Frontier medical missions the problem of providing for its continuance was full of perplexity. But on the day after the funeral the missionaries who had arrived to take temporary

* *The Lahore Church Monthly*, April 1912.

charge of hospital and school preached to a large gathering of people in the Bannu bazaar, telling them that though the one whom they knew and loved was with them no more, yet that God still lived, and that His work would go steadily forward. God's work at Bannu *is* going steadily forward, although this has only been possible—owing to the absence of any reserve of workers—at the expense of other medical missions on the Frontier.

The sacrifice of a life such as Pennell's is a call to all who possess or could obtain the requisite medical training to come forward and follow him in being Empire builders for the King of kings. The opportunities of usefulness open to a young medical man are many and varied, but for the medical missionary there is the continual joy of combining the service of God with the service of man and thus of attaining the highest real blessing and happiness. The writer would most earnestly beg any medical students or graduates, to whom the divine in their profession makes some appeal, not to decide upon their future career without at least giving careful consideration to the claims which missionary service might have upon them. The need for trained nurses in mission hospitals is at least as great as that of doctors, and their opportunities for usefulness no less.

Nor does this call to help in carrying forward the work of medical missions come alone to those who can themselves go abroad. The work in foreign lands depends upon the earnest and devoted co-operation of an army of helpers at home, and it is

the desire of every medical missionary that the bonds of practical interest and sympathy which unite the many at home with the few at the front may become closer and closer and may issue in constant and definite prayer.

As we allow our thoughts to rest once more upon the life of this true-hearted servant of God, the one attribute which comes prominently into our minds is that of steadfastness. We cannot but be struck by the steady and gradual development of the missionary spirit and ideal, from early childhood, through the years of preparation, and on to full maturity and final fruition. Pennell was indeed 'one who never turned his back, but marched breast forward.' With reference to the work of Frontier evangelization, he could have said with St. Paul: 'This one thing I do.' Many missionaries with his intellectual powers, whilst faithfully discharging their special duties, would have sought relaxation during leisure hours in prosecuting social or scientific investigations and have perhaps laid the world under a debt of gratitude by doing so. For Pennell, however, life was too short for anything that did not bear directly upon the one great object which he had set before himself, nor was any other interest ever suffered for a moment to depose from its place in his heart his strong desire for the spread of Christ's Kingdom upon earth. God grant to all of us a similar steadfastness in doing His will.

PART II *

BY MAJOR-GENERAL G. K. SCOTT-MONCRIEFF,
C.B., C.I.E.

IN *The Times* of March 25, 1912, there appeared in the obituary column a brief but appreciative account of the work of Dr. Theodore Leighton Pennell, a medical missionary at Bannu, N.-W. Frontier of India, calling special attention to his brilliant career as a medical student some twenty years ago, and to the ascendancy he had gained by his skill in his profession among the people of India.

It is probable that among the readers of *The Times* not one in a hundred had ever heard of him before, and it may, therefore, be permitted for one who was in no way connected with him as a missionary, but who, as a Frontier official, met him frequently and knew the country and the people among whom he laboured, to add a tribute of respect to the memory of perhaps the most remarkable Englishman who ever came into touch with the fierce and fanatical tribes of the Afghan border.

* Reprinted from *Blackwood's Magazine* for July 1912, by kind permission of the Author and Proprietor.

This is a strong statement, for there have been many Englishmen in that adventurous land who have left their mark. Herbert Edwardes, of Multan fame, and John Nicholson, hero of Delhi, are still remembered and honoured by the Border tribesmen. Yet it may be remembered that these great men owed some of their influence to the fact that they were the accredited agents of the great British Government, and, although it does not detract in any way from the splendid work they did, it is certain that this fact gave them an initial force which they would be the first to acknowledge. Pennell stood alone. He came among them as a stranger, he was representative of a creed which is uncompromisingly hostile to much of their cherished customs, and he made no secret of the fact. Yet, when the end came, it was probably true (as the principal Anglo-Indian newspaper of the Punjab wrote) that in many a Pathan homestead the evening meal would be untouched when it was heard that the famous Doctor Sahib at Bannu was no more. From the hills and valleys, far and near, multitudes came to gaze for the last time on the features of their friend, as he slept his last sleep, lying in his coffin, dressed in the Afghan dress, as they had known him. Many of the wild hillmen sobbed and lamented that they would never see him again, and when his mortal remains were carried to the grave, borne by British officers—the General commanding the troops among them—alternately with the boys from Pennell's school, the route was lined with crowds of Pathan warriors, their mutual feuds and quarrels forgotten,

that they might render a tribute of honour to the Englishman who had trusted them and given them freely of his best.

Who was this man, and what sort of people were they? To answer this question it is necessary to say something about Bannu and its surrounding people.

Nowadays India is, thanks to modern facilities of travel, so much a winter resort for people at home who have leisure and means to escape a British climate, that it is almost an insult to describe any special place of interest in that country. Bannu, however, is outside the beaten track. The cold-weather tourist does not find his way there, for it is very remote. To Peshawar, 120 miles farther north, tourists come freely. They admire the beauty of its gardens, the picturesque costume of its people, perhaps they make an expedition, with proper escort, up the Khyber, and are impressed by the stern wildness of the mountains and the practical need for defences as evinced by the forts and block-houses at Ali Musjid and Jamrud. They see a little of Frontier life, so different in every respect from the ordinary scenes of India, and possibly they realize that there at least war is never far off, and that the rule of the Emperor is necessarily supported by the sword. But not one visitor in a thousand goes southward to the other outposts of British India. If they did, they would find at Bannu another beautiful valley, another girdle of stony but wildly picturesque mountains, fresh tribes, men armed to the teeth, of the same intractable and

indomitable nature as the Afridis and the Mohmands.

One who knew Bannu well* has thus described it : ' In spring it is a vegetable emerald, and in winter its many-coloured harvests look as if Ceres had stumbled against the great Salt Range (to the north and east) and spilt half her cornucopia in this favoured vale. Most of the fruits of Kabul are found wild, and culture would bring them to perfection. As it is, the limes, the mulberries, and melons are delicious. Roses, too, without which Englishmen have learnt from the East to think no scenery complete, abound in the upper part at the close of spring. Altogether Nature has so smiled on Bannu that the stranger thinks it a paradise.'

The administrative district of Bannu lies between the rocky hills of Kohat (*Koh* is the Persian for mountain, and the word Kohat describes the country, which is a tangled mass of ravines and hills) and the plains of Dera Ismail Khan, which stretch between the Indus and the Suleiman Range. Bannu district is, roughly, shaped like a triangle, the apex of which points to the west, the base being along the Indus. At the apex enters the Kurram River, which, rising in the Afghan Mountains south of Kabul and then traversing the Kurram Valley, touches our (former) outpost at Thal, in the Kohat district, and then plunges into a wild mountainous region for twenty miles, emerging again at Bannu, to fertilize with its waters the fruitful valley, before

* Sir H. Edwardes, in *A Year on the Punjab Frontier*, published in 1850.

finally joining the main stream of the Indus. Tributaries from the mountains join the Kurram River from both sides, and each in turn helps to contribute to the possibilities of irrigation and the operations of the husbandman. Evidently from ancient times the valley was known for its fertility, for an ancient mound called Accra has yielded many coins of Græco-Bactrian origin, precious stones, and domestic utensils, telling of the days when Alexander the Great colonized this part of the world with those who brought with them Western art.

As regards the people, Sir H. Edwardes writes : 'The Bannuchis are bad specimens of Afghans. Could worse be said of any human race ? They have all the vices of the Pathans rankly luxuriant, the virtues stunted. The introduction of Indian cultivators from the Punjab, and the settlement of numerous low Hindus in the valley, have contributed by intermarrying, slave-dealing, and vice, to complete the mongrel character of the Bannu people.'

So much for the inhabitants of the valley. The mountains both to the north-west and south-west of the triangle are inhabited mainly by the great clan of Waziris, divided into two main sections, the Darwesh Khels to the north and the Mahsuds to the south, these again subdivided into numerous septs, all of common origin and usually bitterly hostile to each other. There is nothing mongrel about *their* character or origin. They are frankly and typically robbers—brave, hardy, resolute men, but cruel, merciless and savage.

I think it was Mr. Archibald Forbes, the eminent war correspondent, who said that if men were a little lower than the angels, the lowest and farthest place from angelic status would be taken by the Pathans. This may be a little hard on the race, who probably are much the same as highland robbers in most parts of the world, especially in countries where the creed of the warrior gives a certain sanction to highway robbery; but in any case most Pathans would agree that of all the tribes or sections of their countrymen, the lowest place, in respect of sheer devilry, would be taken by the Waziris in general, and the Mahsuds in particular.

Such was the place and such were the people among whom Theodore Pennell worked, and on whom his personality exercised such a fascination. He, however, was not the first Englishman to influence these people, and before dwelling more particularly on him it is necessary to say something about others.

It was in 1847 that an Englishman first entered on the scene. The first Sikh War had ended in the British Government taking over the charge of the Sikh kingdom of the Punjab, administering it in the name of the infant Maharajah Dhuleep Singh, and in place of the corrupt factions that had intrigued and quarrelled at Lahore. The English Resident at Lahore was the great Sir Henry Lawrence, and among the brilliant band of active, resolute men that formed his staff was a young subaltern of infantry named Herbert Edwardes. Lawrence

had already marked the character and capacity of his young staff-officer. And so, when the question of the long-standing arrears of revenue owed by the Bannu subjects of the Sikhs came to be considered, he selected Edwardes to go to the valley and there make a financial settlement, amicably if possible—a fairly formidable task for a British subaltern, or indeed for anyone, considering that the tribesmen had for twenty-five years successfully defied Runjeet Singh, 'The Lion of the Punjab,' as he was called.

Edwardes had with him 500 men and two troops of horse artillery. With this little force, and practically without firing a shot, he not only induced the people to pay their tribute, but succeeded in making them raze to the ground their fortified posts, of which there were four hundred in the valley, and he got them to unite together in building a large fort at a commanding position, close to the place where the Kurram River debouches, and where, therefore, the head works of irrigation can be controlled. This fort still remains, it is the nucleus of the modern cantonment of Bannu (long called Edwardesabad), and it commands the road which leads from the valley to the Tochi Pass, a great trade route into the heart of Afghanistan.

How Edwardes accomplished this marvellous task in a year; how he won this bloodless victory by personal influence alone; how he was suddenly called thence by an urgent message from the wounded Vans Agnew at Multan; how he raised an army of mountaineers and, marching in the hottest of weather,

proceeded at once to Multan, and, though too late to save Vans Agnew, defeated the Sikh host—is related in his book, *A Year on the Punjab Frontier*. It is foreign to our present purpose to do more here than merely allude to it, showing as it does the power of a high-souled Englishman to rule even the wild tribesmen of the Afghan border. His was somewhat of the same fearless character that afterwards was the secret of Pennell's influence.

After Edwardes came John Nicholson, who ruled with justice, swift severity, tremendous energy. Old greybeards to-day point with admiration to the tree under which he sat and administered righteous rule without partiality, favour, or affection. They tell how 'his horse was everywhere.' They never knew when he was coming or where he was going; but they did know that when he came the poor rejoiced and the guilty suffered.

It might be thought that, however right and expedient it might be to introduce law and order among a fierce and fanatical race of Moslems, yet the time could not come for many years when it would be safe to introduce the teaching of Christianity. Such, indeed, was the view of some of the earlier British rulers on the Frontier, as it has been in our own day in the Sudan—at all events, until quite recently. Such, however, was not the view of Sir H. Edwardes. At a meeting held at Peshawar in 1853, he—being then Commissioner of the District—not only encouraged the idea, but expressed himself on the subject in wise and eloquent terms, commanding the establishment of a Mission there

independent of Government aid, but recognized and protected by the State as impartially as if it were a Hindu or Mohammedan establishment. To quote all he said would be impossible, but one paragraph alone may be taken as the keynote of the rest : ‘ Sad instances of fanaticism have occurred under our eyes, and it might be feared, perhaps, in human judgment, that greater opposition would meet us here than elsewhere. But I do not anticipate it. The gospel of peace will bear its own fruit and justify its name. Experience, too, teaches us not to fear.’

History has shown that in taking this step Edwardes was not alienating the respect of the Pathans. A few years after these words were spoken the Indian Mutiny broke out. The Punjab saved India. Peshawar was the key to the Punjab. Edwardes at Peshawar held N.-W. India for the Empire, and the Pathans were true to him.

So Christian Missions were established on the Frontier. Gradually it has come to be recognized that healing of the body is the surest way to win the trust of the Pathan, and a chain of medical missions has been established all along the Afghan frontier. Bannu was one of the last so to be established, and it was to Pennell that the task was confided.

There had been clerical missionaries there some years before. I did not know any of these personally. I believe they did good work in connexion with translation ; but this work did not interest the Pathan, who, as far as preaching was concerned

had plenty from his own mullahs, and was in no mood to have his cherished ideas disputed. So, when Pennell began to preach in the Bannu bazaar he soon found this out, being hustled, kicked and buffeted in no gentle fashion. However, he came up smiling and went on with his work in the hospital, extracting bullets and sewing up sword-cuts with perfect friendliness.

Gradually the tribesmen on both sides of the border-line began to realize that there was among them a man of no ordinary skill, who, although he might have the most heterodox notions on the subject of religion, was at all events a most wonderful healer of disease. Moreover, he spoke their language admirably, wore the same dress as they did, and was always ready to go anywhere, even into the most dangerous places. This was evidently a person to be encouraged. What if the mullahs do rail against him? At all events he, too, is a 'man of the Book' and no idolater, and his medicines, whatever their taste may be, are more efficacious than the mullah's charms. So they made friends with Pennell and invited him to all sorts of queer places. After he had been at Bannu a few years he was invited to attend the chief of a tribe that had given the Government not long before much trouble. The healing art was successfully applied, and the chief became a firm friend of the doctor. Very shortly afterwards the whole Frontier, from the Malakand to the Tochi, was blazing with war. Punitive columns advanced, as we know, from every cantonment. Fierce

fighting was going on everywhere—mullahs preaching a *jehád* (holy war) in every direction. Scarcely any of the tribes remained quiet, but one whole section which did hold aloof was that with whose chief Pennell had made friends.

I met him at Bannu for the first time in 1901. It was a somewhat special occasion. The Mahsuds had been long filling the cup of their misdeeds to overflowing, and were therefore being subject to a blockade—a sort of Boycotting on a large scale, whereby the tribe was supposed to be prevented from holding any intercourse with its neighbours. It was not supposed to be a campaign—that is to say, it was not an officially declared war, there were no special troops mobilized nor staff appointed. But in other respects—i.e. in matters of bloodshed and destruction—it was war. One of my survey parties (I was head of the engineering branch) had been cut up almost to a man, and the bill of casualties otherwise amounted to a considerable figure. So to accelerate matters two mobile columns had been sent in to bring coercive measures to bear on the tribe: one from the south under the General commanding, the other from the north commanded by Colonel Tonnochy, of one of the Sikh regiments in the Frontier Force. Both had done their work successfully, and Colonel Tonnochy had been awarded a C.B.—somewhat to our surprise, for though he richly deserved it, few honours were being awarded for the operations. Bannu was the base of the operations of the north column, and on the return from this raid we were all gathered in

the Frontier Force mess for a special dinner to be given in honour of the newly appointed Chief Commissioner of the Province (Colonel Sir Harold Deane), who in former days had been in a Frontier cavalry regiment. Among the soldiers and political officers gathered in the ante-room before dinner there was one striking figure in ordinary evening dress, who was evidently not a military or civil officer—a tall, spare man, with a short beard and gold-rimmed spectacles, whom Colonel Tonnochy introduced to me as Dr. Pennell.

I sat beside him at dinner. He was, at first, shy, reserved, and even taciturn, until I began to speak about Pathans. Then he told me many interesting and humorous things. No doubt they were great rascals, but probably I had found that they had excellent points. The great pity about them was that they were so embroiled in blood-feuds that they were exterminating each other, killing off the best and bravest. Of course, with the Frontier so close on two sides (it is within three miles), murder could easily be committed in British territory and the culprit escape comfortably outside. The trans-border region was simply full of these outlaws, and it was impossible to ignore them, but it made matters exciting for their next-of-kin inside our territory. Would I come and see his hospital? The wards were generally full, and some of the patients came from long distances. And the school? Yes, there was a school. He had not intended to be a schoolmaster, but it was hopeless to do much with the old material. They

came to be treated in his hospital, and they were very good friends with him ; but they were not much influenced by his teaching, whereas the boys were different. They were such jolly boys, too, so plucky and manly. Yes, there were all sorts, Hindus and Sikhs, as well as Pathans. The mullahs did object a bit, but they had not stopped many coming. Yes, they learned the Bible and Christian hymns, and a few were Christians, but not very many.

So passed the evening pleasantly. We toasted the new Chief Commissioner, and Tonnochy, and Down, the Political Officer. Alas ! only a few weeks later Down was killed in action, fighting with Mahsuds ; and less than a year afterwards Tonnochy, too, was brought in to Bannu, mortally wounded, to be tended by Pennell with every care that surgery could devise, but he was beyond all human aid.

From him, however, I learned much about Pennell. He was working at Bannu entirely at his own expense. He was one of the most distinguished medical students of his year, a gold medallist of London University in science, in surgery, in medicine, and he had come to Bannu, accompanied by his mother, an old lady of great learning and character. He was her only child, and she had accompanied him to India when he first came out. Elderly English ladies in that country are 'like angel-visits, few and far between,' and the few that are in the country usually live in some pleasant hill-station. Mrs. Pennell, I believe, never left the Frontier once from the time she arrived

there with her son till her death, a period of some sixteen years. His attention and devotion to her was one of the many remarkable traits in his character.

The courage of the man, too, was beginning to attract attention in a country where physical bravery is no uncommon virtue. To give one instance, I was told that he had gone alone and unarmed into a mountain village at night to rescue one of his adherents. This lad had become a Christian, to the wrath of his relatives ; but as the man was of full age they could not legally remove him from the doctor's influence, though they tried 'peaceful persuasion' to the fullest extent in their power. Unsuccessful in this, they managed to force him one afternoon to come out with them, and hurried him off to their mountain home some miles away. The doctor came in late in the evening to find the lad had disappeared. Knowing that if he once allowed him to go, the result would be either death or recantation, the doctor started at once on his bicycle in the direction of the lad's home, in the hope that he might overtake the party, and, if possible, recall the young man. But night came on, and the doctor had to leave his bicycle and take to devious mountain tracks. Long after midnight he reached the village ; it was a hot, moonlight night, and he could see three sheeted forms asleep near one of the houses, in the open air. He gently wakened the centre sleeper, who turned out to be the lad he was seeking, and the two quietly returned to Bannu. But if he had awakened the wrong man, or if either of the others, who were

sleeping the sleep of the weary, had been disturbed, Pennell's life would not have been worth a minute's purchase, and he knew it.

I had often to go to Bannu after this, on duty, and I saw the doctor frequently. I accepted his invitation to see the hospital. One must not imagine a splendid palace, such as many of our European hospitals are, with spotless wards, polished floors, snowy sheets, and admirable nurses. The buildings were simply rows of plain-built mud-walled houses, with a veranda along one side, and flat roofs, the whole rather better than native dwellings, but with no greater degree of interior luxury than native string-beds and cotton quilts. On these were lying many poor people in various stages of disease, and from many places. There were Sikhs and Hindus, but the majority were Pathans. With one of the latter, who seemed convalescent and inclined to be conversational, I had some talk in Pushtu. After the usual compliments, I asked him where he came from. 'From Ghazni' (about 200 miles off).

'That is a long way. Was not the journey very trying ?'

'Certainly it was, but it was well worth it.'

'Would it not have been easier for you to go to Kabul ?'

'Yes, an easier journey ; but it would have been of little use. There is a *Farangi hakim* (European physician) in Kabul,* but he is busy, and it is not

* There has not been a European doctor in Kabul for many years past.

always possible to be attended by him. So the advice of my friends was to come here, and I did. Now I am well, the doctor here is kind and skilful.'

'I suppose you will tell that to your friends?'

'Oh yes, but they know it already; the doctor's fame is well known.'

Far into the interior of Afghanistan it had thus come to be known that at Bannu there was a *Farangi hakim*, who was not only a man of skill, but 'a man of the Book,' who healed men 'in the name of Allah, most merciful and compassionate' (words at the beginning of every Moslem book).

Pennell himself took these hill-men very much as he found them, and often humorous stories were told of the conversations they had together. One cannot doubt that, coming in contact with many wounded men in hospital, he must have been the recipient of some atrocious confidences, and some of the stories he told were flavoured with some grim jest. As a sample of these, he told how one day a man came with a gun-shot wound, which he was very anxious to get cured as soon as possible, so that he might settle accounts with the perpetrator, who was his own uncle. 'I suppose,' said the doctor, 'that we shall soon have the uncle here, then?' 'No fear,' was the reply; 'I am a better shot than he is!'

To try to convince such men as these of their moral obliquity seemed impossible, so although the doctor did his best not only to heal them, but also to show them the beauty of the Gospel, his chief

hope for the future and his great pleasure lay with the boys.

His school at first was a very small affair, but by the time I came into touch with him it had flourished so far that it was just being established on the public school boarding system, and a block of dormitories and class-rooms had then been completed. Close to this building was a fine swimming-tank, over which there was a big tree, on which were erected diving platforms at various heights. Every morning, even in the sharp cold winter, the boys all had to swim, the doctor himself often leading them ; and if any lad shirked it, he was thrown in, clothes and all. The elder boys had quite imbibed the spirit of public school *esprit de corps*, and were of the greatest value in enforcing a code of good form and honour. They all adored the doctor, and his greatest pleasure in life was in his association with them, playing football and cricket with the utmost keenness.

The school team soon won challenge prizes for the schools of the whole province, and the doctor one year took them a wonderful tour all over India, playing schools all over the country, as far south as Madras—an education in itself for the boys, who won not only a reputation as good players, but as well-behaved gentlemen. Never before had the people of India seen Afghans of this sort.

Then the indefatigable Pennell started a newspaper. I do not know in which of the many languages spoken in Bannu (there were at least four besides English) it was published, but it had apparently a

fair circulation, and may have reached some to whom the editor was otherwise a stranger.

He was, however, every man's friend in the district, and his fame went far beyond it. One winter he and one of his beloved boys made an extraordinary tour over a large part of Northern India, living entirely on the hospitality of the natives, and preaching and healing, like the early Apostles.

In 1908 he came home after sixteen years strenuous work. But he seems to have taken very little rest, for the greater part of his time was spent in going about England and advocating the cause of medical missions. I met him, for the last time, on one of these occasions, at the Queen's Hall in London. Two other men had spoken before him, one from the swamps of Bengal and the other from the ancient land of Mesopotamia, each telling pathetic tales of suffering humanity and inadequate resources to meet it. Then came Pennell. He strode to the front of the platform and made the hall ring with the Arabic 'Kalima' or Moslem creed, in perfect imitation of the sonorous mullahs in many a mountain mosque. I do not know what else he said, for the wild chant was like the 'call from the wild,' making one forget London with its tame civilization, and bringing back with ineffable force the free Frontier life with its danger and fascination.

I had left India, so did not see Pennell again. But I heard of him frequently. The Government had awarded to him the medal of the 'Kaisar-i-Hind'

—first the silver medal in 1903, and then in 1910 the gold medal. This medal is given, without reference to creed, sex or position, to those who have done most for the people of the country.

His work, too, extended in various directions. He opened first a dispensary, and subsequently a church, at a little out-of-the-way spot in the Salt Range, called Karak. Later on at Thal, farthest outpost within our border at the entrance to the Kurram Valley and some twenty miles across the mountains from Bannu, he opened another centre of work. He had married a lady who, herself a medical graduate, was thoroughly in sympathy with his aims.

His popularity, too, with the people grew with succeeding years. On one occasion when he was seriously ill, prayers for his recovery were offered alike in Hindu temples and Mohammedan mosques, a token of esteem which, as far as I know, he shared in India only with Queen Victoria and King Edward.

The end came suddenly. One of the patients in his hospital, who was in a filthy state, had left a string bedstead in a condition which necessitated the removal of most of its texture. Dr. Barnett, a young English assistant of Dr. Pennell, in cutting this away scratched his hand. Blood-poisoning intervened, and in spite of Dr. Pennell's skill the younger man passed away. The older doctor, too, must have unconsciously been affected, for he grew suddenly ill. All that medical skill could do was done, but symptoms developed with fatal rapidity, and the end came within a very few days.

Then the last scenes of all, amid the sorrow of the whole community.

His work, however, finished in one sense and well done, is in another sense only begun. It is not for me to speak of his work as a missionary—that must be left to those who are qualified to judge. But as an important part of our hold, as Englishmen, on the rule of the great Indian Empire depends on the character not only of the official class, but of all our countrymen, it may be said that Pennell accomplished a magnificent and what to some would seem utterly impossible task of overwhelming importance. He upheld the character of the ruling race for courage and impartiality, and yet he was able to win the hearts of a fierce and turbulent people by sympathy and unselfishness of the most sublime description. The value of such men in the pacification of the Indian Frontier is beyond all calculation.