

**A NARRATIVE OF THE FIRST INTRODUCTION
OF CHRISTIANITY AMONGST THE
BAROLONG TRIBE OF BECHUANAS,
SOUTH AFRICA: WITH A BRIEF SUMMARY
OF THE SUBSEQUENT HISTORY OF THE
WELEYAN MISSION TO THE SAME PEOPLE**

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A Narrative of the First Introduction of Christianity Amongst the Barolong Tribe of Bechuanas, South Africa: With a Brief Summary of the Subsequent History of the Weleyan Mission to the Same People by Samuel Broadbent

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SAMUEL BROADBENT

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WESLEYAN MISSION TO THE SAME PEOPLE.

BY THE
REV. SAMUEL BROADBENT.

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PREFACE.

THE following narrative has been written in compliance with the urgent request of many, whom the writer held in great respect, that he would give to the Christian public the benefit of his own personal recollections, and of those sources of information which he alone could command, concerning "the beginning of the Gospel" among the Bechuana Tribes.

His own share in this now flourishing Mission was full of suffering, which compelled him to leave the ground before the harvest began to be reaped from the precious seed, in the first sowing of which he had the honour of bearing a part.

The later part of this history is briefly given by gathering and connecting together the chief items of information, which have hitherto been scattered here and there in various publications, for the most part of the Wesleyan Missionary Society.

April, 1865.

ERRATA.

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FOUNDING

OF THE

BECHUANA MISSION.

CHAPTER I.

OCCUPIED in Missionary Labour in Namaqualand—Received Information from the Missionary Committee, London, to proceed to the Bechuana Country—Delayed by Drought in the Desert—Thunder-showers—Enter upon the Journey—Leave Reed Mount—Quaggas and Zebras in the Desert—Accident to the Wagon while descending a steep Hill—Joined by our Conductors—Bad Water—Awful Desert—Arrive on the third Day at Water and Grass—Kabbas—Arrive at the Orange River—Proceed eastward—Intense Heat—Cross to the North Side—Sudden Flood—Griqua,

AFTER having been occupied as a Wesleyan-Methodist Missionary at Cape Town, with the Rev. B. Shaw, I joined the Rev. E. Edwards in Little Namaqualand. In the midst of our work, among the Hottentots at Khamies Berg and Reed Fountain, I received instructions from the Missionary Committee, in London, to attempt the formation of a Mission station in the Bechuana country. Immediately, without conferring "with flesh and blood," I commenced preparation for the arduous journey, in which I was to be accompanied by my wife and child, and maid-servant.

We were told that, owing to long-continued drought, it would be impossible to cross the desert that lay between us and the Great River, until rain fell. We remained, therefore, at Reed Fountain nearly three months; where,

and at some adjacent places, I and my wife found work to do, among half-castes, Hottentots, and Bushmen, and were greatly encouraged with the success given by the Divine blessing to our efforts. Those among them who gave evidence of having received the grace of God in truth, were recommended to join the station at Khamies Berg, where they would have the means of grace, and be under pastoral care.

From that place, Mr. Edwards sent me word that thunder-showers had begun to fall in the desert to the north; and that a wagon had arrived from the Great River, and would in a short time return. On receiving this information, I rode over to Khamies Berg, and entered into an arrangement with the owners of the wagon, that they should convey me and my family to the Great River, and that one of them should drive our oxen to Griqua Town.

All things being ready, we departed from Reed Mount, amid the regrets and tears of the people; some of whom accompanied us a day's journey, and remained until we set forward on the following morning.

We travelled through a barren and desolate land, in which we saw no living creature beside our own party, except when the quagga or zebra passed; reminding us, in their lonely course, of some impressive imagery of the Hebrew prophets. (Jer. ii. 24, and Hos. viii. 9.)

On the third day we had to descend a steep ridge; the wagon bounding from rock to rock, sometimes down a step of between one and two feet deep. A long strap was tied to the top of the tilt, the other end of which I held in my hand, in order that when I saw the wagon sway, I might endeavour to prevent it upsetting. When descending one of these steps, the chain which locked the hind wheels broke, and I was drawn with my chest against the wheel so violently, as to give me much pain at the time, and leave mischief from which I suffered for years afterwards. When the accident happened, we were not far from the bottom of the slope; and, though the oxen were unable to check

its descent, the wagon with its passengers providentially escaped injury.

Whilst delayed a few days, repairing the damage our wagon had received, we were joined by the party who had come from the Great River and by a border farmer, or Boor, who, hearing of our expedition, availed himself of the opportunity of crossing the desert in our company. His errand was to barter with the people dwelling near the Great River.

January 1st, 1822, on the border of the desert, was one of the most uncomfortable days that I spent in Africa. The heat was almost past endurance, the wind blew in strong gusts, bringing suffocating clouds of dust from the sea of sand around us; even an ostrich that passed us, ran with open mouth, as if gasping for breath. As the sun declined, our oxen were yoked; and, about evening twilight, we arrived at a spring of water. Its taste and smell were very bad, and both men and cattle that drank of it suffered severely; the latter writhing in the yoke with pain.

We had two teams of oxen; and, about midnight, changed one for the other in the yoke, and again at the dawn of morning. We cast our eyes around upon "a waste howling wilderness," with not an object to relieve the gaze, except a fleet zebra which crossed our track, with head erect, nostrils distended, and seeming hardly to touch the ground as he sped along. Long before noon, the heat and lurid glare reflected from the sand became intolerable. At mid-day we came to a hollow where rain-water was expected to be found; but we were disappointed. The oxen lowed, the goats bleated, and the horses became piteously tame, following us as if imploring that we would quench their thirst. After two hours' rest, and having prepared a little coffee, with water we had taken in a barrel, we set forward. A second night was spent in wearisome journeying through sand. At intervals, the drivers of the loose cattle called out that a goat had fainted, and we stopped to take it on one of the wagons:

then, that such an ox would not travel any more! As light came the second morning, we gazed round upon the horizon, but nothing appeared except the same dismal waste. A low eminence is before us; our eyes are fixed upon it, hoping that when it is reached, some relief will be presented by a different view. We ascend: our prospect is indeed extended, but it has the same sickening aspect; sand, sand, and nothing besides!

When the third night came, we made slow progress, as our draught oxen were nearly exhausted. The coolness of the night refreshed them, and they began to draw heartily as if in hope; and indeed in the morning we found ourselves among low bushes and grass. The late rain had fallen here, and a fountain of water gushed from the mountain-side! O, it was delicious! It was as life from the dead. The cattle drank freely, and then browsed on the tufted grass which had sprung up since the rain.

The pain in my right side now became very acute, so that I could not lie upon it, nor find rest. The Boor who had joined our party, complained at the same time of distressing head-ache, and said that bleeding had relieved him on former occasions, and he had no doubt would again now. As I thought the same treatment would also be of service to me, we agreed to operate on each other. My medicine-chest supplied the lancets. We uncovered our arms, and I proceeded to bleed the farmer, who then performed the same kind office for me, and both were much relieved. I have little doubt, that if this bleeding could have been followed by suitable medicine, diet, and rest, I should have escaped the sufferings I had subsequently to endure. We rested nearly a week at this oasis to refresh ourselves and the cattle. We found that the rain-cloud had proceeded in a line stretching east and west, and had fallen upon a strip of land from two to three miles broad, which appeared as a beautiful green belt on the earth. How many miles it reached in length, from the shore of the Atlantic eastward, we had no means of ascertaining. We