

Ragland: Pioneer

by

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THOMAS GAJETAN RAGLAND, B.D.
 Fellow of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge,
 Missionary of the Church Missionary Society,
 South India

Born: April 26, 1815.
 Called to India: May 19, 1845.
 Sailed for India: November 20, 1845.
 Ordered Home: February 24, 1852.
 Second arrival in India: December 31, 1853.
 Left Madras for Camp: January 18, 1854.
 Entered into Life: October 22, 1858.

Note

Where written and why.—The first month of the Tamil year is called by the Tamils Mothermonth. But to the children of Dohnavur September is Mother-month, for then we go together to the forest.

Near the end of such a month when the tire of the year had worn off a little, I read from an old-faded forgotten book, Perowne's Memoir, and found it full of penetrating stuff and very kindling, and wished others could share it. Then, (perhaps it was the fellowship of the growing green things of the forest that caused it), the desire to re-create came upon me.

And the children helped in the work. They had looked forward to this time for many months, but they left me alone in a shady cave with the trees and the birds and the sound of a mountain stream, and tried not to interrupt.

Sources of information.—Dr. Stock's *History of the C.M.S.*, *Memoir of Henry Venn* by Knight, *Perowne's Memoir of Ragland* and the memories of those who knew him.

So far as we can discover, after searching all available records, Ragland was the first Englishman to camp among the people of

India as a missionary of Christ. Eighteen months after his departure the Breath blew across his field, and many were refreshed and renewed. But perhaps the deed of his life was the dropping of a new thought into the missionary mind, and wherever a white tent is pitched all over this Empire of India, and from it goes forth the Evangel of Peace, there you have Ragland's seed in fruit. His years in camp were few; but eternal values are not counted in terms of earth's coin, and in what splendid fields may he not be pioneering now?

Later Note

While this book is in the Press, the C.M.S. *Mass Movement Quarterly* for May, 1922, was sent to us, and it throws another ray back upon the story.

'Although these first missionaries of Travancore made some efforts to "ameliorate the condition" of the Outcastes, it was through a famous Tinnevely missionary, the Rev. T. G. Ragland, that the movement began. He was in Travancore in 1850 and was filled with compassion for the slaves, especially after seeing one of them unequally yoked with an ox pulling a plough. He infected with a like compassion an Indian clergyman who induced Outcastes to come and learn of the love of God in Christ' So the journey that led out into that first camp set loose other forces that operate mightily among us to this day. Verily, it is no vain and fruitless thing to be God's corn of wheat.

*Many crowd the Saviour's Kingdom,
Few receive His Cross,
Many seek His consolation,
Few will suffer loss
For the dear sake of the Master,
Counting all but dross.*

*Many sit at Jesus' table,
Few will fast with Him
When the sorrow-cup of anguish*

*Trembles to the brim.
Few watch with Him in the garden
Who have sung the hymn.*

*Many will confess His wisdom,
Few embrace His shame,
Many, should He smile upon them,
Will His praise proclaim;
Then, if for awhile He leave them,
They desert His Name.*

*But the souls who love Him truly
Whether for woe or bliss,
These will count their truest heart's blood
Not their own but His:
Saviour, Thou who thus hast loved me,
Give me love like this.*

Chapter 1: Thomas Gajetan Ragland

*'She took me like a child of suckling time.
And cradled me in roses.'*

NOT so was Ragland cradled. The first glimpse of him is of a tiny serious boy, delicate in feature and in colouring, bereft of both parents, dressed in deep mourning, kneeling like the little Samuel of nursery pictures on the floor of the Roman Catholic Church in Gibraltar, his piteous little hands, it was remembered afterwards, always most anxiously folded. The next is brighter. He was swept off to Lancashire, and there, ready created for him, the lonely child found one whom he calls his 'very dearest best earthly friend, both a mother and a sister'. She was a cousin, ordinarily speaking, but she was what he said, and she never failed him all the days of his life.

His parentage was interesting. It explained him, and he must have considerably astonished himself at times; for he was essentially English, calm, steadfast, shy; whence then those strange upshootings of swift flame within him? It was as if a young volcano had suddenly sprouted right in the orderly middle of a velvety English lawn. And the lawn alarmed and shocked did exactly as one might expect, hastened to cover the upstart thing with a tidy layer of turf.

Gajetan stood for Gajetani, his Italian grandmother's name. It was she who mixed lava in his cool English blood. He had a noble grandfather on the English side; a man who chose exile rather than stain his conscience; and the father was a soldier. There was nothing dull about the boy fashioned thus.

We may fly through the next years: school where he worked hard at classics, and for pastime poked into obscure corners of history, and worried through genealogies with amazing pertinacity till he knew the ins and outs of Europe with most un-boylike precision;

office, where his uncle meant him to reign in his stead; but as he had no heart for it, college, where he won the silver cup every year for four years, finally coming out Fourth Wrangler in the mathematical tripos, at that time the only tripos at Cambridge.

The day the letter of all letters was expected he shut himself up in his room, feeling like a fiddle tuned to snapping point. The post came. His family clamoured round his door and apparently called the good news through the key-hole. 'With some natural excitement', admits his grave biographer, Ragland emerged, asked for the letter, read it and then—shut his door again.

But that could not last long. His people had to be appeased, and for a very glad minute they jubilated together, and thanked the Giver of this good gift.

Some time between childhood and boyhood he had chosen whom he would serve. Frank as he was, with a frankness that sometimes astonishes (the Italian in him, perhaps), this one matter of his faith's beginning he kept hidden in a reticence no pleadings from even his mother-friend could penetrate. 'No, this cannot be,' he wrote, when she asked him to tell her of those thoughts and feelings. And another matter he held as a secret between him and his Lord. Of the love that might have been he never wrote or spoke, though it was known that his missionary call cut straight across that hope. For his generous soul, so joyfully opened to all who cared enough to enter, had its profound reserves.

*Whoso begins to think himself a citizen in the world and
not a foreigner, him God biddeth leaving his ordinary
dwelling to remove into a temporary lodging, in order
that, leaving these thoughts, he may learn to
acknowledge that he is only a stranger in this world and
not a citizen.*

—Old Jewish Writer

*Let us make earth a little less home-like and souls more
precious. Jesus is coming again, and so soon! Will He find
us really obeying His last command?*

—Hudson Taylor

*I said, I shall miss the light
And friends will miss me, they say.
He answered me, 'Choose to-night
If I am to miss you, or they?*

*I pleaded for time to be given.
He said, 'Is it hard to decide?
It will not seem hard in heaven
To have followed the steps of your Guide.'*

*Then into His hand went mine,
And into my heart came He,
And I walk in a light divine
The path I had feared to see.*

Chapter 2: Cambridge—Cabul

WHY are men in books and in most other places so exceedingly interesting, while the same ranged in rows in pews are just merely formidable? Ragland had known all along, of course, that ordination implied weekly sermons, but he does not seem to have realized what he was in for, and the shadow of this duty distressed his weeks. Shortly after being elected Fellow he was ordained and became curate of Barnwell, Cambridge, later of St. Paul's, New Town. So, in spite of what he called 'general emptiness, sermons had to be prepared, and Saturday evening would see him pacing up and down the grass plot in the college quadrangle in most visible trouble. Sometimes he worked on till three or four o'clock on Sunday morning, and when indignant nature got him at last to bed he would be up by seven and at it again.

For all his life he was possessed by a conscience with an uncomfortably high standard of duty. Such men, when they get out into a large room, are like John Gough, V.C., of whom it is written that duty, discipline, and the joy of life were the rules he walked by, 'and if you found yourself in his company you had perforce to walk with him keeping up with his stride as best you could.' But coop them up within narrow bounds and they become pincushions, and more pin than cushion.

These Saturday ruffles over the Sunday's sermon do not sound like the joy of life, but, for all that, it was joyful. He had any number of friends among the undergraduates. A Cambridge tradition tells how he challenged one of them to race him, and then, just as the other was winning, he scooted across the grass plot (sacred to Fellows) and won amid shouts of derisive laughter from the vanquished. The men loved him for the fun that was in him and the genuine generous character, and he loved them and delighted in their company. One of his best remembered ways was the ingenious use he made of the means that were now at his command to do all

manner of little kindnesses, extremely privately, sometimes quaintly, but always with the most unusual joy:

‘Oh, the gratification it is! If the covetous knew this, how it would save them the trouble of hoarding!’ Nothing could persuade him to hoard, and his gifts were generally given for the need of the day. ‘Money is like muck, no good unless it be spread,’ was distinctly his opinion, and he held to it with some tenacity. Years afterwards we find him, when (anonymously) he passed on to C.M.S. a legacy of £500, explaining clearly his one condition, it must be used for present need. He was in India then, and the present need was all about him; but during those Cambridge years he never even dreamed outside England. Life to him was a book-lined room full and running over with the blessings of tranquillity.

‘The whole world before Thee is as a little grain in the balance, yea as a drop of the morning dew that falleth down upon the earth.’ Look with God on the other side of this grain of dust, this globe of dew, and see the mightiest contrast imagination can conceive to that peaceful book-lined room.

See a defile, dark even in midday, five miles long, between tremendous mountains. Through its depths a river rushes. Frost holds the waters on higher levels. These flow too fiercely to be stayed, but the rocks are slippery with sheets of ice and snow lies everywhere.

Down in the gloom of that dismal gorge a host is toiling painfully, sixteen thousand men, women and children, English and Indian, in peril together.

A shot, another; shots from all sides; every crag a foe. Long guns, long Afghan knives, confused noise, garments rolled in blood. But why describe? There was no battle, only a slaughter. One man alone on a jaded horse reached the walls of Jellalabad. One, out of sixteen thousand. A few were in captivity, the rest were dead.

And in the secret cells of underground prisons, utterly lost to the knowledge of men, Englishmen were being slowly done to death,

some avowedly for Christ's sake, others 'just for the pride of the old countree.'

Why revive forgotten grief? And how will it sound at home?

*Massacre, torture, and black despair,
Reading it all in my easy chair.*

Will it be only that?

Writing on Asian soil, within sight of a temple tower that would shelter such deeds to-night, if he who now letteth were taken away, it does not feel remote.

But the tale is told because it belongs to the story. The month of Ragland's ordination saw these things happen. Christmas Eve, 1841, in Cambridge—holly, and mistletoe, and carols, universal kindness for the sake of the Babe of Bethlehem: that same Christmas Eve in Cabul—but the words have not been coined that can show it, and it opened on that dark defile among the mighty mountains.

Chapter 3: Shaken Out

SLOWLY across Ragland's first spring as a minister of Christ crept the long shadow, as the news slowly travelling home became known all over England. The May in the green hedges must have withered for him as that shadow spread and deepened. But it never came as an influence that bore a compelling word and he continued to walk up and down the college grass plot, laboriously concocting his poor little sermons as if battles and blood and tears and the immeasurable sins and woes of nations wrestling in the darkness were dreadful dreams—no more than that.

Small wonder, therefore, that those who looked with God upon the world, and heard voices in events that were dumb to others, could not be silent, but spoke, and so spoke that the pleasant men in their pleasant rooms dared not stay in them any longer, but rose and went forth with the Word of Life to the peoples of the East.

One such was Henry Venn, Hon. Secretary of the C.M.S. A page from Knight's memoirs is like a snap-shot photograph. One day a stranger called to see him, and as it happened, on the African mail-day when every moment was precious. The Secretary was busy with his despatches when the visitor was announced. He came to complain of the ministrations provided for passing tourists in a favourite health-resort, and to propose that a church should be built. 'How was this to be accomplished?' 'Nothing is simpler. Put the church into the hands of some well-known persons as trustees and the money will be easily raised.' But the visitor was not satisfied; he did not wish it to be a party matter. 'I have given you my advice,' was the reply. The other stammered and hesitated with all the marks of a weak man who had a weak cause. 'They wanted a man that didn't belong to a party—not a party man.' 'Besides,' he feebly added, 'the clergyman' (a German missionary) says, 'Let us bray'. It was too trivial, and the slur on a good man too unkind. Henry Venn grasped the arms of his chair, drew it close to the table,

shifted his letters to and fro, and, looking his interviewer straight in the face, said, 'I know, Sir, but of two parties in the world, Timists and Eternists. I am an Eternist.' The gentleman picked up his hat and left Mr. Venn to complete his despatches.

To Cambridge now came Henry Venn, the Eternist, and Ragland received him in his rooms and gathered a few men to listen to him, little knowing what would come of it.

For what came was a shaking of the soul such as he had never conceived could be. A power had him in its grasp and mightily it dealt with him. It shook him free from the silken threads of his very respectable life, it shook him out of Cambridge and, what was even more amazing to himself, it shook him out of all his small pet habits and desires, his very flesh had to rise and get out into a most uncomfortable world. He hated foreign travel. He was elected to travel with very few sitting down periods right on to the end. Verily, Venn was a waker of men.

Once before, like a wild bird flying unbidden through his quiet rooms, the thought the disturbing thought of the Christless peoples of the earth had come to him; but he had refused it, and the light within him departed.

Eight months had passed so. He was almost as many a man since then has been called, but deaf to the call which, once trifled with, rarely comes again. 'I was not willing then; I missed my chance; and now, when I would go, it is too late.' Who that knows anything of God's dealings with men but has had to meet and mourn with and try to comfort such, stricken with the sorrow of a great chance lost?

*Oh, there are heavenly heights to reach
In many a fearful place
Where the poor timid heir of God
Lies blindly on his face,
Lies languishing for light Divine
That he shall never see*

*Till he goes forward at Thy sign
And trusts himself to Thee.*

Ragland went forward at God's sign. He wrote to Henry Venn on June 2, 1845, definitely offering for work abroad. Seven months later he landed in India.

Madras received him with her usual welcome, a glory of white surf along a shore which seems endless. Through streets where his eager observant eyes saw many a forehead with Vishnu's sign or smeared with Siva's ashes, he passed to a house in the heart of the city from whose flat roof one might look down into the court-yard of a Hindu temple. And with a great quietness and earnestness almost awful, the new life began.

It was then early in 1846, three years after the close of the Afghan war, and he was thirty years old.

*You'll find
No purple fields of Arcady out there.*

—Noyes

Peace was His atmosphere.

—Henry Venn

Chapter 4: No Purple Fields

THE SHOCK: This is the short sharp name given by some of us to the first year abroad. There are places where it is not so. All skies have their starry patches. But many have felt it exactly that

Ragland had not fed before coming out on the type of missionary literature which paints the picture with the devil out of it, or if in it, elderly, tamed, almost a respectable devil. Such books had not been written then. But, being the man he was, he had gathered a series of impressions, and looked to find blessed ardours, a general beaming of heavenly rays more evident than at home and, as a matter of course, (and why not?) Pentecostal things happening constantly.

He found, as many another has since, a certain chasm between platform and floor. Set on the common sand of life the missionary glow is not always as luminous as one might expect. The only glow apparent after the first rosy days of rosy glasses is that proceeding from a very hot sun, and it leads straight, grace being in abeyance, to what is politely called nervous irritability, a sin without a halo; and then, if there was a particle of self-deception in the call, or mere skin-deep emotion in the circumstances attending it, with ruthless fingers the strong facts of life tear to shreds that poor little forlorn scrap, till Truth stands naked and shivers.

Ragland was a man of most tender and sensitive spirit. To such a one there is sure to be a time of inward trembling. What of oneself? It is so easy to settle down to less than the arduous, so easy to condone impatience and trifling lapses in love; easy too, to slip into a soft tolerance which does not see sin as such in those for whom one is responsible, but slides along comfortably for the sake of peace and avoids tackling it in right earnest. Above all it is terribly easy to get accustomed to the thought and the sight of people living without Christ: 'My principal grief was, and so it has continued to be, that I grieved so little,' he said before he had been long in India.

It is not difficult to trace the track of the shock through Ragland's truthful letters. His chief temptation leaned towards sarcasm and fretfulness, he says, but though nothing of either appears, there are little revealing words which show the inmost to one who knows it by experience: 'Has your heart been wounded, my brother; I mean since your arrival in India? Well, we must suffer; but He suffered and will comfort'

How well one who knows the place where that letter was written can picture him as he wrote. The house familiar afterwards as one of the battle houses of South India stands alone in its large compound, a roomy but strangely lonely-feeling house, with a bitterly hostile Hindu village on one side and an indifferent Christian community on the other. Near the gate is a sheet of water over which the sun sets in a double glory, but on the bank buried among palms is a wicked little demon-shrine whose night-noises keep the weary awake. To a happy heart all looks, or at any rate can be looked upon, happily; but to a wounded spirit there is a sigh in the wind in the palms, and sitting in that house one can be very sorrowful. But the hope then as now was the coming of our Lord. 'Unbelief says, "He delays, and will still delay; He must, things are not ripe enough." But He is the faithful and true witness. Oh, when He does come, do you not think we shall all cry, "How quickly, how quickly"? Meanwhile, then, let our loins be girded and our lamps burning, let us run and fight each day as if our last' And he signs himself, 'Your companion in tribulation (real, though unseen and sweetened) and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, to whom let every knee bow.'

Other letters touch on more outward matters, but always with the same sincerity. For Ragland, by force of his character and training, could not help being sincere; he clearly saw and clearly said what he saw. Wonderfully soon he pierces the appearance and gets at what is:

'The spiritual trial to be expected most is, I think, that arising from disappointed hopes of the success of our ministry.' So he writes to

R. L. Alnutt of Cambridge, who was thinking of coming out. 'Access to the heathen, too, is much more difficult than a person unacquainted with the country would suppose; and preaching to those who have just renounced heathenism is not so naturally or even spiritually interesting as romantic people before trial picture it to themselves.' Then he hopes he is not discouraging him but only driving him to his God for sure guidance. And he tells him something of the need, that need which can never be exaggerated. No fear there of an over-coloured canvas. And again, 'Were all Christ's dear servants only made willing to be as corn of wheat to fall into the ground and die, I should be content and thankful' And he writes of the temptation to be satisfied without getting into real touch with vital things: 'Without watchfulness on the missionary's part he will seldom come to close quarters with the great enemy in the souls of his people,' a word that cuts to the quick, so keen it is in its truth-telling. He speaks too of preparation, deprecating long absorption in the study of Indian philosophy for instance; for he longs to see the new missionary right among the people, 'while his feelings are fresh, before he has lost his first missionary aspirations, and begun to prefer European society and work, and to look wistfully towards home.'

And again in his sixth year, he writes, and the words are written in golden letters in the hearts of some of us who follow after:

'Of all qualifications for mission work, and every other, charity is the most excellent

Of all methods of attaining to a position of usefulness and honour, the only safe and sure one is to fit ourselves for it by purging our hearts from vain-glory, worldliness and selfishness.

Of all plans for ensuring success, the most certain is Christ's own becoming a corn of wheat, falling into the ground and dying.

May the Lord's presence go with you, wherever you go; and when you have done His work, may He give you rest'

Chapter 5: Signboards

‘WHAT is the first thing you read when you open a book?’

‘Oh, the conversations, of course.’

I listened to the question and answer with some regret, for Perowne does not lend himself to conversations. He deals chiefly in letters.

The first six months were spent in language study and in getting to know the people, an interesting and lovable people whose language commands the respect of students for its clever grammar system and vigorous colloquial strewn with wise sayings, shrewd proverbs and aphorisms, and morsels of thoughtful poetry packed into fewest words. Can any one know a people without a knowledge of their intimate talk? Tamil poetry, as a study, lies far ahead of the first few years; but the beautiful endless play of allusion contained in the lightest idiom is something that breaks upon one from the first, if indeed one lives on Tamil not English ground, and listens and loves enough to want to understand.

Ragland much wanted to understand, and soon he found that almost everything he saw, as well as all that he heard, was a door that opened into rooms that belonged to the soul of the land. One such room he early strove to enter, for its signboard hung conspicuous wherever he turned to look. The marks on the forehead of his pundit, what did they mean? The marks he saw were various.

Here is a man with a curved white line like a U painted between his eyes, and in the middle of the U a red dot, this U to represent the foot of Vishnu, and the red dot his wife Lakshmi. He tells you that he is a Vadagalai, a Northman, his title is lyengar, and he must never be confounded with a Tengalai, a South-man, whose title is Iyer, though both are Hindus. He accepts the Sanskrit Vedas, and views the human spirit’s dependence on the divine as a voluntary act on

its part. It clings of its own will as a young monkey clings to its mother.

Here is the Southman whose Vedas are in Tamil, and who paints a device signifying both of Vishnu's feet on his forehead, and draws the line down his nose, to show the throne in which the feet are set, while a red or yellow line enclosed shows Lakshmi. He declares that the human spirit is laid hold of by the divine, apart from its own volition, and his illustration is the cat seizing her kitten. Countless law-suits have been fought over the disputes which have arisen between these two sects of Hindus and, as it occurs to neither that possibly both are right, for truth does sometimes lie in both extremes, the controversy is likely to continue. The Northmen shave their Brahman widows and the Southmen sensibly refuse, so in walking down a Brahman street you can tell at a glance to which theological party the inhabitants belong. 'Mere duffers, most ignoramus,' as a Southman remarked the other day in a town near by, for he was a lately appointed Government official who found himself unhappily planted in a streetful of Northmen; and so it goes on.

Then, and he is also a Hindu, there is the man who uses neither of these signs, for he is a worshipper of Siva and smears ashes on his forehead, breast and arms, because Siva in a moment of fury burnt up the gods by a flash of wrath from his eye and rubbed their ashes over himself.

His religious tenets cannot be described in a line (nor indeed fairly can any other). All three may be good friends in spite of law-suits provoked by theological discussions, for, even in religious India, not theology but custom reigns supreme, and if a man keeps his caste rules he is acceptable to his brethren; unless some question rises that touches his dignity, such as who shall take precedence at a big temple *tamasha*, then the sparks fly, a suit is filed that proceeds from court to court, and supplies sweet food for the talk of the countryside for months and may be years. Of such curious clay are we made.

But long before Ragland had fathomed all this, before he had done more than catch a glimmer of the inward ways of the language and its people, he had to travel south to become acquainted with the missionaries there, and see their work; for the committee wanted to make him Secretary at Madras, and for that work such a knowledge was required. It was a loss to him for it handicapped him as we shall see in later years; but it was a gain to the mission at large and wherever he went he was loved; his charm is remembered to this day. 'I love the men' was his word concerning those whom afterwards he had to oppose. Only for a little though; he won them all in the end.

Chapter 6: On the Surface, and Under

THAT first journey, and who ever forgets his first? was by bullock-cart over the plains. Through country towns, with their huge temples walled like Jerichos, by famous cities, to this day strongholds of idolatry, and through hundreds of villages, strewn as it were anywhere on the wide flat spaces, he passed, and looked, and wondered. The life of the people lay round him here as it had lain for ages, simple to the innocent eye, to which all is as it shows itself, but a complex tangle to one who knows a little more.

He saw many a pretty picture, women at the well, children playing with pebbles on squares marked out in the dust, field labourers carrying their light ploughs over their shoulders, their oxen stalking on in front, setting the leisurely pace. And on countless verandahs opening to the streets he saw grave old men reading from narrow slips of palm leaf yellow with age, or meditating with that wonderful independence of circumstances seen to perfection in India.

He saw too something of the other side, sorrowful, sinful; but not much, he was too new; and as his ear was not open to the talk of the land he heard little of the word that filled the bazaars, a word spoken under-breath and passed from village to village with care—for it is unlucky even to speak of such things, talk of the great rounding up of the members of that most powerful of Indian secret societies, just accomplished, or almost accomplished. India must have breathed a great sigh of relief when the last Thug was caught.

Of this amazing society Ragland could not have been ignorant; for it had spread its invisible net from the Himalayas to the Cape, and like every other Englishman he must have marvelled as the facts emerged and showed it to be religious, root and branch. In the name of the goddess Kali, the sacred handkerchief was flung, and from his initiation as a novice, to the day when he strangled his last man, everything a Thug did was done with prayer, and offerings,

and regard to the omens. Hindu and Moslem, for once firmly united, participated in one festival, regarded their calling as a divine command, with, as its end, the prevention of the overpeopling of the earth, and for its reward the spoil of the victims. Religiously organized murder and robbery committed by means of peculiar treachery, for in that lay the glory of the game, strikes the Western mind as anomalous, to say the least of it. But for good or ill such is the mentality of this land of contrasts and anomalies.

Ragland however had other thoughts in mind, and the beautiful wide roads with their ancient trees, and the wastes where nothing grew but scrubby thorn on which flocks of goats fed noisily, said less to him than to most other travellers; to him they were just ways by which he could reach the orderly English-looking settlements with church and school and bungalow, whither he was bound.

The next months were filled with learning about the Christians, the problems presented by the mass movement then in full flood, and the thousand other matters of his day. The men and women who welcomed him were brave and strong, thought nothing of difficulties, and lived for their people. Those were the days of very valiant deeds in the name of the Lord, and if life was in some ways less painful and perplexing than now, it had its pains, its sacrifices. Hidden among these mountains we came unawares upon one of them, a grave where a young mother and her babies were put to rest together. With a six months' voyage between India and England men and women came out practically for life, and death.

And now a joy awaited him. Allnutt and he had stood at the door of his rooms at Cambridge holding the plate after the meeting at which Henry Venn spoke so straightly to their hearts. A boat race was on that evening and Venn had looked longingly at the men crowding the enclosure of King's College, wondering when the day would come that such would offer for a harder race. He did not know then that two picked men, the two who stood on either side of the door as the little company streamed out, had heard and would respond.

Both did as the child did in the story of the plate in church, they offered themselves.

'These are the "Honours" of Cambridge,' wrote Henry Venn years later, about nine who had offered; 'Let us but get a glimpse of things unseen and eternal, and see the King of Glory establishing His reign through the whole earth, and calling many officers to join His royal camp and court, and we shall feel in what true honour consists.'

Now Allnutt was out, and in the Dohnavur bungalow Ragland wrote a long letter home in which is imbedded one of his peculiarly neat little sentences: 'I have been one of the happiest men on the face of the earth for the last eight days, enjoying Allnutt. We parted last night, and so unmixedly happy had our intercourse every day been, and so much was I afraid that human frailty would bring about some change before we separated, that the separation was almost a relief.' Who has not known that feeling?

'Dohnavur, a beautiful spot in the southwest corner of Tinnevely, close (that is on mountain scenery scale) to the last high rock of the Ghaut range'; thus Ragland describes the well-loved place, the southern outpost of the C.M.S. in India. The bungalow is a plain little house, built about a hundred years ago of sun-dried bricks; it has been patched up, added to, and generally dealt with, till there is little of the original fabric but the solid mud walls, and the whole compound would be new to that kindly writer if he could come back, (what a welcome the swarming little blue-clad girls, and boys in forest green would give him if he could!) But just outside the compound everything is as it was, the same square-towered church which deliberately faces west, with its huddled-up partly Christian village on the one side, and on the other stark Hinduism then as now. Being an Englishman he could not be here without climbing the tower, from which are seen in joyful glorious half-circle, the ever varying, ever constant mountains that are our guard and our delight.

It was early November then, just after the first burst of the monsoon. Down the nearer side of the rock, 4,578 feet of seamed

and scarred precipice face, he saw the waterfall known as the 'Laughter', not because its beauty makes the beholder laugh for joy, but simply because to the practical Tamil it suggests a tooth, such as laughter reveals. Through the telescope when the sun is upon it you can see the leaping spray. Trees cling round it and bend low to look into its pool. You can almost see their leaves shake as the wind blows through them. Perhaps the wraith falls, seen only after heavy rains, were out. Those lovely elusive waters stream in three white sashes into a valley blue as the blue of bluebells. Seen from the inside of that blue valley, one can watch them plunge headlong into forest that hangs like moss on the steeps.

It was in the Dohnavur bungalow that the story 'Cry a little for me' was written.

There was a certain devil-dancer's son who became a Christian, but without entirely breaking free from his old life. He was from home when his son was born and an astrologer told the mother that the baby would be an unlucky child, in other words cursed by the Evil Eye—a fearful fate here.

So the poor mother's spiritual advisers naturally were about to 'cause it to depart', and the father upon his return would have been told it had died of fever. But just then he returned, and hearing what was proposed sought out another astrologer, had the baby's horoscope taken again, learned that he would have a serious sickness when about four years old, and that if he recovered he would live long and prosper.

When the child was about three years old he began to fade. His father one day took him on his knee, and bending fondly over him heard him say, 'Father, cry a little for me.' The father's tears were not far to seek and he wept. 'Stop,' said the child, 'That is enough. I am going to my Father's house.' And in a few minutes he was gone.

'Cry a little for me.' Many a young child, and with deeper reasons, might have said it. But for this comforting more is needed than tears.

From Dohnavur Ragland journeyed by quiet country roads bordered by banyan trees bright with masses of crimson figs, through frontier town and mountain-pass to Travancore, and when at last he reached the palm-fringed backwaters of that beautiful little State, he found himself in fairyland.

There we may leave him to do the work of the time and, that work finished, to return as he had come by bullock-cart to Madras. He passed among the missionaries as a good man and true; but they knew him as little as he knew himself. Sitting in a compact curl-up in his cart he looked like any other man. There was nothing vague, nothing fantastic about him. And yet he was inwardly seething with the distress of an unanswered question. The word that had moved him so profoundly when Henry Venn pressed it upon his heart on that never-to-be-forgotten day in his rooms in Cambridge, had moved him for another purpose than this that occupied him now. And stirring like wind among the trees of the forest was a whisper in the secret places within him—Yea, and if I be poured out—Did *that* mean *this*?

Chapter 7: C.M.S. Secretary

IN those days C.M.S. Secretaryship included the care of a congregation in a quarter of the city then called Black Town. The people to whom he ministered he loved with such affection that, as we shall see later, he proposed giving himself entirely to them. The sermon-making, and he had three to make a week, he did not love. Nor did he love those stiff little semi-social functions held 'with a view to promote Christian unity and intercourse among the religious portions of the residents of Madras' which week by week with ruthless punctuality looked to him as their natural prey. It was then June, 1847, a period politically not unlike the present

Have we ever caught ourselves, as we looked at some old print, wondering if people so quaint felt exactly as we do? The wood-cut in Perowne's Memoir with its respectable C.M.S. house, and top-hatted gentlemen (let us hope it was an evening sketch or they must all have died of sun-stroke) exceedingly prim ladies, and stiff clerics walking soberly in the background, feels millenniums remote from us and our ways. Did these decorously buttoned-up hearts beat hot as ours do? Were those so immaculate people really and truly up against life, with the tumble and toss of it, the laughter of it and the tears, its thousand secret shynesses, the tyrannies of temperament, and ignorings of the same?

But as history repeats itself, so does the fashion of the soul of man, never twice identical yet always one. We leave the pictures with their disguising exteriors and looking in we understand each other.

See Ragland then and, to take him at his lowest ebb, see him in the soaking heat with a sermon in view. Now he bends over his paper, pen in hand, writes nothing; now sits back in his chair in a kind of despair mopping his forehead which drips, being, as the nice would put it, bedewed, and his hand also plentifully 'bedewed' drips too and sticks to the paper. At last he begins again but writes, in his deep desire, prayer instead:

‘Oh, help me to complete the preparation of my sermon: let it be suitable, wisely arranged; let it forcibly set before my people the important truths connected with my subject. Oh, let it not be as it were an essay, the performance of a task, the filling up of the half-hour.’ Then, for we have anticipated a little, ‘Let me not regard improvement in Tamil, or other matters of this inferior kind. The souls of my hearers, their real sound profiting, that they may be instructed, excited, comforted, led to Thee indeed through Christ—let me regard this.’

And afterwards, ‘Shame covers my face almost every time I leave the pulpit, for my hesitations and poor meagre incorrect statements; and such a hubbub does wounded pride stir up in my heart, that I feel I never prize so highly as then the precious blood of sprinkling.’ Yet again: ‘Yesterday was the day of the ordination. I preached on the occasion at the cathedral. It was a very, very heavy trial, preparing. I could not divest my mind of the unusual auditors I should have, although convinced of the folly and wickedness of caring for anyone but Him who walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks.’ But he tells of one good day when, just before he had to speak, the hymn ‘There is a fountain’ acted upon him like David’s music upon Saul, and words came forward joyfully, and he ended refreshed.

And he tells too, with a kind of grateful wonder, of an experience of help when, owing to the heavy pressure of his official duties, he had not time to prepare his sermon at all, and yet had to face his expectant congregation early on Sunday morning. On his knees he waited, the book of Joshua open before him: ‘Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage.’ He had met the word before as a comfortable word, a cushion not a trumpet-call; now he met it as a command. ‘And I said to the Lord, with this thought on my mind, “I will obey Thee, and be strong and of a good courage,” and from that moment I could almost fancy that I felt I had got strength.’ With his Bible open at Joshua 1, he began to speak to his people. ‘Whenever faintness of heart returned I put down my head and drank in those words “Have not I commanded

thee? Be strong and of a good courage." And they proved each time a powerful cordial. I felt no fear. And now, blessed be the Lord, my strength, who teacheth my hands to war, and who hath once graciously opened my mouth, and so given me the hope that He will continue to do so.' Preaching however was the lesser part of his work.

Chapter 8: I Want a Settledness

His chief work concerned the conduct of the various undertakings in the hands of the C.M.S. missionaries of South India, the supervising of accounts—‘spiritual arithmetic’ his chief, Henry Venn, called it,—writing of business letters, and that oiling of possibly creaky wheels for which such an office affords opportunity. He was keen to keep the human touch alive and tried to add a personal word to each official letter; and he kept a prayer roll of his fellow-missionaries’ names, and wrote to them on the day set apart for prayer for them. So the routine of business was saturated in the loving and spiritual, and the work never became merely mechanical. But he stabbed himself at times, and as was the custom in those days, in secret with his pen.

“I was dumb and opened not my mouth.” Teach me to restrain my tongue, when ready to break out. At a committee meeting, sometimes I break through all rules of gentlemanly behaviour, interrupting. Often silent and dull; and when speaking, speaking folly.’

And again with the same sharp truth-telling. ‘How often I mention the faults of my fellow-helpers, making it appear that I am so far superior to them. How slow am I to praise; and this, not from envy, but from a slowness to perceive excellence. In myself, how quick am I to perceive anything seemingly good, and to hug myself. Dear Noble and his house, how different from me!’

In India to be long alone is rarely possible, the desire for privacy is not understood, and from the kindly little child who slips her hand into yours sure of her welcome, just when you were revelling in your good luck, ‘for I saw you all by your lonely,’ up through the countless grades to whichever considers itself top, there seems to be a compassionate conspiracy to save you from the blessings of solitude. To shut one’s door is not easy, sometimes as a matter of fact there is no door to shut.

Ragland found that one way of getting alone in spirit, if not in body, and after all it is the spiritual seclusion that counts, was to sit writing by a table. So when he could not be longer on his knees without attracting observation, he would sit and write on slips of paper the prayer that still lay in his heart

I have hesitated to copy from these slips. They were private. But so were the cries from David's heart when first they burned out into words. And these words of Ragland discover us to ourselves. By that sure sign we know them ours. These slips of paper are human documents: they belong to the human family. We are not eavesdropping then, we are only listening with the angels who tarried about him and are never far from any one of us. And he would not mind. For just as the book born in the deeps of the soul, shyest of all shy things, becomes as it were impersonal when another hand touches it, so it is with these records which, as he was translated straight from the day's work to Paradise, he had no time to destroy. Rather he would wonder and be glad if any single little word could do anything for us. So we draw near, unashamed.

'O Lord, do I not often render myself worthy of the folly of those that answer a matter before they hear it? Am I not sadly eager to speak? This is very unbecoming, however good that may be which I have to say. Does it not arise from self-conceit, and also from an affectation of appearing more penetrating than others? Why should I care to speak? I want to have the credit of making the suitable observation. It is not enough for me that the best means be adopted, but I, if possible, must suggest them. Lord, forgive this vanity, this unbecomingness. It is still worse in me than in others, because I have so few good thoughts, so little to say. Let me never interrupt: also, let me always hear all, before I attempt to form a judgment or give a reply. Wisdom, wisdom, Lord, for Thy glory only, only! Give me power to command myself. "He that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a city." "A fool hath no delight in understanding but that he may discover himself." Make me abhor display, as hateful to Thee. It is a sign of a little mind to be anxious to deliver oneself of a new thought. I have Thy glory to seek and not

my own. If I were considered the wisest and the most apt of men, would it be anything compared with glorifying Thee truly, by the humble use of the meanest talent?’

Scathing is it not? Introspective? Perhaps so; but ‘Let a man examine himself’ is not an obsolete command. His quick temper: ‘How I sin in clamour!’ he writes as regards that temptation of the East to shout when dealing with tiresome servants, ‘Cannot I make them understand when I talk in a low tone, and without impatient gestures?’ The tendency to fret over trifles: ‘Let it be seen that I have not my heart so set on the little things about me as to be ruffled by slight derangements. Oh do not allow me to go on lamenting, but slothful and unimproving. Give me meekness out of Christ’s meekness.’

And just about the same time another man with razor-edged words at his command was writing: ‘Mr. Ward kept his temper—to compress, bottle up, cork down, and prevent your anger from present furious explosion is to keep your temper.’ We breathe another air when we walk with Ragland.

Life even in those days, which appear from our distance so placid, could be complicated and perplexing enough, and once Ragland consoled a worried brother by reminding him that our Master ‘does not give us two things to be done at the same moment; and He only expects what He gives time, talents, and strength for. This thought was most comforting to me, and was the means of keeping me quiet when I had much to think about, and wonderfully helped me in getting through work.’ The man to whom he was writing owned that work was invading his quiet morning hour. ‘But this ought not to be; and let us say, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, shall not be. My brother knows as well or better than I do, what a poor meagre ministry must be the consequence of a minister’s neglecting to keep his own vineyard.’ Did he never know depression apart from that greater emotion, repentance? Saints, martyrs, warriors, was there one who never knew it? There are days in India when one cannot see the hills; not because of mighty

clouds and mists, these carry rain and the very word has a good sound to Indian ears, but because of a faint thin grey heat-haze that blots out as effectually as any cloud the brave joys of peak and crag and the sweetness of the valleys between. In all souls' weather there are days of heat-haze, when that cheerless sin *accidie* makes to lay hands upon us. But the joys are. They cannot cease to be. What can feelings do to facts except for the moment obscure them? The only thing on such days is to look up, and go on, and try not to make it harder for others: 'Many as Thou knowest are our temptations. Oh let me not increase those of my poor brethren by selfishness, arbitrariness, want of kindness and sympathy.' For in all Ragland's habits of thinking he never poses; one never comes across mere covering phraseology; he deals with real things. It is evident that light upon the keeping power of our Lord Jesus Christ came in fuller and fuller measure as he went on, and the thrice blessed words 'Able to keep you from falling' became illuminated in his experience; his friends write of a brighter, gladder, more triumphant faith being born in him. But his sensitiveness towards God, I know not by what other name to call it, never grew less tender, nor his grief for any lapse less fine in edge: 'It won't be always as it has been,' he wrote on a day, not of heat-haze but rather of mingled sun and shower. 'The God of peace shall bruise Satan under my feet shortly. I want a settledness, a settled holy fear of sin and, if it might be, continual upholding of my going in the Lord's ways, that my feet slip not, never, never.'

I see some sparkles of a better hope.

—Richard II

Chapter 9: From the C.M.S. House Roof

LIFE of the orderliest sort, office, routine, parochial work, committee meetings, 'social duties'—and these bored him badly; hear his feeling little word about purposeless callers: 'Many visitors. They take up my time and weary my spirits, and I do them no good, nor they me at all in proportion to the expenditure of time.'

Suddenly up shot a flame (but the fire had burned below for a long silent year): this quiet man in his office chair who turned to the world a soul as even as a calm, ('You could time your watch by Ragland,' they used to say at Cambridge) was one tingling wild desire to fly it all, to fly to some distant place where there was no office or committee meeting or polite society: 'Some place where there is no English protection, and where very great hardships have to be endured, and life, in short, carried in the hand,' to Japan, then closed, the land where they crucified their martyrs as his Lord was crucified. 'Should I go,' he writes significantly, 'it will be without asking any counsel from dear friends.' And he likens the longings that possess him to the longings of a lover: 'The thought makes my heart burn and makes me indeed ask, Am I in my senses?' But this was only to his mother-friend to whom he had opened his fugitive hopes.

For he was not in the least understood. His curious spiritual restlessness offended people. One can hear the ponderous sentences of perplexed expostulation pounding fat-footed down on him. But there are some now who will understand. Life in India can be as formal, as petty, as remote from the valiant endeavours of a real campaign for Christ and souls as life can be in England. Ragland was being slowly sucked into such a life. He had to break loose somehow, and there were so many to tell him he was making a mistake, and that he should be patient (as if this yielding to the strange strong current surging through him night and day must needs be impatience) that he did in fact begin to feel he must be

very wrong, and four months later, to revert to an early metaphor, we find the poor lawn busy turf-laying: 'I am so sorry I said a word on the Japan matter; such a very improbable thing.' And again, 'I have not a word to say worth saying. To say what I think, would be to wish for a quiet following of Christ, without caring for such high things as to be a missionary at the risk of my life (I am sometimes ashamed of myself for what I said) but a steady holy following of Him every day the same.'

But he still feels the bluster of the storm, and comforts himself by remembering how 'some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship got safe to shore: clinging to some simple promise, which a high-minded one would think unbecoming those who have known Christ for years.'

He calls the plan 'visionary' now, which means the decent turf has covered it from the cold scrutiny of man. Visions are for other eyes. But something had happened within him, a new passion had awakened; the lava still flowed. He would walk up and down his roof in the late evenings while the noisy Hindu worship was going on in the temple court below. He might close his eyes and try to commune with his God, but the coloured lights and flaring torches struck through his eyelids, pricked him back to earth.

Then he would ponder over it, this that pulled him down from heavenly places. Go and stand at that temple-court door and preach to the worshippers? But he had not had time to get the language well. They would not listen. Ask some one else who had Tamil better to come? All were engaged with equally needy people. 'But it seems sad to watch them night after night, and to feel that prayer is *all* that can be done. The pagoda near me, the streets on streets round about it, the very many other pagodas throughout Madras, and the multitudes of streets round about them, have no one with time to attempt anything to deliver the souls in them from the power of Satan. They must go on with their tom-toming and jingling of bells, just as if there were no Christians, to say nothing of missionaries, in the land'

The words read almost true to-day. Leave the open road-ways of Madras where churches look across at each other, go to the city proper, and though you know, thank God, there are little lamps burning bravely somewhere among those dark streets, it is possible to walk for hours and never see them. It is possible to pass thousands of people without, so far as you know it, meeting one who has even the look of being about the things of the Father. You may sit in the late evening on the stone steps of a temple and (if you are inconspicuous) look in and see and hear many things not set down in any missionary book. You may penetrate into rooms that do not care to open their small barred windows to the clean light of God, you may see the huge cynical sensual creature straight from the holy Benares, stretched full length in his foul den, waiting for the coming of his dupes. But the white angels you do not see; and certain streets in that city are so, that if they did come you feel they would have to pick their steps carefully. The very air of the place still is 'as if there were no Christians, to say nothing of missionaries, in the land.'

*I clomb the dreadful stairways of desire
Between a thousand eyes and wings of fire
And knocked upon the Second Gate.
The Second Gate! When, like a warrior helmed,
In battle on battle overwhelmed,
My soul lay stabbed by all the swords of sense,
Blinded and stunned by stars and flowers and trees,
Did I not struggle to my bended knees
And wrestle with Omnipotence?*

—Noyes

Chapter 10: The Stairways of Desire

ABOUT this time he had the cheer of Allnutt's company. But Allnutt was ill and Ragland just then was down-hearted and bothered by the duties and formalities of a formal age, so the weeks were foggy. Still the friends talked and read together, and often, Allnutt says, the clouds were cleared away by the brightness of their kind Lord's presence.

At last they had to part, Allnutt was ordered home.

It was a wild day, heavy seas broke on the shore, and the surf flag went up, to signal that it was dangerous or impossible to cross from the beach to the ship. One poor lady had to give up the attempt and saw the ship with her baggage sail without her. Ragland stuck to his friend through the excitement of the hour. Could Allnutt go or not? If he could go to the ship at all, so could Ragland; and it was done. Together they pitched across the surf in the little surf-boat. A wave lifted them above the deck, to drop them below the lowest step of the ship's ladder, while the crew yelled themselves hoarse as is their pleasing custom.

For a moment it seemed as if they must be swallowed up. Then the boat lifted. Allnutt sprang up and on to the ladder. Ragland followed. For a second they stood together and in that second Ragland said, 'Unto Him that loved us'—'Amen!' they both exclaimed; Ragland leaped into the plunging boat, Allnutt climbed the ladder. And the spray sprang up between.

Quite evidently Ragland had been plainly told that he was not suitable for the glories of what was then termed 'a work of high emprise'. And his sensitive soul shrank into itself; 'I have much to thank God for in the little chillings I occasionally meet with from dear Christian friends,' is his final gentle summary. The sheer goodness of the man makes him add, 'I believe they were frequently creatures of my imagination'.

Japan being too great for him, that hope must end, and he turned humbly to the poorer English-speaking folk of the city, the little congregation in Black Town who cheered his heart by loving him and listening to his words. He was tired of the big mission-house with its comings and goings, the many servants who had to be looked after, the time that had to be spent as it seemed to no profit at all. He would live in an outhouse in the compound, with one servant, two small rooms would suffice for him, there would be the less to look after.

‘What if I were to say to the Society, I will be your Secretary for the next twelve months; but then, whether you have found a person or not, I must resign, and I will work in one of the churches of Black Town on my own resources?’

He broke this new madness to the Madras Committee. And who that has seen that discreet Committee sitting round its table but can imagine the scene? The inevitable minute disapproving the suggestion was drawn up and went home. The Home Committee still more august and surprised ‘was adverse to the proposed change’. As Secretary, it said, he was using his administrative talents for the good of the whole mission. In Black Town he would be laying them up in a napkin.

It was all perfectly wise and right as will presently appear; God had something else for His son to do. But for the moment it was a bitter blow: ‘I clomb the dreadful stairways of desire.’ It was verily that ‘My soul lay stabbed by all the swords of sense.’ It was that too. The heart that burned with the longings of a lover froze under the cool hand of disappointment, and the man to whom the freedom of the unsown fields, or even the crowded streets of the city, was nothing less than a mystic gate that opened into life indeed, stood outside it sorrowfully:

*It will not open! Through the bars I see
The glory and the mystery
Wind upward ever.*

And here again we meet and touch. Which of us in the hour of our greatest decision or of our sharpest disappointment looked upon it as a little thing?

Chapter 11: Never More Again

'Tt is the last thing I would allow, murmuring. I hope I do not murmur; often I am about to wish matters were differently arranged, and sometimes am about to try to effect a change, but I generally stop short,' thus Ragland as he sat down after his first rebuff and tried to compose his mind. There is no doubt that it was strangely ruffled, and the deeps within him moved rebelliously for a time. 'I pray, though I am sorry to say with some difficulty, "Let me be a corn of wheat," he had written just before speaking to his three special friends on the Committee from whom he did not get much encouragement and, now that the two Committees had turned down his second hope, he sets himself valiantly not 'to grow weary of his work'. This just then included long journeys as Secretary, and he addressed himself to the required preparations. 'My secularities begin to be drudgery,' he had remarked, a little testily perhaps, some time before, being but human after all; he was knee-deep in them now.

Fusses of packing and getting off, who does not know them? For never by any remote chance does an Indian journey of the sort now required, consent to arrange itself without every kind of tangle-up known to the ingenious oriental mind. At the last hour things, tent-pegs, for example, lanterns, pots and pans, or anything you happen to be unable to do without, 'are not'. Relatives of indispensables fall ill, marry, if need be, die. Prove that they have frequently died before and you start the fox on a fresh run; you don't unearth him. If you have engaged bulls or hope you have, you find prices have risen. It is the marriage season or a festival is on, or ploughing or sowing or harvesting. And as all these functions occur oftener than once a year you cannot possibly elude them all at any time. If by any blessed chance you slip through, you are pulled up by 'more-than-may-be-borne-sun', or, if that won't do, 'rain that says I cease not'.

At last he was off and, trundling slowly through his hundreds of miles of bullock-cart travelling, he had time to think, time to remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.

He acquiesced in the Committee's ruling. The big garden roller and all the little rollers did their best to roll the lawn back to its wonted respectable smoothness, and being a good lawn and indeed most properly ashamed of itself, it tried to lend itself to the process. But, as poets are made, so are pioneers:

*Making a poet out of a man:
The true gods sigh for the cost and the pain,
For the reed which grows never more again
As a reed with the reeds of the river.*

Chapter 12: Impossible?

SOUTH, by way of Arcot, Salem, Dindigal, Madura, that bullock-cart and its attendant bullock-carts piled with the required baggage and servants crawled through the stuffy weeks. For a large part of nine months it was Ragland's home, a cramped little vehicle, with a low mat roof, too low to sit up under, too short to stretch out in, for the cart has yet to be evolved that can contain comfortably an Englishman. And as it passed unhastily through the northern part of the most southern district occupied by the C.M.S., Ragland found himself in a waste land (not that *that* was new, but a waste land for which as a C.M.S. man he felt responsible), for it was unevangelized. Then, as he saw day after day people who had heard nothing, could hear nothing of Christ, his heart walked after his eyes, and his spirit was greatly set on fire and his soul was in distress. Why must they go on without hearing? Was there no way by which they could hear?

There was a way; but no one had ever tried it. In all India, so far as we can discover, it had never once been tried. That which has never been tried is usually called 'impossible' and dismissed. Ragland was a very modest man, very unsure of himself, diffident to a fault, the opposite of the accepted typical pioneer; but here he was again upon the dreadful stairways of desire, the Impossible called him and would not cease. These people must be reached. Impossible or not, the thing must be attempted. And after long pondering (who that has travelled in a South Indian bullock-cart but can imagine that interrupted pondering?) he put into words thoughts which had grown up in his heart as he communed with his dear Lord, and asked not only to be set free entirely from all other work but to be given for fellow-workers men to whom the Cross was the attraction.

It could mean nothing less. They must be willing to forego much then (and now) usually considered essential to the well-being of Englishmen. They must be willing to live among the people, as

nearly as possible one with them, camping out month after month, moving from place to place as the leading came, preaching to all within walking distance of each camp, separating as they grew more at home in the work, each Englishman taking an Indian brother, the two to live together as brothers. English home life could not be; it would hinder the work. How could a man give himself to this kind of life, how fulfil its unceasing demands without a care or a distraction if he had a wife and little children whose health and happiness must be his charge?

Only so could the men of that district be reached (the women could only be reached by women, and it fell to the lot of his spiritual successor, Walker of Tinnevely, to help forward the first women's band). Such a plan must mean sacrifice. There was no easier way.

Sacrifice! When was anything worth attempting accomplished without sacrifice? Oh, the joy of it for Jesus' sake! The very word allured him, enchanted him; but it was a disciplined man and no vague dreamer who calmly set down in black and white what the work demanded and must have if it was to be done as it ought to be done.

And as we read we note a change of manner since the day when he burned for far flights, for martyrdom in Japan. From this distance it is clear as light that the little chillings had had their part to play in the plan of his life; to the ardent man thus chilled those trials of the spirit turned to a tempering of the steel. Burning fires of eager loves, then the plunge into iciest water; thus are God's sword-blades made.

China is not to be won for Christ by self-seeking, ease-loving men and women. Those not prepared for labour, self-denial, and many discouragements, will be poor helpers in the work. In short, the men and women we need are those who will put Jesus, China, souls, first and foremost in everything and at all times; life itself must be secondary—nay, even those more precious than life. Of such men, of such women, do not fear to send us too many. Their price is far above rubies.

—Hudson Taylor

(And the same is true of India.)

*I do not want people who come to me under certain reservations.
In battle we need soldiers who fear nothing.*

—Pere Didon

Chapter 13: Vaira: Savi

WOULD he be understood? There was an abandon about the idea that caught at the breath and made men wonder, as he had once about himself, if he were in his senses. Would any understand?

But his time had come. When the Lord opens who can shut? Very wistfully, for he was a child to the end in simplicity of character and did most truly trust his fellows and longed for their full sympathy, he unfolded in detail the desires of his heart, pleading for men in real sympathy, and with candid earnestness showing how if the plan were to be tried at all it should have a fair trial, which could not be unless men of steadfast purpose were entrusted with carrying it out.

'They will have very many temptations to change their way of working. Perhaps some of the best Christians, nay, even my dear brethren already in Tinnevely, may prove in this respect temptations. They see not the matter precisely as I do.' So the men must be steadfast

And humble. 'I am more prolix than I intended to be, but I must still say what I meant by the requirement of peculiar humility. First, the work will be, in appearance at least, more self-denying than that of our South Indian missionaries generally; and therefore only to a very humble man would I entrust it. My hopes would be at an end, if those engaged in it gave the least indication that they thought themselves a superior class of missionaries. It would most probably considerably alienate from them our present excellent missionaries in the south; and what is far worse, would withhold God's blessing. Another reason for peculiar humility has reference to the intention, which I should be glad if those engaged in this work formed, of not marrying for a few years. I can conceive of no one forming this (resolve) so as not to be ensnared by it, except a person who has so little care for his reputation among men, as to be

content, on seeing good reasons, simply to say he had been mistaken in imagining he could live a single life.'

He had another unusual idea. It was, as regards Indian workers, 'not to get money from the Society and then go to the market and buy them,' but to write, when he wanted them, 'to the missionaries in their different districts, and press upon them to stir up their people to supply the want; to find the men, and men of a right missionary spirit, who would leave their homes, not for larger salaries nor for batta (extra pay given to men who serve away from home), but for Christ and souls'.

And he had as new a thought about himself and his English colleagues. He wanted men looking not to any promised support, but cast in what was then a new way upon God. Personally he purposed to resign his Fellowship (which supplied sufficient for his needs) and to take only what might be given to him by his Master through free-will gifts from Christians in India even though he knew that might be very little, for he could not ask his colleagues to walk in a path he had not trodden himself. He knew too that this, his whole thought about working without guaranteed support and breaking new ground in this new way, would be called 'romantic' and so he takes the bull by the horns and writes straightly, 'St Paul considered it as wages to work at Corinth without wages, and had a feeling (which in any one else we should call romantic) about preaching Christ where he had not been named before...Indeed, I am not clear that the feeling commonly called "romantic" is not, as much as any other natural feeling, sanctifiable, and applicable to Christ's purposes.'

He wanted men to whom even this would commend itself, for to do that particular work he required only such men as had burned their boats, every little spar of them, men ready for anything. It was fourteen years before the birth of the China Inland Mission. But Ragland of India and Hudson Taylor of China were blood-brothers, spiritual pioneers.

In India we call sound timber *vaira*, diamond. Poorer stuff is *savi*. Tap a palmyra palm and you know in a moment which is within. The one makes roofs that for strength and lightness cannot be equalled except by teak, the other fails under strain.

Ragland dared not ask for less than *vaira* and he besought those responsible to send only that, an anxious charge for them. (Would to God soul-substance were as quickly discoverable as palms!) But he had no choice. To ask for less was to court defeat. He was up against a power that had never been attacked, much less conquered, a power that knew how to use every element of difficulty and discouragement, climatic and other in this tremendous warfare. 'That supernatural power standing behind the national gods,' as Delitzsch has it, in commenting upon the prince of the kingdom of Persia who was able to withstand even an angel of God for three full weeks, is no myth. The princes of the many kingdoms of India, the particular prince of this particular and as yet unchallenged territory, who may measure his force? Of what use would *savi* be in the stress of life? He must have men whose hearts were fixed

*To defy power that seems omnipotent,
To love and bear, to hope till hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent:*

Yes, he must have *vaira*, men with no weak strain in them, no reservations, and no 'buts'. Quiet waiting months followed upon the letter-writing. He had once more been judged worthy to anticipate, as Hannington put it years afterwards, but much had to happen before things could ripen for action. The Committees of Madras and London had to be satisfied. This took time, for he would not hurry. He had learned to wait. He kept back his letter to Mr. Venn for a month, lest he should run before his Lord. And when the letter finally went, with what earnestness he held himself in stillness before God, praying, praying for the right men: Searcher of souls, send *vaira*.

Was it all foolishness? Did he ask for too much? Has the Cross ceased to attract? Surely each generation as it rises thrusts forth some men and women whose hearts bound forward at the very thought of suffering for Christ crucified. The true soldiers among those who offer, those who have it in them to be warriors to the end, ask for no creamy smoothness, no sham battle-fields. They want the real thing. And the call finds them, thrills through them. They rise and obey, and a joy that passes the joy of the morning lightens upon them and abides.

Chapter 14: Dumb, Because Thou Didst It

SLOWLY, slowly the long weeks passed. Raymond Lull in his great hour saw Calvary, bleeding outstretched hands, bleeding feet, eyes that followed and pierced, and from that vision was born a deathless word, '*He that loves not lives not; he that lives by the Life cannot die.*' Zinzendorf when his moment came stood by an Ecce Homo, 'I suffered this for thee: what hast thou done for Me?' was the question scored upon his heart, so that his motto *Aeternitate* henceforth expressed him. No vision, no picture, has part in Ragland's story; but through those weeks of waiting his very being was laid upon the altar of God, his exceeding joy, and the Lord whom he loved turned to ashes his burnt sacrifice.

For his offer was accepted. The good old Bishop of Madras felt the matter so far out of his reach for the pure devotion in it that he could only write, 'God speed it'. So said the two Committees, so said every one whose word had weight. He was persuaded not to resign his Fellowship, and the men to be sent to him were to be the care of the C.M.S., with this one exception all his plans were commended, and by Christmas Eve, 1851, the hundred hindrances whose forbidding faces all who have attempted even the least of unattempted things know so well, were got over or under or round. The door swung open...then slammed shut. A sudden and serious haemorrhage from the lung seemed to end all.

But it was no accident. It was the working out of the law of pains for the pioneer; was ever one who was not tested to the uttermost, beset behind and before, crushed and milled till nothing was left for the eye of man to find beauty in, or any power?

And so it is that when the work is accomplished the excellency of the power is shown and known to be of God and not of us. The thing is done. Who did it? Not this poor man, how could he? Who then but the Lord, *Karia Kartar*, Doer of things?

But for the moment on that strange day, like a loving child struck sharply by the hand it trusts, so was that stricken heart, and as the child speaks not a word, only tries hard to keep the tears back, so it was now: 'Dumb, because Thou didst it'

Didst it, but how? Not in the sense of giving the distress of disease. But in the sense of allowing yet another battle-field to be spread out before His warrior, that strength being perfected in weakness should triumph gloriously.

'Put forth Thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh. And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand.' And yet was ever Job, the real Job, held closer in the hand of his God than when that alien hand touched his bone and his flesh?

But all down the ages the Lord God Omnipotent has turned the tremendous attack of His foe ('An enemy hath done this,') into magnificent gain. In suffering, more than conquerors; see them, the Lord's peculiar treasure, by whom He sits watching as the goldsmith of the East by his gold in the red fire.

Consciously or unconsciously, Ragland must have thought along these lines, for he conquered by the grace of his God. But for the moment he was stricken hard, 'Satan's angel dealing blow after blow'. So for awhile he was dumb.

Chapter 15: No, Lord

BUT he was not dumb to his God. Dumb to those who might have misunderstood and thought ill of his good Master, but never dumb to Him.

I beseech Thee, O Lord, let me have understanding.

For it was not in my mind to be curious of the high things, but of such as pass us daily, namely, *wherefore?*...and for what cause?...and why? Of these things have I asked.

Once, and for all ages the story of days such as these now set for Ragland has been written in full. Esdras the earnest, the sincere, found at first no rest in the answer given. 'I gathered you together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings,' the God who so expressed His love, who had called His children 'as a father his sons, as a mother her daughters, as a nurse her young babes', He to allow them to be taken captive by the King of the Persians? 'The thoughts of my heart were very grievous unto me, and I began to talk to the Most High again. And said, O Lord...why?'

And the burden on Ragland's heart was just this that presses on ours so often, why, when God's will is the salvation of these for whom Christ died, should there be these perplexing reversals of an apparent purpose? Wherefore this? And for what cause that? And why this unexpected, this bewildering defeat?

'Now when I had spoken these words,' writes Esdras, 'the angel that came to me the night afore was sent unto me, and said unto me, Hear me and I will instruct thee...and I said, Speak on, my Lord.

'Then said he unto me, Thou art sore troubled in mind for Israel's sake: lovest thou that people better than he that made them?

'And I said, No, Lord: but of very grief have I spoken: for my reins pain me every hour, while I labour to comprehend the way of the most High, and to seek out part of his judgment.

'And he said unto me, *Thou canst not. And I said Wherefore?*'

Then said the angel Uriel:

'Number me the things that are yet not come, gather me together the drops that are scattered abroad, make me the flowers green again that are withered, open me the places that are closed, and bring me forth the winds that in them are shut up, shew me the image of a voice: and then I will declare to thee the things that thou labourest to know.'

And the great and mysterious Angel who likened his judgment to a ring 'like as there is no slackness of the last, even so there is no swiftness of the first,' drew back curtains by a word, revealed an end, not indifference, not unkindness—unthinkable thought—but Love.

So to all questions for all time the answer is given. The undiscoverable is love. Love lies at the end of all ways, in the deeps of all mysteries. Far, far beyond the reach of Esdras' eager mind, or Ragland's, or ours, concealed by amazing providences, like a sun set in thick darkness of impenetrable clouds, is Love; eternal, active, unextinguishable Love.

To Ragland, thinking of the Christless crowds his eyes had seen and his heart had longed after, the word of comfort was the same. No explanation, only an assurance that Love ruled all.

'Thou art sore pained in mind for India's sake; loves t thou that people better than He that made them?'

And he said, *No, Lord.*

Sitting on deck wrapped in rugs as his ship passed out of the warm tropic seas into the keen winds of early Spring, he was to all seeming a man broken; but it was then he entered as never before into the private places of peace. He, Ragland, buffeted back at the very hour of achievement, was not to be bewildered, was not to give in. There were purposes of love laid up for these peoples: 'in the

end the love that I have promised' He was not out of his dear Lord's will as he sought to renew his strength and return to them.

Thus he was loosed from all his fears, and in the multitude of the sorrows that he had in his heart the comforts of God refreshed his soul and made him vigorous with spiritual purpose.

Chapter 16: Into These God Infused a Willingness

BUT it was a very sick man who 'landed in England in the good month of roses, and made his way slowly with his family to the south of Hampshire. Egypt or Nice was ordered, but he wanted his own country, and the doctor consented on condition he went south at once if he got worse. The various splendours of the sea, those four months round by the Cape, had done much for him, but no one believed he would ever return to India.

Just as he arrived home the two young Cambridge men, R. R. Meadows and David Fenn, who had answered to his call, were about to sail for Madras. He saw them, and his heart went out to them, went out with them indeed, as they sailed away leaving him, as it seemed, wrecked on the shore.

'There shall be no Alps,' Napoleon said, and the road across the Simplon was constructed through a district formerly almost inaccessible. 'Impossible,' Napoleon said, 'is a word only to be found in the dictionary of fools.' Napoleon and Ragland—the two names do not fraternize. Who can hear Ragland talking in that crude fashion about fools? But he had no more idea than Napoleon of giving in. He calmly kept the required exercises for his B.D. and settled down to Tamil study.

Some years later while in camp he made himself a plan by which he covered the Tamil Bible once a year, the New Testament three times, the Gospel of St. John four times and the Psalms twice. No one could say he had not the use of his Tamil sword; but it was long before he got the freedom of the language. Idiomatic colloquial is a matter of time and opportunity.

One gain was his at home. He got into touch with keen men and started a Prayer meeting at Cambridge: 'Oh that they (meetings for prayer) were multiplied through the land! It is for want of roots such as these to suck in grace from Him that is full of grace, that the church and missions especially, languish.'

It is not difficult to live through those months of waiting with Ragland while his people tried to show him that he could not go. It was useless:

*He saw a hand they could not see
That beckoned him away,
He heard a voice they could not hear
That would not let him stay.*

'Break through, O Lord, and show Thyself. Oh, speak aloud that they may hear!' Have we not cried the words in the loneliest hour of our lives? And it seemed as if no answer came. We had to go on alone. But if by the grace of the Lord we were held on in obedience, did not the day come when they too saw and heard and were satisfied?

In the autumn of '53, knowing he was needed there and being able to meet his own charges, Ragland sailed for India. To be ill in India can never be easy. It is a land to live for, and (most joyfully) to die in, but it is not a land to be ill in, unless one can command seclusion and quiet, and few missionaries can do that. To return thus in weak health meant suffering. That mattered nothing to him. He believed that it should not be counted a strange thing but a natural to suffer in the service of the Lord.

It is not Christ only that must suffer, he said. The work of bringing souls to glory is one which Christ shares with us and He calls us now to share with Him, and to be content to share with Him, some part at least of His self-denial and suffering, and not only content but ready, forward—'I had almost said, *be ambitious* to suffer.' The words did not break forth like froth upon the tumbling waters of speech. They occur in a sermon preached at Cambridge shortly before he sailed, and must have been weighed and measured and steeped in prayer before they were written down.

Continuing earnestly, he spoke of Ridley and Latimer and the less known John Bradford who wrote from prison facing painful death, 'Oh what is honour here but baubles? What is glory in this world but shame? Why art thou afraid to carry Christ's cross? *Wilt thou come into His kingdom and not drink of His cup?*' and again in the

very fire turned to one who suffered with him saying, 'Be of good comfort, brother, for we shall have a happy supper with the Lord this night' 'Into these, three hundred years ago, God infused a willingness to become as corn of wheat,' he said, and then, 'If it had not been for a long chain of persecution and of shame and of humiliations and of labours and of self-denials and of prayers with strong crying and tears, we should not have the gospel; and we cannot expect in any other way than by adding one link to that chain to have the glory of handing it down to others. *If we refuse to be corn of wheat falling into the ground and dying; if we will neither sacrifice prospects, nor risk character and property and health; nor when called, relinquish home and break family ties, for Christ's sake and His gospel; then even supposing that we do not thereby prove that we have not the root of the matter in us, that we have nothing at all to do with Christ, we shall abide alone.*'

So he returned to India to live five glorious years and die a glorious death. I write in the speech of the angels, not in man's. Granted he played dice with his life, was it not worth while? God forbid that we should be too careful of our lives, or of what means so immeasurably more, the lives of our beloved.

I have lived

To see inherited my very wishes, And the buildings of my fancy.

—*Coriolanus*

*Fire and heat, snow and vapours, wind and storm, fulfilling His word.
O fire-swept mountain slope,
I never saw thee so,
Thy grass is green as youngest hope,
Thy woods aglow.*

*Ruby and blood-red sard—
Art thou all precious stone?—
Budding in jewels, jewel-starred
With flowers fresh-blown.*

*Never this carnival
Of colour to desire
But for that fierce effectual
Swift flame of fire.*

*O Fire and Heat whose breath
Scorches the shrinking soul,
Blind, blind I stood and saw as death
Life's aureole.*

*As death I saw, being blind;
But now, or Fire or Frost,
In your great mystic touch I find
Life I thought lost.*

—Dohnavur Songs

Chapter 17: The New Adventure

IT was a shining December day when R. R. Meadows and David Fenn, who had spent the year in Tamil study, took a surf-boat and crossed to the ship to welcome their leader back.

Out of the dancing boat they clambered eagerly, were up on deck in a moment, all three clasping hands in a most delightful excitement. Then Ragland led them down to his cabin, and their life together began with prayer that knit them heart to heart. Still together, they crossed the surf, and thereafter through all the surfy tossing of this difficult life they were what he believed they would be to him when he looked into their eyes in his cabin that day. 'Your greatest trial may be your fellow-missionaries,' said a wise old Chinese missionary to the writer years ago. Yes, or your greatest joys.

'I could hardly have chosen two such men to my mind, had I had the whole church to choose from,' thus Ragland after nine days with them. And all in the highest spirits, ('Too high spirits perhaps' was his cautious word, but no; blessed be gaiety) they bought tents, ponies, and the miscellaneous impedimenta of camp life, and before the stars had paled in the sky of that Wednesday morning, January 18, 1854, they set forth on their joyful adventure.

The season was the best in the year for a new adventure. (And, difficult as it is to keep it in mind in a day when everywhere Ragland's thought has been accepted and developed, let it be remembered that it was nothing less.) The mighty rains of the north-east monsoon had cooled the land that opened before them enchanting in its new green dress. Before them too lay the lure of the unknown, and each day beckoned through wonderful and lovely changes; starlight, for they rose long before star-set; dawn, seen over vast spaces through air like sparkling crystal; sunlight, so lavish, so golden to eyes toned to northern grey that at first, 'Oh what a beautiful day,' is the involuntary exclamation, and the amused smile of the accustomed who would prefer an English day

strikes curiously; sunset and after-glow, dreams of wonder these, when the after-glow falls on the red soil of the South kindling the dust to rubies. And the nights; who can forget the first nights in the East? There is the night of velvet depths when the stars burn in ordered distances, one beyond the other for ever and for ever. And there is the night when the sky, lit with a little moon, is asleep in gauzy blue and the constellations appear in bright groups, and again there are those many nights that follow when every colour of the earth shows clear (only most strangely holy) and you feel it ungrateful to go to sleep while the very trees stand awake and conscious and worshipful.

All this our three passed through and apprehended before the blinding heat of later months turned day into one long gridiron, with briefest respites at either end, and night herself ached with the hot men tossing on hot camp-cots. Slowly they journeyed through the perfect hours each morning, facing south all the time, led night by night by the Cross in the sky that sets far south-west over the sea.

And as he travelled Ragland found life he thought lost.

On these hills, towards the end of the hot weather, forest fires seem to spring from the ground. Night after night, till the foresters get it under, those in the Plains below see an awful but brilliant pageant. Great snakes of fire coil round the crags, lick up the grassy summits, swing across the ravines and leap upon the forest trees, which then can be seen to stand like mighty candles alight. No one who loves the forest can endure that sight.

But come up a few months later, and you gaze astonished. Sheets of burnt and rain-washed bamboo lie like shining yellow cornfields thrown on the steep slopes. The rounded hill tops are emeralds. The sunlight picks out the crimson and orange colours of young shoots of jungle trees, and they are jewels alive. There it is, found again, life we thought lost.

'Now to Him who, in the exercise of His power that is at work within us, is able to do infinitely beyond all our highest prayers or

thoughts—to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, world without end! Amen.’

Chapter 18: Their First Camp

FOUR hundred miles on foot and horseback and they reached their first camp in their own proper battle-ground. See Ragland as he writes his journal that first evening; English words do not feel enough, so he writes in Hebrew. 'And he said, *Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.*'

The district they had entered now was the northern part of that tract of country about the size of Yorkshire, known by a silly mispronunciation of three sensible Tamil words connoting to the Tamil ear three desirables, religion, food, protection: Tinnevelly, poor little tin-pot sounding word for Tiru-nel-veli. It is a fair sample of the way we maul any unfortunate 'foreign' word that falls into our hands.

This then, to be called for the sake of peace North Tinnevelly, covers (or covered, for the district is otherwise divided now) some fourteen thousand square miles, and contained two hundred and seventy thousand people scattered in nearly fourteen thousand country towns, villages, hamlets; numbers that sound as nothing to one accustomed to think in millions; but two hundred and seventy thousand is a number neither one man nor ten can reach effectively. The people in this one plain, one out of India's myriad similar plains, were unreached. It matters not, says the Tamil proverb, whether the water above your head be an inch or a fathom, an inch of water can drown.

The country is featureless, flat and for the most part given up to cotton and the coarser kinds of grain. Cotton soil is black, drying to grey. It does not offer anything for the after-glow to turn to carpets of gems. It is eminently prosaic and useful. But all plains have a beauty of their own; wide spaces, edged with blue mountains, patches of bright green where the young grain grows, or miles of dull gold when it is ripening; a long green snaky line where a road moves on, its beaten dusty grey shaded by trees planted by the

virtuous; villages, made of the same grey clay—this is North Tinnevely. And here was the town, Sri-vilai-puthur, with its mountains in the background, and its famous temple, and sheet of temple water, and its twenty-two thousand Hindus; nothing after all was worth a thought but how best to bring to them the good news of Christ

One week of eager work, and Ragland sat by Fenn's camp-cot in speechless anxiety. Fenn had fever which would not yield. Ragland was alone with him as Meadows had had to go to the hills, another month's journey. Who that has nursed a beloved comrade through an unknown illness, earnestly searching for guidance in books, baffled by symptoms not described or not recognized, with a heart racked by fears of making a mistake, but will sympathize with him? At last, to reach a doctor a dreadful journey north had to be undertaken. A typhus patient in a bullock bandy in the blazing sun of February—there are some experiences better left undescribed.

Fifteen long months were to trail past before the comrades met again. Those who judged the rightness of an action by its immediate result had doubtless much to say. As leader, the only one who could be blamed when things went wrong, Ragland drank of a bitter cup. 'Lord, is it I? Who am I that I should be here at all? And yet, hast Thou not sent me? Strengthen me once again.'

ROUNDHEADS' RALLYING SONG

*How beautiful is the battle,
How splendid are the spears,
When our banner is the sky
And our watchword Liberty
And our kingdom lifted high above the years.
How purple shall our blood be,
How glorious our scars,
When we lie there in the night*

*With our faces full of light
And the death upon them smiling at the stars.*

—NOYES

Chapter 19: A Song, Three Frogs and a Corn of Wheat

THE Rallying Song is new in phrase, but in nothing else. Ragland and his band thought little probably, and said less about the glories of scars and death; but for all that they were not found wanting when they reached the place of wounds and dying, and the joy of the singer was theirs. So joyful were they that they set others singing. All over the fields and in the villages a strong little song in Tamil ran, set to an adaptation of *Men of Harlech*, and Ragland was as pleased as a boy over the small triumph of writing down the notes without an instrument, notes proved correct when at last he had the chance to try them on a decrepit piano. 'I do not know when I have had so much enjoyment of life,' he wrote in the freshness of his happiness.

And this happiness, so evidently not caused by circumstances but by something invisible and abiding, affected the people among whom they camped; for it impinged upon an existence bounded for the most part by fear pushed far into the background of consciousness, but always there, in spite of periods of gay excitement. And except the mysterious aloofness of asceticism, nothing is so attractive in India as supernaturally sustained happiness.

So there were constantly people about the tent door during the hot hours of the day and again in the evening. Sometimes they really wanted help and got it; but sometimes they talked for talk's sake. One morning to the tent soon after breakfast came a young man who seemed in no need of teaching. So Ragland said to him, 'You know so much about Christ and the way of salvation, how is it you are not yourself a believer?'

'I am,' said the young man.

'But are you baptized?'

'No, a man is not a Christian and safe merely because he is baptized.'

'Certainly not,' Ragland agreed and he instanced the thief on the cross. 'But then if a man when he might be baptized will not be, I cannot believe in the man's salvation.'

And he turned to Matthew 10, 'Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him will I confess before My Father which is in heaven.' 'Is it not because you are afraid of confessing Christ?'

'No,' said the other. 'Read St. Mark 13:20. Except the Lord had shortened those days—'

'But what has that to do with baptism?' asked Ragland, mystified.

'Read on.'

Ragland did so. 'And false Christs and false prophets shall rise.'

'Yes,' said the young man, sure he had made his point. 'There is my reason for not being baptized. Christ says there shall be false prophets. How do I know when I go to a missionary to be baptized whether he is a false or a true one, and so whether his baptism will profit me or not?'

To which Ragland using the way of the East replied, 'There is a loaf no doubt that has poison in it. Must I therefore never eat bread?' And he explained that it is not the baptism or the character of the baptizer that is of so much importance, but the confessing of the Lord Jesus Christ. 'Will you walk down the village street with me,' he asked, 'and confess yourself a believer?' And the young man said in effect, 'No, thanks.'

Then Ragland in his kind straight way looked his questioner in the eyes, 'Your own soul's salvation, that is the important matter; and it is my belief,' and he said this very gently, as well as very seriously, 'that you are not baptized simply because you are ashamed of Christ'

Thus in poor flimsy coverings do souls screen themselves to this day; for the latest question asked us by a would-be enquirer was

this, 'Of what wood was the Cross made? If you cannot tell me that, of what profit is all else that you can tell me?' And the curious thing was that he believed he had said something very wise.

Once Ragland found himself alone among a crowd of scoffers. Imagine him, the polished gentleman (his courtly manners are remembered still,) standing earnest but rather helpless in the midst of a delighted rabble who mimicked him, catechized him about his pay and relations, and altogether made hay of him, he the while serving up to them that which he had so laboriously acquired in many an arduous hour over intricate print.

'Bring your *du-bashi*,' (two-language man, interpreter) they shouted at last, in full chorus, and as his servant did as a matter of fact help him out of difficulties in the kind way servants do, Ragland in telling of this speaks of his servant as apparent translation for *du-bashi* and so, to the unholy glee of Indian missionaries, his biographer, thus innocently trapped, illuminates the page with a footnote, 'i.e., to come attended by a servant if he would command respect'

This stage was passed, of course; but, though the complicated niceties of the Tamil written language were mastered in a scholarly way, Tamil spoken never became easy; he had begun it too late and had been too much interrupted. His fellow-workers were younger and got on well. He toiled long. One year, in the rainy season, he got a rustic to come to him every morning and patiently extracted words from him. These he would look up later and learn, quoting the verse about the slothful man not roasting what he took in hunting. Sometimes he made the most comical slips, which of us has not? And these are remembered because of the humble way he used to be sorry when he got upset over the result.

A slight change makes a towel into a frog and one day he sent his servant in a hurry to get a towel. The boy looked blank, searched long, and at last appeared with a frog. Ragland amazed repeated his order, and the boy vanished, to reappear after a still longer interval with a bigger frog.

Then Ragland—it was hot and he was very tired—got properly cross, ‘I told you FROG,’ he exclaimed, and a third was added to his collection.

At last he knew what he had done, and as he said about his sermons, shame covered his face. He laid his hand on the boy’s shoulder and apologized. He was so sorry that the boy was embarrassed. ‘We did not know what to do,’ said the old man who told me the story, and the incident was never forgotten, not because of the mistake but because of the humility. ‘In him is a great gentleness; he is fine gold,’ said the servants one to another, and in a land where gentleness counts for more than eloquence he was loved for it.

It was not a virtue that came of itself like the bloom on the peach. ‘Do I well to be angry?’ he wrote once in an hour of distress. ‘Oh no, O my God, I pray Thee to forgive me for Thy dear Son’s sake. And teach me what to do about the various matters all so little in themselves which disturb me.’

The difficulty about the language caused a trial of spirit which perhaps only a missionary can appreciate; especially he felt it when one whom he had been addressing in flawless Tamil turned from him with that vague look of incomprehension which is usually followed by a gesture of complete bewilderment: ‘To me English is unknown!’ And, as his wont is, he puts his trouble into plain words of pitiless honesty on one of those slips of paper which served to shield his privacy:

‘Know how to be abased: Tamil: not distressed when I hear (Fenn) speak so well, so easily understood, and understanding so well; when persons turn away from me, not understanding me; when I cannot get out what I have to say; or when (Meadows) speaks, what is orderly, interesting, gets attention. Let me thank Thee from my heart for them, be content, acknowledge Thy goodness. Not too anxious to make excuse for myself; not too fond of speaking of my deficiency; not trying to show off; not holding back out of a sinful

shame or sloth. Two talents gained “Well done”. What a little matter deficiency is if I am only poor in spirit’

Here is another of these heart entries, the very pith of prayer: ‘Not loving to have the pre-eminence, to be called h.d. (highly devoted, as a missionary magazine had called him); impatient of being contradicted; disliking to have my faults pointed out in conduct, in spirit, in Tamil.

‘Not vexed because as a missionary I am perhaps despised; not anxious to be thought anything more; not angry with any persons who seem to despise me.’

We aren’t no thin red ’eroes, nor we aren’t no blackguards too,
But single men in barracks, most remarkable like you.

Imagination refuses such a remark from such lips; but fitted into tidier words Ragland would certainly have set his seal to them. Here we have him most humanly tempted to fret about the silly little mosquito stings of life that do so persistently beset us.

That particular mosquito, the temptation to resent the foolish judgments of man, seems too small to write about, and yet able men of our day have known what it is to feel its sharp minute irritation, and in those days even the C.M.S. Committee could remark after a Cambridge graduate who had offered to them had left the room, ‘A man with so many accomplishments should go out as a chaplain, not as a missionary,’ and as a chaplain he went out. So Venn, ashamed, told, and so the C.M.S. history reports. Its sting, then, must have been uncomfortably venomous at times. For Ragland found that it was one thing to be Fellow of his College (Senior Fellow he was soon to become, and had the option of being preferred to any living that fell vacant in the Society’s gift), and quite another to be ‘only a missionary’, especially only an evangelist: (‘Poor old Ragland! A back number you know.’) Among the ordinary he passed as ordinary. It was part of the dying of the corn of wheat:

*Dead to the world and its applause,
To all the customs, fashions, laws,*

*Of those that hate the humbling Cross.
So dead that no desire may rise
To appear good, or great, or wise
In any but my Saviour's eyes.*

Stern words, and 'narrow'. Perhaps so; but they show the man of this book.

*Strange that we creatures of the petty ways,
Poor prisoners behind these fleshly bars,
Can sometimes think us thoughts with God ablaze,
Touching the fringes of the outer stars.*

*And stranger still that having flown so high
And stood unshamed in shining presences,
We can resume our smallness nor imply
In mien or gesture what that memory is.*

Chapter 20: A Fragment from the Day

THERE are some men whose influence is like dawn on mountain crags that passing over them brings into swift beauty shapes and colours that slept before. Ragland was such a man. And the joy of dawn was his; his life had its nights, but never night that has no dawn, and there is the feel of the morning in the record of those years on the plains with Meadows and Fenn and the Indian brothers he loved so much.

'It is not beyond the power of His grace to keep us, all three of us, in the most perfect concord and love; and to render us continual helpers of each other's peace and joy and strength and fruitfulness,' he had written to the two before he joined them in India. And passing guests could not help noticing the uncommon love that bound the band together. They were one'd.

'Had we only such men everywhere we should have no divisions among us; they would be impossible,' wrote a friend, and he tells how Ragland delighted in the good work of the others, their free Tamil, readiness in answer (as compared with his own difficulty in the language, so surely his prayer had been splendidly answered) and how he, the acknowledged leader, was servant of all.

And the keen dark eyes that watched the band every day and from all sides, saw what pleased them well. The Tamil language scintillates with sayings about love and friendship. If love be, the impossible becomes possible. True friends are as flower and its scent, inseparable; as soul and body, as nail and flesh. They have scores of caustic proverbs too, on the follies of silly friendships, and the perils of too close an intimacy where perfect affinity is not; never were clearer eyes than theirs. But they were satisfied now. These men lived as they talked. They were men of love.

It is not difficult for one who knows South India to walk through their day with them. There was the early start, always before star-set, because only so can the villagers be reached before they leave

home for their fields. So to get quiet alone it was needful to be up about three (2.45 was the usual rising hour during the journey south), and those of us who have had such an itinerating band staying with us well remember the sound of the little alarm clocks going off at three. Then came a cup of tea, and the regulation slices of toast, and plantains, and then at half-past four the start on foot or in bullock-carts or on ponies for the appointed villages. But one thing that matters has been missed. 'In the morning, before setting out to preach, the brethren kneel together to ask for thoughts, words, fluency, skill audiences not blasphemous or indifferent' So wrote one of those short-time guests.

Sunrise over the wide spaces of this land is always a wonder; but very soon to those out preaching, the beauty seems to race into something much less welcome, even pitiless searching glare, and it is extraordinary how quickly this sun-glare sucks an Englishman's strength; he may go on working but the vigour in him is drained dry. Then too the people are engaged in their own affairs and, though there are always some who seem to have nothing to do, not a great deal can be effected out of doors after the morning has well set in. So by half-past ten the camp is at breakfast, the inevitable curry and rice of the country; then comes rest, and if there is energy for it study and talk with people who come to the tent, till the afternoon begins to think of cooling; then off again.

And all the time, in and out of the day winds that curiously woven, many-coloured thread of Hindu life; a thread dyed in no two parts of its long length alike, and yet always one, and indivisible. Nothing in our superficial religious divisions can approach the varieties of creed that obtain in this land where two Hindus walking together in amity can truthfully describe each other as fundamentally opposite in faith.

And now, how can one best show a fragment of Ragland's day to the reader who does not know India? Generalities mislead, so does too minute a morsel from the mosaic. And yet perhaps one half-hour

from Ragland's certainly usual morning may show this India of our tale as clearly as anything can, and India at her best.

Morning by morning as the men walked through the open country, just before sunrise, in the twilight deified as one of the twin sons of the sky, the evening twilight being the other twin, they came upon the worship of the caste-men, going on at that hour all over India. When first you come upon this worship which is always performed by any convenient water, stream or pond, you withdraw hastily, feeling intrusive; but you soon learn that you might as well be a crow for all the notice the worshipper pays to you, you are not in the least disturbing. So you get into the way of drawing near, and watching with a kind of longing loving sympathy, and this is what you see and what Ragland saw uncounted numbers of times.

A man sitting in a crouching position by the shallow water, murmuring an invocation to the Ganges, which for the moment this small water personates. He has bathed and is now beginning his ceremonies. And first he marks his forehead (and if he be a worshipper of Siva his breast and arms) with the signs which show not only his sect but his particular cult of that sect, and then he ties his long wisp of hair into a tight knot lest a stray hair, now regarded as unclean, should fall into the water.

Follows the sipping of water, poured from the right hand shaped like a cup into the mouth. This is for interior purification. He invokes his god as he sips, and thus cleansed from (ceremonial) impurity begins his worship proper.

At first it is difficult to understand and follow the movements in the ritual called 'The Regulation of the Breath'. But it is never varied and gradually becomes clear. The right nostril is pressed with the thumb, and the breath expelled through the left. Then the order is reversed. This movement is repeated with the forefinger. Then both thumb and forefinger are used, and the breath held. This fixes the wandering thoughts, and prepares the mind for prayer.

And now follows that part of the ritual about which so much has been written, the repetition of the sacred Syllable OM. (A.U.M., Agni,

Vayu, Mitra. Fire, Wind, Sun; or Agni, Fire, Varuna, watery atmosphere, investing sky, and Marut, Wind.) Set in the blue sea at the Cape is a little old grey temple. From that temple, up through the plains of this mighty land, over the snow mountains, through Tibet to the Chinese frontiers, wherever Hindus or Buddhists be, that same Syllable rises from myriads and myriads this day, and will this night. It is a fact that lays hold upon the imagination, and among all the many byways of Indian knowledge none is more alluring than that which leads to the Aryan uplands where first that Syllable was created. After the repetition there is a pause.

I do not know anything more heart-moving than what follows. Turning to the eastern sky the man says solemnly: 'Let us meditate on that excellent glory of the Vivifying Sun, may he enlighten our understanding.'

It is the prayer that has risen from countless hearts through the dawns of three thousand years. 'If the light of a thousand suns were to burst forth at once in the sky, that would be like the splendour of that mighty One.' This (a line from the *Bhagavad-Gita*) is the truth at the heart of the ceremony. Blessed be the word that says, 'The Being, whom without knowing Him, you revere, Him I now proclaim to you.' For among those myriads did not some revere?

And now the second part of the ritual is about to begin. First comes that daily self-baptism, the sprinkling of water on the head, which accompanies a prayer for vigour and strength. There is one great line in this prayer: 'We come to you (the waters) for cleansing from all guilt.' And another is a petition to be preserved from sin and forgiven for it. Yet another prayer called the Sinannihilation follows, which prayer, repeated three times, is believed to remove all sin. But sin, as it is generally understood in India, is not what we mean by the word.

And now for a moment it is as if creation held her breath and watched, colours kindle and spread, clouds that see the advancing sun flame suddenly, and he is here. Then, just as the keen curved flashing line appears above the horizon, there is a sparkle of water

as the worshipper throws it three times into the air towards the east, an act of homage to the eternal miracle of day.

The next part of his worship is less appealing to the western mind; it is called the Imposition of fingers, and stands upon a belief that each part and organ of the body is pervaded by a separate essence of some divinity, the highest in order occupying the head. Still, nothing that concerns a fellow-man can be void of interest to his fellow, and so one watches the complicated ceremonial of the touching of various parts of the body with the fingers of the right hand, regarded as sacred to Vishnu, and listens to the great prayer to the sun again, and notes the hidden hand (for the act must not be seen) fumbling at the rosary keeping count of the 108 repetitions of that same prayer.

And now the man rises, stands facing the sun that streams in great waves of light to him, and using the old old name Daniel must have heard many a time, Mitra, the Mitra of Persian tales and Vedic hymns, he chants an invocation to him, and then, 'Hail, brilliant Dawns,' an invocation to the dawns of all time, and looking back over his own short day he names his forebears, and once more invoking the God of gods, 'May the one Supreme Lord of the universe be pleased with this my morning Service,' he ends by sipping water for the cleansing for the inward man.

It is the fitting note. Who that has tried to press through the things of sense to the invisible, eternal, but has ended just there? 'For they that have kept holily the things that are holy shall themselves be hallowed,' as a wiser than the old Vedic writer says. And who has perfectly kept these holy things in holiness? 'Grant, we beseech Thee, merciful Lord, to Thy faithful people pardon and peace, that they may be cleansed from all their sins, and serve Thee with a quiet mind; through Jesus Christ our Lord.' The words cry within us as we watch with desire that turns to poignant pain this last act in the long ritual.

Can we ever grow accustomed to such a scene? The sunlight is shining over the earth, the little stream where it all happened, or

the poor little pond if such it were, is like molten gold, and the whole world sings. And the man? India has her spiritual men, here and there one finds them. God has not left Himself without witnesses among this people. There are those who 'touch the fringes of the outer stars.' But let no one be deceived by the beauty and, in parts, the simple dignity of worship such as this. Among the sins explicitly mentioned in the prayer for forgiveness and preservation is one which is deified now and has been for very many centuries. It is round the temples if anywhere in the land that the old Dragon swings the scaly horror of his folded tail—a line that says all that need be said. The man who has just chanted words, which, sincerely meant, would have led him straight to God, smiles indulgently at you as at one hardly accountable when you try to meet him on the ground of this prayer. And if hard pressed he would do as a young ascetic who went through the ritual to-day did, when faced with the sin for which he had asked forgiveness but which he had not the least intention of forsaking, 'Sin, what is sin? A word, a breath, mere *maya*, delusion.' And he stretched himself, touching himself delicately with his right hand, 'How can I sin, I not being I, but Brahma?'

Here then is a fragment of Ragland's day. With such men he talked lovingly, his wise mind meeting them in sympathy; for no modern impression is more unjust than that which imagines the 'old' missionary as inevitably ignorant and unsympathetic; but then as now, very few of these to whom one might expect the appeal to come with most alluring force could bring themselves to believe that they needed anything.

And with the uninstructed peasant whose foot would pollute the street where the other lived and whose horizon is bounded by the terrible horror of demons, he pleaded too, and here an invincible ignorance barred the way. But sometimes the peasant believed and sometimes so did the scholar: the fruit was all hand-picked, and never made much show; for in this part of India there is very little true conversion in the mass, and Ragland was not out to pile numbers in reports, but to win souls for Jesus Christ.

The day closed, the guest quoted before tells us, as we should have expected it would. 'Can He fail to bless it who commanded it and encouraged us so to work? Will He not bless what has been done in Him and for Him? He does bless it; refreshes jaded spirits; gives energy, perseverance, hopefulness.'

Chapter 21: Precious Things Put Forth by the Moon

'GOD who has the almighty power sleeps. The Lord Bishop and the Committee have shut up their eyes. The Executive members have lost their consciousness. The Church of Christ at Middletown is daily falling down dead.'

This candid paragraph concerning a place in the South is from a letter received by the Bishop of Madras in 1893. Lest things should be thus, when converts began to come out in connection with Ragland's work, and also for the sake of the often relapsed Christians who were to be found scattered on the Plain, and whom the band had influenced for good, the C.M.S. sent out a fine man, C. Every, and they welcomed him with thanksgiving.

Immediately, and how well a missionary will understand what this meant to them, Every had to be taken for another need, and when at last he was retrieved they were jubilant, for he was getting Tamil well, and had just reached the place where it is possible really, not merely nominally, to lift burdens—'likely to be a very great help and comfort to us,' wrote Ragland with a thankful heart. Eleven months later cholera smote him. Once again, as when Fenn went down with typhus, Ragland was alone, and he had never nursed cholera. Swiftly the chill of death came on. Ragland wrapped him in his railway rug, but nothing could help him. Wrapped in that rug he was laid to sleep by the little house then being built where they had hoped to spend the approaching wet season together.

'What a bright holy course he has run, never trifling. The Lord seems to take the best first' Aye, and test to the uttermost those He leaves behind. But help came, another was found to fill the gap, another of choice spirit, Barenbrock. Seven months later he too fell, struck down by that same cholera. And, as they dug his grave by Every's, it seemed as if before the next sun set they would have to dig one by his side for Fenn.

'My thoughts are not your thoughts.' O Lord, would that they were! Have we never all but said it, cried it back to Him? But no, before the words have cooled in the air we recall them; not ours, because better, very far better. 'For My thoughts are higher than your thoughts:' who has not felt his thoughts, as if they had hands to hold, cling to the dear things low on the earth? 'I know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil to give you an expected end.' Dropping, dropping through the silence fall the words upon our hearts, and surely at such times there are those about us whom we do not see. Do they long to break through for one moment, be visible, explain? Do they watch us breathlessly, I wonder, as we sometimes watch a little hard-pressed child? Will it trust or will it not? 'What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.'

Therefore let the Lord's tried ones, to whom this tale may come, be of good courage. Blow may follow blow on the anvil of life, wave may chase wave upon its shores, Ichabod may be written, or appear to be written, across every hope, every purpose of the heart, even as for Ragland it was written again and again as the glory faded from his sky; pile simile on simile, how little such can say: are we not as water spilt on the ground which cannot be gathered up again? No, verily, it is not so. There is no waste in God's economy. This and no other is our faith. Let us hold it fast not only in moments of spiritual exultation when faith rises like a lark in the clear air and sings, but through all the common days of life when feelings die down, and everything looks hopeless and impossible.

Yes, there are the precious things brought forth by the sun, and happy are those who have such to offer; but blessed be God, too, for the precious things put forth by the moon, and for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills. Such are the treasures of darkness, jewels dug from out deep mines, the precious things of pain. God never wastes His children's pain.

Chapter 22: It is a Serious Task

NOR does He ever leave them unconsolated, and the Band pulled itself together and fought through that sinking of the spirits which makes us feel as if the bottom of things had been knocked out and nothing much mattered any more. Straight through the hot weather now upon them they worked steadfastly, preaching in hundreds of villages and towns, and rejoicing mightily when here and there they came upon ground already made soft with showers. In such ground they sowed the seed with a sure hope, and watched with grateful delight the ever new miracle of its up-springing (there is no missionary song like the 65th Psalm). But though they had these good hours sometimes, they never disguised the fact that as a whole the ground was very dry. 'To this-side-cow that side looks green,' says the Tamil. 'Far green cools the eyes.' Far hills look blue. But the far green is probably tussocky elephant grass. Climb the hills, and you find them hard going.

Ragland was a man who had no use for paint where truth was concerned. Perhaps mathematics and paint do not run together. At all events he writes about things exactly as he finds them. Every now and then he strikes sharply against the much pleasanter view usually accepted now about the 'Spiritual East'. Is it always remembered that Westcott's rather over-emphasized remark touched only that rarest type of soul, the seeker after God, whose ritual does indeed express him? Be that as it may, here is the word of another Cambridge scholar, one who knew the people not from books only, but in the thousand contacts of life.

'I find it (the work) likely to prove not such as those I have spoken to in England and in India have thought, particularly interesting or exciting; but rather just what I expected myself from the first, quiet, humble plodding day after day, and returning again and again to the same dull-minded (or if quick-minded, gainsaying) people, and endeavouring to make them care about their souls and seek the

Lord Jesus Christ; a work requiring very much patience and love, faith and perseverance. Oh that I might have all this!

Pioneer work sounds splendid; there is glamour in the very word; there is usually none in the life itself. Hear another of God's pioneers, Coillard of the Zambesi:

'The evangelization of the heathen world in the place where it is carried on, is certainly not a tissue of strange customs and adventures as thrilling as a romance; it is a desperate struggle with the Prince of Darkness, and with everything his rage can stir up in the shape of obstacles, vexations, oppositions, and hatred, whether by circumstances or by the hand of man. *It is a serious task.* Oh, it should mean a life of consecration and faith.'

But because they had entered into the field with earnest hope, and because they could not be satisfied with anything short of reality, and never (this is a Tamil word) showed brass for gold, Ragland and his colleagues searched themselves to find cause for the disappointments which did certainly meet them, and ever methodical, Ragland drew up a set of questions and answers probing into the matter.

First, as regards the Hindus, there were certain hindrances: their thorough worldliness, an almost universal forgetfulness of a future state (in spite of their doctrine of transmigration) and a great unwillingness to believe in it; their habits of idolatry and sensuality, for both can co-exist with the most intriguing philosophy; and in the domestic arrangements of some castes, allowed gross immorality. These he regarded as natural difficulties; but then, though confessedly great, they would prove as nothing before the power of God and His quickening Spirit. So he goes deeper: our preaching itself may be faulty. Is it always the Gospel? Always to the point? Do we avail ourselves of every opportunity and every mode of approaching the people?

Then, going deeper still: Do they see in us hindering things? Worldliness of mind? Levity? Impatience and anger? Selfishness?

And our friends, 'Do they not sometimes commend us too much?'

Bedrock questions these, and not out of date.

But, in spite of disappointment ('Blessed is he that expecteth nothing for he shall not be disappointed' was not a word cherished among them) the three who were left were very happy. They were often tired of the perpetual travelling under conditions which never grew restful. They were discouraged at times, being as we are. But they had the splendid unassailable happiness of freedom to pour themselves out to the very last drop, and they dearly loved one another.

'His ways with the Hindus were most impressive and tender,' writes Meadows, 'he would put his two hands on their shoulders and plead with them.' (These would be the peasant folk, others of course could not be touched, they would have felt it defiling.) And he tells now for himself and Fenn it was as if language would not yield strong enough words of love. It was the same with his Indian brothers and fellow-workers. 'Oh, may we all faithfully grow in pure and fervent love to one another. Our time of labour will soon be over, but then our time of fullest enjoyment of our Saviour's love and one another's love will only just be beginning,' he wrote to one of them.

Such love is never forgotten in India. 'What was he like?' I asked one of our oldest pastors, who had been, I was told, one of Ragland's men. The dear old man was breakfasting with us, he had just told us the frog and towel story, and he turned where he sat beside me and looked at me with eyes that shone with the coming of a host of sweet memories. 'He was loving, he loved us much,' he said in Tamil after a long pause; 'without measure, without boundaries he loved us'.

To one who could so love, the longing to see a great turning of the people to the Lover of them all was no endurable faint desire but a consuming passion, and the chill of hope deferred was as ice to his hot heart. Not that there were no individuals; as we have seen a little church was soon gathered out, to which Every was to minister:

but he longed to see crowds. Who does not? And it never becomes easier to see the greater number turn away unaffected as it would appear, and undesiring.

Still the joy when it does come is unearthly for sweetness. Oh the pure, the golden gladness of witnessing this Doing of the Spirit whether it be in the soul of man, woman or child. See the unyielding attitude, as the call and claims of our blessed Lord fall on an unwilling ear, the coldness towards His precious Death and Passion, the definite choice of sin change gradually or suddenly to a concern, a sense of need, the tenderness of penitence, a longing after Jesus the Saviour of the world, an understanding of what is meant by that mysterious but how simple coming to Him for life, the acceptance of forgiveness and cleansing through His blood, the quick spreading of a glow of grateful love over the whole being, the eager offer of all the heart's dearest, the apprehension of what is meant by access, and the loving, adoring, worshipful waiting for the crowning of our King. Who that has lived through it all but will rejoice with Ragland as he tells of one, a wealthy landowner, who, for no earthly reason but the pure love of Jesus, came to Him and followed Him through good report and ill? The teaching of such men was full of vivid moments. Who that has prepared such a one for baptism and the Lord's Supper and His most joyful service will ever forget those hours?

But here again we come straight upon the innate honesty of the man. He knows how the Christian public at home springs upon quick results, and how well it likes the man who will give it what it wants, but he utterly refuses to convey false impressions. 'How many such converts may we expect to be given us? Will not nine out of every ten be persons brought to us and kept with us by motives more or less worldly, and at length, only after a long pressing of God's word upon their hearts, brought just to such a measure of knowledge and correctness of walk and desire for salvation as to justify our admitting them to baptism? *If we were to look only at what has been, there would be no grounds for any high expectations*

(mathematics, here; hard facts, not sentiment). *But are we to limit our expectations by what has been only?* No, verily.

These words were written in that great year, 1858. Echoes of what was happening in America had reached South India and stirred most ardent longings. Nothing could satisfy Ragland but souls. But like many another as earnest he never saw the fields white unto the harvest. He was trusted to go on without seeing what he longed to see; and he went on.

*More than half beaten, but fearless,
Facing the storm and the night,
Reeling and breathless, but fearless,
Here in the lull of the fight,
I who bow not but before Thee,
God of the fighting clan,
Lifting my fists I implore Thee,
Give me the heart of a man!*

*What though I stand with the winners,
Or perish with those that fall?
Only the cowards are sinners,
Fighting the fight, is all.
Strong is my foe who advances,
Snapped is my blade, O Lord;
See their proud banners and lances,
But spare me the stub of a sword.*

Chapter 23: The Stub of a Sword

IT was the good wet month of October, 1858, on the plains of North Tinnevely, near the town of Siva's Benares. After the panting heat of the three previous months the very earth seems to cry out for the rains. October, generally about half-way through, brings them grey sheets that fall straight and solid, as if sluice-gates above were opened and the water descended in bulk not drops. Glorious days are to follow, days when the world washed clean and consoled sings and shouts for joy. Put your ear to the quick young leaf and hear the sap race through his veins. Open your heart to the sound of the land, not to the birds' talk only or to the multitudinous tiny talk of the unseen life among leaves and grass, but to those thousand little singing voices of the lowliest weed-flowers of the earth, and you know that every created thing carries its note within it, sings it forth and contributes to the rapture of the world. Why be reminded that it is but for a moment, that everything that can feel will be stretched alive on the frying-pan not three months hence? There is nothing less rememberable or recoverable to memory than heat. The very thought of it passes like a little puff of smoke.

So in the house lately furnished, the one inharmonious thing on the plains, for it was new and raw and starey-eyed, Ragland and his band settled down with thankfulness. What did it matter that the Tamil carpenter, unlike his brother of China and Japan and even of our Indian West Coast, thinks of a roof in terms of a lid, and that only? So long as it kept out the drenching rain it spelt luxury to the men underneath. And the solid bare walls were luxury too after flapping canvas. After long sojourn in tents the veriest hut is luxury. And Ragland indeed needed luxury now, he had owned to being ill. So had his fellow-worker Meadows, and he (Meadows) had started on the month's journey to get medical help in Madras. But Ragland knew the journey would be wasted time for him; he did not believe in the treatment, drugs and leeches and blisters, then used for his trouble, but in food and rest. And yet, as he carefully explains in a

letter home, in India your doctor is your friend, you cannot ask for advice and then refuse to follow it. It is not a question of fee but of kindness. If he went to Madras he would either have to submit to reducing treatment and lose the little strength he had ('Spare me the stub of a sword,' he says in effect as he enlarges upon that), or return to England to escape from it. This last he says he does not intend to do because he knows if he went home he would never get out again. So, to the great relief of his fellows, he decided to stay and do the hundred odd things he could do to help, and in utter contentment of spirit settled down to the wet weather work in the bungalow.

But he was very tired. Five unbroken strenuous years of work on the Plains lay behind him, and all the time there had been that which one in sympathy with the Father finds hardest to bear, the grief of seeing His poor children blindly turning away from their good. Morning by morning all over South India, the silence before dawn is crossed and jarred by the melancholy long-drawn wail of the conch. Flashes then across the inward sight the priest in charge of the idol in the temple near by, one sees him as he blows his shell, follows him as having wakened the sleeping god he proceeds to minister to it through petty barren rites, aches, yes *aches* is the only word, to lead him to the living fountains of waters, recalls his refusals. Thus, for the man who has ears to hear and a heart that cannot help loving, the Indian day begins.

And at sunset, through the treasures of colour and the general sense of peace once more that wail proceeds discordant, empty of triumph as of hope. And often in the night, always in these parts on Tuesdays and Fridays and often at other times, there is the persistent beat of the tom-tom that tells of demon worship unashamed. The listener must be strangely impervious to the thousand cries and calls and feelings of the air if he can lie and listen and turn again to sleep without a pang. Surely when we see our Lord Jesus we shall not ask Him to forgive us for our foolish over-caring, but rather that we cared so little, cared so coldly that souls are perishing for whom He died.

Ragland was his Lord's dear lover. Here and there among the old biographies that fill dull looking bookcases we find the tracks of such and kindle our poor little fires at their bright furnaces. Stars are they like the glory stars of our eastern skies, stars set among a multitude of greatly lesser stars, ourselves, so faintly following. Their deeds shine down through the years. Like many a hidden woman in the crowded little house whose duties are as constant as her unsung endurance, they appeared merely ordinary to the people about them for they wore no grand airs; but they walked with their God, and they went on; love held them on. They endured and did not give way. Of such was Ragland. He was ill now, but it never crossed his mind to give in. The pain of the land lay upon him, the pain of his hidden hurt, but here in the lull of the fight he stood, and asked only for strength to go on. Not that he was above temptation to weakness:

'I am very well now,' he had written two years before, cheerfully ignoring the lung. 'Nevertheless I long for rest from travelling. Rest from travelling—how quickly this little string of words suggests the thought of the longed-for rest' And he anticipates that for a moment and then adds, 'Oh that I knew something of the love of Jacob which made his seven years of servitude seem only so many days.' But he never listened to the voices that would have weakened him. The fear of fatigue never deterred him, was the witness borne to him afterwards.

Chapter 24: What Is

DOWN came the rain, and the plains smoked. Indoors Ragland wrote letters, did accounts, and unpacked his box from home, a precious box from Cambridge long looked forward to. One can almost see his careful hands taking the first of his four old silver prize cups and the plate to match from their tissue paper wrappings, his pleased kind eyes examining every detail, almost feel the warm heart-glow over this sign of unforgetting affection (for the plate was the gift of the Master and Fellows), and follow him to the holy quiet Communion with his Lord and the newly-won disciples, those joys of missionary life that pass the reach of words.

There was one black day. To enter into it with the man whom we have taken for friend we must come close to him if we can.

See then a boy with eager thoughtful face, eyes that look keenly, wistfully too, into the eyes of the man who talks with him. Go with him to his home, a big Indian house with many rooms one opening out of the other, with barred windows, and huge iron-bossed doors. Each door has its massively made lock and key: Indian houses can keep secrets well. The boy knows it, knows what is threatened if he confesses Christ, turns like a hunted animal but with a courage no hunted thing ever had, to face it all, confesses his new Master, Christ the Lord, escapes, how he hardly knows himself, from death by slow poison, or a living death from mind-destroying drugs, reaches his friend, the Englishman whose heritage is liberty and who understands his hunger and his thirst for spiritual liberty; tells him all, asks, though his strong home-love pulls him hard, for shelter for awhile.

But may the Englishman give him this one little thing, shelter?

His age? His father has his horoscope, so he cannot get it, and it can be manipulated and caused to prove him too young to have a mind of his own. Not too young, though, for a forced marriage if he is not already married (and this fact holds ten times more fatally if the

young confessor be a girl), not too young for any shame if the will of his people decree it, and he lies helpless and bound in their hands in one of those low, thick-walled, dim-lit rooms, whose doors, as we saw, can be locked, while the brain-drugging poisonous stuff is forced into his mouth.

Do you see it all, reader? If you saw him (if you saw her), saw the appeal in those eyes, not the flintiest soul could pass by unmoved. Ragland had such a one in mind who had fought through a few months previously, suffered, shown himself true. There had been legal trouble and the case had appeared before the High Court, Bombay. The decision had been in the boy's favour. It was held that one who showed himself fit to make his choice should be allowed to choose. And the Court had set him free.

Now, eight months afterwards, the High Court, Madras, had ruled in a similar case that age and not intelligence must decide the question, and a precedent was established which holds to-day.

Ragland thought of the boy recently delivered by the Bombay ruling. What if he had come under the Madras Court? He thought of two new enquirers, lads who knew their own mind, and were ready to lose lands and all their possessions rather than be untrue to Christ. He knew that the proof demanded of age over eighteen is usually unobtainable; for rural India knows nothing of birth records, and even where they are kept there are ways by which they can be suitably cooked.

Ragland, clear-seeing man that he was, looked straight down through the avenue of the years that day, saw the sorrows that advanced in silent procession, spiritual tragedies with no light in them, and he grieved exceedingly, touching for the first time in his life rock-bottom of pain.

For no distress of our own, no distress in the life of one beloved who has hold on the comforts of God, *nothing* can approach for sheer torture the sight of a soul that has just begun to turn towards good being overwhelmed, driven back, trampled under strong feet into pollution...How long, O Lord, how long?...And those to whom

such words sound too great for the occasion have either never loved much, or never tracked far along the covered roads wherein men walk in this present, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind. There are books which say otherwise, we have all read them; and the old Vedic prayers touch the heart with their beauty; but nevertheless it is true that Hinduism, as we know it in its outworkings, presents no mere 'different angle of vision', something to be approached delicately and never offended, but a deadly, cruel, subtle and awfully compounded power, with a face set straight against holiness and goodness and the white light of God. And nothing can recover a man, body and soul, from its entangling folds, but the compelling love of the Lord who died and rose again for our salvation.

In the north too, that autumn, the news was ominous, the Mutiny was being dealt with, and terrible things in righteousness had to be done for the sake of the peace of the land. And the home news was bad. Was there any unholy connection between this new order in the Madras High Court and Lord Stanley's anti-missionary speech in Parliament? Do light-flung threads run unseen between events like these? Is there a wireless telegraphy in the spiritual realm, a far more potent force than ours? And are these mysterious powers most active when the floods roll up against the Lord's warriors?

Who knows? Only we know that the despotisms, empires, forces that control and govern the world, the spiritual hosts of evil arrayed against us in the heavenly warfare, are as real at this hour as they were when St. Paul described them; meet them and you know it. Yield but for a moment to the spirit of the age, question the existence of these darker facts, suck honey from the flower of fancy as regards our enlightened times, and suddenly, even as you taste of its sweetness, the gates of the ages swing back on their hinges and eyes are given to you that can see, and you see what IS. Only, thank God, you also see what shall be, and take courage and fight on, be it with but the stub of a sword.

*Let the victors when they come
When the forts of folly fall.
Find thy body by the wall.*

—Clough

O Christian worker, Christian soldier, Christian pilgrim, in the midst of your 'contest' and your 'running' to-day, or in what seems the midst of it, for the end may all the while be just upon you, take heart from the thought that even so for you, if you are true to the blessed Name, it shall one day be. The last care will have been felt—and cast upon the Lord, the last exhausting effort will have been made, the last witness under difficulties borne, the last sorrow faced and entered, the last word written, the last word spoken. And then the one remaining thing will be to let the Lord, 'the Man at the Gate' lift thee in, and give thee rest.

—Bishop Moule. Note on 2 Timothy 4:6,8.

Chapter 25: Through an Open Window

IS there anything more unexpected than a true life-story with its quick turns up and down hill and the sudden and curious corners?

Last as first, obedience to his Master's command translated into terms of service to Ragland was office work.

He could help the younger men by counsel and by the ever-growing gladness of his love for them and faith in them. He could talk quietly to the people, often tedious folk, who came and went; but he could not do the more strenuous part of the work any more. Letter-writing, account-keeping, consulting, the thousand multiplicities of the 'secular', these he could undertake. 'And if they were all thrown upon us two younger brethren I think things could hardly go on,' was David Fenn's view of the matter. In the land where heavenly values are noted, the unselfish men and women in our mission offices are known for what they are.

So Ragland went on and met his last day, but not at all recognizing it sat down to write his mail. In it he explained how he now hoped to help, and David Fenn interpolated as above, adding out of the fulness of his loving heart as seemed good to him. And Ragland, cheered to think he was wanted so much, continued his letter. It was his last letter.

On that morning, October 22, 1858, life was as usual brimful of duties, and as usual in India if one lives with the people there was much coming and going; a small boy hanging halfway through an open window would not be noticed. There was nothing unusual in that.

But as the small boy looked, taking stock of the white men's ways, he saw the man whose kindly face had pleased his sense of the fitness of things, walk quickly across his bed-room to a little room opening off it; heard a stifled call, saw the younger man run to the older, help him to his camp-cot set in a corner of the room into

which the boy now gazed fascinated. The man on the cot said something the boy could not understand, and he looked up. The boy looked up too and very quickly, eager to miss nothing. But he saw nothing. Only he heard one word he recognized, 'Jesus', saw a smile that no passing of the years could blot from memory, and before he realized what it was he saw, he was looking upon death.

'And I could only look upon her as a wounded victor in possession of the field, and the enemy out of sight,' wrote Henry Venn of his dead wife. He would have said the same of the dead man whom to his eternal joy he had called forth to the Great War, could he have seen him then.

They laid him beside Every and Barenbrock, his faithful forerunners. One Englishman (Fenn) and a little group of Indian brothers stood together amazed, in tears. Then they turned to the house and took up life again, and the heavy grey skies seemed in sympathy as they came low down in rain. But as a dream when one awakeneth is the memory of such hours when the clouds have broken and the sun streams forth; and for these three friends it has been for a long time a morning without clouds.

And yet it might all have happened yesterday; for times change and customs; phrases pass, our very speech takes to itself new dress, the old sounds outworn to us, but the great elemental things of life do not change at all; like earth, air, water, fire, they abide unaltered and unalterable.

Deep in the quiet heart of the man who came and went before we were born burned the fire of a great love. Many waters cannot quench such love, nor can the dust of years smother it. 'Oh what a name is that,' he wrote from the midst of life's oppressions, 'the name of our dear Redeemer, how easily it makes every rough thing smooth.' And we? We have warmed ourselves for an hour by his fire, can we be as we were before? Can we bear our tepid lives? Can we call that poor little smouldering heap of ashes within us by the fiery name of love? What do the angels call it? Oh, they are winds

and flaming fires, those ministers of His that do His pleasures. And we? Are we winds and flames of fire?

God forgive us: God renew us.

Chapter 26: Fifty Years Afterwards

JUNE 3, 1851, a breathless date, for no rain from the western hills had come as yet to cool the air, and the pitiless heat of six parched months makes the average Englishman feel akin to the yellow stubble of grass in the dry water courses. All flesh is grass, and withered grass, in June before the rains.

On that date, in that heat the man, whom we now know a little, wrote the words we copied before: *'Of all plans of ensuring success, the most certain is Christ's own, becoming a corn of wheat, falling into the ground, and dying.'*

June 11, 1901, on just such a day, those same words were repeated slowly by a man like-minded, Walker of Tinnevelly. No life of Ragland was to be had then, the ancient blue Memoir was discovered later; but this one sentence was like a winged seed, it had flown down the fifty years to us. More than any other human words they influenced the man who quoted them now.

On that day, sultry to exhaustion, after a long sticky railway journey and a hotter stickier bullock-cart drive, we had walked from the nearest mission station to Ragland's grave. A bare, baked road, six hot missionaries trudging along in more or less silence, for there was no visitor to delude into the belief that nobody was particularly tired—it does not sound an inspiring spectacle. Nor was it. Dust lay thick everywhere, the heat was visible as it is in our hottest days, you can see it in tremulous waves flowing knee-deep along the levels, breast-high sometimes where spaces are vast. The sun knowing he was near his setting thrust at us in long sharp slanting stabs, and the wind we longed for lay low and said nothing.

In silence then, we stood beside the place where the shell of Ragland lay, near by the house where he died. Desolation reigned. Not a green thing breathed. But that word, quick as the day it was first written on paper long since turned to dust, was at work then, is at work to-day, imperishable as energy.

Which was the boy's window?

It was rather a small question to ask, and it broke on the great silence like the foolish little chirp of a bird. But it would have been interesting to know, and we walked round the poor weather-beaten house, looking in through the gaping holes, trying to see, trying to hear. If walls could speak, what a strange confusion of words there would be. Or would each house have its dominant word? This surely would. We could almost hear it now, word of words, name of names, Jesus.

That boy never forgot it. One day, a man grown, and still a Hindu, he stood by a dying friend. 'I have learned ten thousand stanzas,' the dying man gasped in his awful mortal terror, 'but the bough that I clutch breaks in my hand, the branch that I stand on snaps under my feet.' And he turned in his agony to the man by his side. There was silence for a while.

*Lord, in the darkness I wander,
Where is the lamp? Is there no lamp?
Nothing know I, but I wonder,
Is there no lamp? Where is the lamp?*

The words (thus freely translated) were wrung from the heart of the noblest of Tamil poets:

*Lord, in the vastness I wander,
Where is the way? Is there no way?
How may I reach Thee, I wonder,
Is there no way? Where is the way?*

They cried again through the dying man's soul. Was there no one to light a lamp, no one to show a way?

Then the younger man in sore distress remembered; told of the open window, the look, the smile, the one great Word, 'Jesus'.

And that memory of a Christian death was all the light the Hindu had to die by.

Is there no call in that?

*Glory to Thee, O God of mighty forces,
Glory to Thee for mystic voices' thunder,
Glory to Thee for these Thy water-courses, Whispers of wonder.
How calm thy flow, thou stream of golden glances;
Frail water-plumes, why fret ye at his flowing:
Will your array of frothy spears and lances
Bar his great going?*

*It may not be: Oh see the white mist creeping,
The hurrying wheels of cloud-land, hear them, hear them!
The rains, the falls, the tumult of their leaping—
Vain ripples, fear them!
O splendours, powers, deep in the silence hidden—
To-day these bars, to-morrow and thereafter
Triumph of flood, and glorious unforbidden
Snow-foam of laughter.*

—Dohnavur Songs

Chapter 27: Except

THIS book has been written, as its note told, in the green depths of a recess among the mountains Ragland saw from the Plains. And as I end it I look up and see the final chapter framed in forest and grey rocks.

For below flashes a mountain river, clear as crystal. The colours of the rocks under water here run from red-brown, through all yellows to orange, almost flame colour at times, and there are cool washes of jade-green and grey. It is as if some giant brush dipped in pools of melted jewels had dealt out the colours in great smooth sweeping strokes; the very gravel sparkles like crushed chrysolite, and the river flows over this loveliness as if it knew the glories that lie in it, and the heart in one wonders, 'Can there be even in paradise anything more lovely than clear water upon lighted coloured rocks?'

But as the river turns for a leap round and over the curved shoulder of a boulder, slashed with rose-red now, as a beam from the sunset strikes it, a little angry determined hurry of foam meets it, spreads across it, thrusts forth a series of frothy tongues, makes as if to forbid it to proceed.

And the curious thing is that the little tongues seem to be making headway, or is it that the dance of the water bewilders eye and thought? Granted that, are they not at least holding their own? Surely that little forbidding fretted line has not by one inch given way?

Has it not? So possibly think the water beetles caught unawares in its flurry. But they imagine a vain thing.

We know better. The changeless front is changing. Every drop of that ruffle of water is being carried down even as it lifts itself up. A score of such eddies foam and fuss in this one little reach of calm water alone. The river takes no heed.

And soon the great day for all rivers will come. A night of the rumbling of thunder among the mountains, a whisper of mist in the morning, more thunder; the rains. Then—but how describe it?—in the twinkling of an eye ‘the floods’. Domination, majesty, awful glorious irresistible might, that will be what whoso stands here on that day will see. Rocks will be spun down, their crash will reverberate through the ravine, great trees will be tossed about as if they were rivers’ toys. Where will this impotent ripple be then?

For awhile indeed it will be. As the tremendous force from above strikes the obstructing shoulder with greater vehemence, there will spring up plumes of white water, curled feathers of foam, higher and higher they will rise, as more and more grandly the floods sweep down, till they lift themselves for the last time, curl over and disappear. Then, then will be seen only the flow of the river and that sound which is like nothing else on earth, the glorious noise of waters in the fulness of their might, will fill the whole ravine.

To-day we stand on the edge of a river the fulness of whose might we have never yet seen. Futile forces play upon it, make to withstand it; poor little puerile tongues of froth, they think they are barring the river’s way. But the Lord shall laugh at them. As spume before the flying winds they shall be on the day when the river rises in spate.

Ragland did not live to see the splendour of that day. We may not live to see it. But someone will. Let us never lose heart. That day is nearer than when we first believed.

And in the time between this and then, be it long or short, by the love of the Lover of souls, by the love of all fellow-lovers, let us live, by the power of that love, the life that is all poured forth.

What if we waste our lives?...Down those steep mountain-sides scores of waterfalls race in joyful eager streams. From our valley half-way up the heights we can see them spring from their secret places among the crags a thousand feet above; we can watch them in their headlong flight to our river here. And as we watched them

the other day after the first rain had overflowed their pools, a child's voice beside me said, quoting from one of the children's songs,

'What do they know of measured love, or meagre?

Let Him take all'

Shall the waterfalls do more for their river than we are willing to do for our Lord? The joy of life, the strength of youth, the gathered fruit of study, the powers of the whole being and all its riches of love, are these too much to pour forth upon Him, at the feet of our Lord, our Redeemer?

It is the old word in a new form, and with that we end.

*But all through life I see a Cross
Where souls of men yield up their breath,
There is no life except by death,
There is no vision but by faith,
Nor justice but by taking blame,
Nor glory but by bearing shame,
And that eternal Passion saith,
Be emptied of glory and right and name.*

'Verily, verily, I say unto you, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

