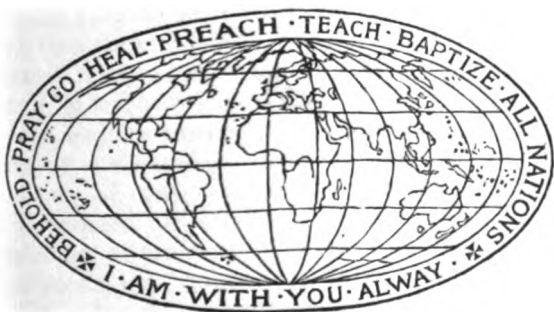


STUDENTS AND THE MODERN MISSIONARY CRUSADE

ADDRESSES DELIVERED BEFORE THE FIFTH INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE STUDENT VOLUNTEER MOVEMENT FOR FOREIGN MISSIONS
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE, FEBRUARY 28-MARCH 4, 1906



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AFRICA

**General Survey of African Fields and of Methodist
Work**

**Experiences of a Pioneer Missionary on the Congo
Work of the United Presbyterians in Northeastern
Africa**

**The American Board's Work in West Central Africa
In British Central Africa**

with growing cities and magnificent agricultural interests, with multitudes accepting Christ, with the power of Islam broken, with barbarism and superstition gone, and the Christ honored over all that vast area. God hasten the day. O Africa, for thee I live, for thee I pray, and, if necessary, for thee I die!

EXPERIENCES OF A PIONEER MISSIONARY ON THE CONGO*

THE REV. WILLIAM H. SHEPPARD, D.D., F.R.G.S., CONGO

AMONG the many things which impress me in this great Convention, allow me to mention two. One is the great possibilities that are within these walls as you go forth to battle in the four quarters of the world for the Master. Your beautiful singing is the next. As I have heard it, I have thought of what it will be when we shall have gone to glory, when all the Christian singers of the world gather themselves together. David of the harp will be there; Gabriel of the trumpet will be there. I am indeed grateful to you that you allow me this opportunity to speak of our work in Central Africa on the Congo. I have had many experiences; I shall speak of only a few.

When a boy playing in the streets of Waynesboro, Virginia, a good lady called me to her. She said: "William, I am praying for you. I pray that some day you may go to Africa as a missionary to your own people." I thanked her. I went up and down the street playing with the other boys, but the Master had made the impression.

In 1890, as the "Adriatic" slowly steamed out from the pier in New York, a kind voice called out as she waved us good-by, "Sheppard, take care of Sam." It was the voice of Mrs. Lapsley, wife of Judge Lapsley, of Alabama, who had not only given her prayers and money but now her most precious gift, her own son, to Africa. We sailed away, our faces turned toward next to the largest continent of the world, the richest of the world, the darkest of the world, and the most neglected of the world. Judge Lapsley's good wife returned to Alabama. The home had changed. There was a vacant chair; there was a voice that was never heard there again. After a short sail we reached Liverpool; then we went up to London.

One month's stay in London was spent in getting information about the Congo, securing supplies of food, outfit for traveling and exploring, and exchanging American money for that used in the

*Dr. Sheppard's address at the Ryman Auditorium was largely a repetition of this, and hence the two have been combined in the present one.

interior of Africa, such as cowrie shells, salt, beads, cloth, and brass wire.

After these necessary purchases and arrangements, a twenty days' sail brought us to the coast of Africa. Here we disembarked at Banana and went to Matadi, ready for the trip to the interior. There were no horses or oxen, the burden bearers being natives of the Ba-Congo tribe. During this journey of fifteen days over the barren mountains and through the valleys we had daily evening prayer, calling the carriers around and talking to them by signs and in English. The Holy Sabbath Day was never broken by travel. At Stanley Pool we met missionaries of the Baptist and Methodist churches. While waiting here for a steamer to get into the interior, we spent a good deal of our time in fishing and hunting with the natives, killing some thirty-six hippopotami, two elephants, and many crocodiles. We also picked up their language in this way.

We had been advised by the King of the Belgians to proceed to the Kassai Valley. Hearing of a country called Kinguwegi on the Kwango River, we proceeded there in two canoes. These two months we suffered very much from natives, wild beasts, rain, and exposure. But the voice of Jesus cheered us, "Lo, I am with you alway." We will only mention two or three things that happened to us when the Master, who called us forth to darkest Africa, proved that He was with us.

One day, by accident, one of our canoes turned over; a native was dragged away; he screamed for help. Immediately we put our canoe on land and rescued our man. Back again in our canoes, we crossed to the other side. Soon we heard drums, and the natives told us, "They have telegraphed ahead that enemies are coming." For two days we were driven from one side of the river to the other, and were shot at by poisonous arrows. None of them touched us. We traveled by night. Being hungry after this, we came to a narrow raceway. We heard people talking. They said, "Make your way to this side." We did so. Soon we heard them fighting; we journeyed through the night and crossed to a town of 30,000 people, and rescued our men. No harm came to us and none to the villagers. Had the Lord not been with us we never would have been heard of again.

Up the Congo we went. One day Mr. Lapsley, my comrade, was sick with fever. As we attempted to land, we saw women catching up their babies and running to the jungle and men getting arrows to shoot. I stood over Mr. Lapsley and called, "Don't shoot! Don't shoot!" and asked them if we could sleep there for the night. "To-morrow we go away," I said. "No. Go away; go away," they cried. So we started for the other side and landed on the sandy bank. We got out the tent and had Mr. Lapsley carefully moved into his bed. Walking up and down the river bank we could hear the excitement on the other side. At twelve o'clock at night it still

was going on. At two in the morning those people had not retired; nor had I. So we said, "In the morning something will happen." Coming outside early, as we looked across the river we saw one of their war canoes filled with men starting up-stream, and then another. I ran to the tent and said to Mr. Lapsley, "Those people are coming; what shall I do?" He was there sick with fever, with no chance of running away. He said, "There is nothing that *we* can do." He meant by this that the Master could do something. I came outside. They had started in our direction. I could hear their warwhoop. Just at this extremity a hippopotamus came. We shot him. Then the thought came, why not offer them this meat? They were crazy for meat. I waded in the water to my waist and beckoned to them, calling out: "Come this way, all of you. Don't be afraid." The nearest canoe approached me as I was wading in the water, and I surprised the first man by saying, "Leave your spear." The next canoe load that followed I turned the hippopotamus over to, and then they began with their long knives to cut it up and fight over it. I went into the tent and told Mr. Lapsley that we were saved. It was no surprise to that servant of God. He was so near to the Master always that he believed He would save us.

We returned to Stanley Pool and went on a small steamboat up the Lulua. After thirty days we landed at a place called Luebo. At Luebo the captain put us on shore; he told us that we could go no further toward the cataracts. But there were towns there; we could see the natives on shore. We could not speak the language. We went across the country, and men came to fight. We said: "We have come here. We have been sent as foreign missionaries to live with you and teach you, if you wish us to remain." They talked over the matter between themselves and decided that we could live with them. Our tent and belongings were all put on shore. The captain blew his whistle; his workmen on board waved us good-by. He said, "I will try to get back this way again in about nine months." We said, "Very well, captain." We waved him good-by also. We watched the steamboat as it turned the last bend in the river and the smoke until it all cleared away; and we were 1,200 miles from the coast in the heart of Africa alone—yet not alone; "Lo, I am with you alway." Should we get sick with fever, the nearest doctor was down at Stanley Pool, 800 miles away. But when I was sick, Mr. Lapsley practiced on me; and when he was sick, I practiced on him.

We went with our tent and our loads up near a town and pitched our tent. The first thing that we did was to have prayer. We bowed and dedicated ourselves to the Master, asking His protection that we might be a blessing to those natives. The next day the natives, hearing of the foreigners, came down, thousands of them, from all the towns round about, surging round our tent and looking at the strange people that had come among them, and we looked at

them. They were strange to us, and we could not understand a single word they were saying; it was a new dialect. But the worst time was during the nights, when they had withdrawn to their tents. We could then hear only the chirping of the crickets and the calling of the jackals. To acknowledge our weakness, sometimes we cried like babies all night long thinking of home and of friends. It is a small thing to mention, but you have no idea how it cheered our hearts when in the morning about five o'clock we heard the roosters crowing.

A tribe varies from 50,000 to 350,000, living in villages ranging from 1,000 to 20,000 people. Contrary to common belief, the country is well populated. These people, the Bakete, all seemed bent on doing us some kindness. The boys would go with our jugs to the creek and bring water. The men and women brought plantains, bananas, pineapples, chickens, sugarcane, dried field rats, peanuts, and fish as presents. We bought of them for cowrie shells two well-constructed houses of bamboo, which were larger and cooler than our tent. We were indeed glad to find such a responsive people.

With our books and pencils in hand we learned the Ke-Kelti. We would point to objects, and the natives would tell us the native name. In this way we studied the language. There was not a book in all this region; we doubt if they had ever seen a scrap of newspaper. When we could make ourselves intelligible, we preached and prayed and longed for one ray of light. "Lord, give us one soul; our faith is so weak. May we see some visible sign of Thy favor."

One day after an exceedingly earnest talk by Mr. Lapsley to a crowd of natives, one woman was so deeply impressed that she arose from her low seat and spoke out distinctly and earnestly, "Why, Mr. Lapsley, if we had known that God loved us, we would have been singing to Him." The Holy Ghost had made an impression on the woman's heart, though as yet the plan of salvation was vague to her. The missionary of Jesus went to his tent with a heart overflowing with gratefulness for this one ray of light. At midnight I heard Mr. Lapsley praying, "We thank Thee, Heavenly Father, for the first evidence of Thy blessing." The people called him "Ntomen-Jela," meaning pathfinder; for he found his way into their country, into their homes, into their language, and, best of all, into their hearts.

When Mr. Lapsley was called down country to see the Governor-General about our land concessions, the beach was crowded with natives to wave him good-by. The strangers who had come to their land on a strange mission were now known and loved. Day by day we tried to preach and lead the people to Christ. We opened a little school and taught them the alphabet. We had no slates, papers, or pencils; so we smoothed off plots on the ground and used sticks to write with. Many of the natives living far away in the in-

terior heard of us and came down to visit us. Some brought their families and made their homes near our place.

After many months of weary waiting, after a hundred prayers to God to sustain our friend, body and soul, natives reported that a steamboat had been sighted slowly coming up the river. Our hearts leaped for joy. Mr. Lapsley is coming! We were so happy to receive him back. The steamboat drew up to the bank; the captain beckoned me to come aboard and handed me a letter. Hastily opening it, I read: "Dear Brother Sheppard, your friend and comrade, Rev. S. N. Lapsley, while here at Matadi was attacked by a bilious hematuric fever and died on the 26th of March." Was it true, or was it an unhappy dream? Stricken with giddiness we crept from the deck and, followed by hundreds of crying and excited natives, sought a quiet spot in the bush near our beloved station.

Some weeks after, we called the mission station natives together and laid before them the perilous journey into the forbidden land to King Lukenga's capital. We explained that Mr. Lapsley proposed taking the journey, and now we would, with the help of the Master, carry out those plans. We had previously studied the language of the interior people, the Bakuba. Whenever they came down from their country to trade, we would entertain them at our station, and in this way learned the language and made maps of the many trails, markets and villages. We were two months on the road, not because of the distance, but because the many difficulties we encountered from trails, elephants, leopards, and frightened natives detained us. We made the journey, and through a superstition which God permitted we were not murdered.

In 1893 we were reinforced by three white missionaries and their wives. The missionaries studied hard on the language, all the villages in the neighborhood were visited and prayer meetings were established for our own spiritual growth. The ladies visited the women and the sick in the villages daily, and as we learned the language better, we preached daily in some of the near villages, holding our services under big bamboo trees. In 1894 we had more comfortable houses and a church building, seating 100 people. Some of our number had been called home to glory in the meantime, and the Lord sent four colored missionaries to join us.

We had long been praying for a soul. In April, 1895, five young men came to us saying that they had renounced their idols and believed in the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. We were indeed happy. These were carefully instructed and trained, and after some months, when we felt sure of them and had seen evidence of their changed lives, we received them into the church. At once these five started out as missionaries of Jesus and preached daily to their brethren. Soon others followed. In 1896 a beautiful church, with steeple and bell, was erected, which held 600 people. The Holy

Spirit honored the Word which was daily preached by his faithful missionaries. The last building for worship at Luebo is the "Slay-maker Memorial Tabernacle." The building is well ventilated, daily services are held in it, and on the Sabbath there is hardly standing room in the spacious building. In 1897, forty miles northeast of Luebo a new work was started, with only a handful of faithful followers of Jesus. There are now more than 1,000 Christians there. The last church erected is on the famous spot where from time immemorial the accused witches have had to be tested by drinking poison. Fifty native evangelists, teachers, and helpers have been sent out from the Luebo church. There are twenty-five of the same faithful kind sent out from the Ibange church. These are all supported by the natives themselves. Every new mission established is self-sustaining.

Fifteen years ago, when the missionaries landed at Luebo, 1,200 miles from the coast, the natives had never seen or heard of a missionary, had never seen a book, had never sung a hymn, had never heard of Christ! The giving of poison to supposed witches was a daily occurrence; the Holy Sabbath and week days were all the same. The sacredness of the marriage tie and the taking of but one wife had not been taught them. Of all people these were most miserable, most neglected.

To-day what has God wrought? There are two well-manned mission stations, Luebo and Ibange. The orphan children, who are often sold for goats, are now housed in two comfortable homes—the "Pantops" and the "Maria Carey" Homes. Day and Sabbath-schools have been established through the country, which are taught and supported by natives. The poisonous cup is a thing of the past. Whenever the Gospel is preached, the Sabbath is observed, even by sinners. Polygamy is fast being abolished. The people desire and have Christian marriages and funerals; no one is again buried with the dead. Family prayer has been established in every Christian home. Natives, once savages—some were cannibals—are now in the "Leighton Wilson" printing office, setting up type or printing and binding books for use in church and school. Their houses are larger and cleaner, their homes are happier, their children are learning to wear clothes. The prayer meeting, Christian Endeavor Society and catechumen classes are conducted by intelligent Christian natives. They are indeed happy and are daily following the teachings of the lowly Jesus.

Had you not sent them the Gospel, to-day they would be in all the darkness and wretchedness of their fathers. As you so generously stretch out your arms to China, Japan, Korea, and other mission lands, you have not forgotten poor Africa, the darkest spot on the planet.