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Grinding Barley in the Near East



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1872—JOHN IRVINE ARMSTRONG—1924

AN APPRECIATION

R. E. MAGILL, *Secretary*

With aching hearts, stunned minds, but, we trust, with submissive wills and unquestionable faith, we announce the death of the Editor-in-Chief of our Sunday School Publications, Rev. John I. Armstrong, D.D., which occurred on March 8, 1924.

He was stricken with pneumonia on Monday, March 3rd, and after five days' illness, during which every remedy known to modern medical science was used, he entered into eternal rest.

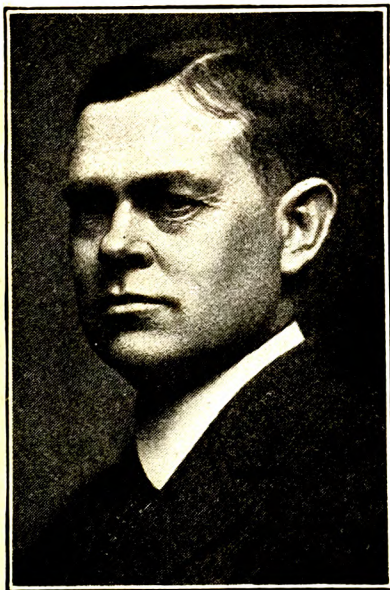
Dr. Armstrong left as a legacy a record of service to our Church and to the Kingdom of God conspicuous for its devotion to high ideals, the sacrificial giving of himself to his work, gracious consideration of the opinions of others, and of loyalty to his friends. He consecrated his life to the task of Christian education, and to a mental endowment of a high order he added the equipment which comes through continuous study and research. He received the degree of A. B. and M. from Hampden-Sidney College and immediately took up the profession of teaching. He was associated with the Wallace School for boys at Nashville, Tenn., until he entered Union Seminary at Richmond for his theological training. He graduated with distinction in 1904, and was called at once to the chair of Moral Philosophy and Logic by his Alma Mater, Hampden-Sidney College. This position he

held until he accepted the chair of Philosophy and English Bible at Agnes Scott College, Decatur, Ga., in 1906. In order to enlarge his usefulness, he accepted at the same time the pastorate of the Kirkwood Presbyterian Church in the suburbs of Atlanta. The able burden was carried successfully.

He became Educational Secretary of Foreign Missions in 1913, and held this position until 1920. A literature of an exceptionally high order was created, and the Church was given a new vision of its missionary obligation and an intensive course of study

was launched, which, if followed, will give our people an intimate knowledge of conditions in every field we occupy.

The Lewisburg Seminary of West Virginia found itself in need of a President, and laid a call upon Dr. Armstrong's heart. He accepted this arduous task in 1920, and rendered a great service to the cause of Christian education in carrying this institution through a grave financial crisis.



John Irvine Armstrong.

The Publication Committee made three attempts to have Dr. Armstrong accept a place on its Editorial Staff. Our last call, to become Editor-in-Chief of all the Publications of the Southern Presbyterian Church, appealed to him as offering a field of boundless usefulness and a task that would tax his resources to the limit. It was characteristic of the man that he always sought tasks that involved great personal sacrifice. He took full charge of our publications on April 1, 1923, and here entered upon what promised to be his largest service to the Church. He began at once a broad and constructive plan of developing and improving our periodicals, and enlisted at once the enthusiastic support of his associates in the Editorial and Educational Departments.

Dr. Armstrong personally reviewed every line of copy appearing in our twenty-four Sunday School periodicals, and his fine judgment was reflected in the improvement of all the periodicals. In addition he prepared the expository notes which appeared in the *Earnest Worker*, and many of the leading Editorials.

Throughout the Church his fine work and spirit were recognized, and this sudden ending of a rich and fruitful life brings grief and regret to the whole Church. He leaves a devoted wife and five children, ages six to eighteen years, and the sympathy of the whole Church is with them in their great bereavement.

additional strain of the conference work lowered his resistance to such an extent that he was not able to rally when attacked by dysentery. His death was a great blow to our mission. He was our leader, not because he was a senior missionary on the field, but because he inspired the confidence of everyone with whom he came in contact. His unrelenting stand for justice to the natives made many hate and fear him, but while hating and fearing him they were forced to respect him as one of the first missionary statesmen of the world.

From 1918 on, rapid strides have been made in the medical work. The policy of training natives as medical assistants was started as early as 1910 by Dr. Coppedge and has been continued up to the present. The progress has necessarily been slow as it was not possible in the beginning to pick up the best material for this work.

Now we are able to get the best element among the natives to take up this work, and regular three year courses are given following the training outlined by the Congo Government. Our graduates are then given an

examination by the government physician and certificates are given them which places them on the same footing as those graduated from the government schools. Last year seven of our boys were given certificates. They are eagerly snapped up by the larger companies and given good salaries.

In 1921 a great calamity struck us, one entire wing of the new hospital was destroyed by fire and one year's supply of medicines, our entire laboratory equipment and electric plant were burned. However, the McKowen's who gave the original hospital have now given enough money to rebuild the burned wing and also enough to build another wing and a new electric plant. The destroyed wing is already rebuilt, and plans are ready for further construction.

The Lord has wonderfully blessed us in this work, and it has proven the opening wedge for the Gospel of our Master. May the results of the past be an earnest of the blessings of the future as we continue in His name.

Luebo, Congo Belge.

THE BLOOD COVENANT IN AFRICA.

REV. T. C. VINSON.

ANCIENT customs still prevail to a very large extent in Africa. Not infrequently one of these customs is found to serve as a point of contact between the native and the missionary as he preaches the Gospel. A striking illustration is the "blood-covenant," which is the most sacred and most binding oath the African of the Belgian Congo can take. In entering upon this covenant he solemnly binds himself to fulfill the conditions in the agreement, at the same time calling down upon his head the direst of curses in the event he should break his oath.

The covenant is made in this district in the following manner: When two tribes have been at war or at variance with each other and are seeking to make peace, the "treaty" is "signed" and sealed with this covenant. The "go-betweens" having arranged the preliminaries, a neutral spot is selected, where the ceremonies are to

take place. On the chosen date the representative men of each tribe bring sheep, which they exchange after breaking their legs.

A cup of water is brought and one of the representatives mixes a little Indian hemp with it. Each man then cuts a gash on his right wrist and adds a few drops of blood to the mixture. The contents are next poured through the muzzle of a gun barrel and caught in another cup as it flows from the other end. This signifies loyalty to each other in the event of war.

The contracting parties now take their stand upon a leopard skin and grasp the cup, containing the mixture, with their right hands, each holding his left hand under the thigh of the other. Standing in this posture they in turn drink equal portions of the contents of the cup. Having mingled blood with blood with the symbol of peace and the symbol of war, they thus pledge them-



Corn raised by the Students of the Mutoto Bible School. The records made by these boys might rival some of those made by our own Corn Club boys.

selves loyally to protect their mutual interests in peace and war, even at the price of their own blood.

This part of the ceremony being complete, the sheep are killed by cutting the throat, the blood flowing out on the ground. The carcasses are divided, each party taking half of his own and half of the other's. The meat is dressed and cooked in two large native pots and all the near relatives of the representative parties eat of it. This signifies that they also obligate themselves to fulfil the conditions of the covenant.

The analogy between this ancient custom and the Christian's covenant relationship with Christ must not, of course, be pressed too far, but the essential features

serve as a vivid illustration of Christ's sacrifice for in order to bring peace between God and the rebellious sinner. Christ Himself is at once the Mediator of covenant and the lamb of the sacrifice. We enter into the covenant relationship with Him and partake of His life through the symbols of His flesh and His blood. We pledge our loyalty to Him and He promises to sustain us. If we break the covenant we bring upon ourselves the fate of those who have "trodden under foot the Son of God and have counted the blood of the covenant wherewith they were sanctified, an unholy thing, and have done despite unto the Spirit of grace." Christ is the Mediator of a "better covenant," which is established upon better promises.—*Missionary Review*.

WHY DOES THE CONGO NATIVE RUN FROM HIS MOTHER-IN-LAW?

REV. ROBT. D. BEDINGER.

SOME time ago I lost my way in a village and requested a young man to put me in the right path.

As we rounded a house he gave a sudden leap and was off at full speed. As I called to him he slackened his speed but never turned his face. I noticed his shoulders shaking as if he were convulsed with laughter, or was it fear? I inquired into his strange conduct. With a sheepish grin, he said: "That woman back there is my mother-in-law and I saw her face!"

Rev. P. Smith tells a choice bit. In the village of an important Lulua chief, he was invited to occupy the brick guest house, one of the few in this land. After becoming installed, his cook came up and said, "Mr. Smith, I wish to do your cooking here, but unless you move out of this immediate section I cannot do it." Much surprised, Mr. Smith inquired the reason for so unusual a demand. The cook answered, "My mother-in-law is one of the wives of this chief and if I remain in close proximity to this harem I am likely to see her face!" Rather than subject him to such a harrowing experience, Mr. Smith removed to the house of the evangelist, some distance away.

Recently I was doing pastoral work in the local village. I ran across a man who is not a Christian. He was not even attending the inquirers' class. When I

asked him why he did not attend, he replied, "I cannot because my mother-in-law attends."

Two years ago one of our most intelligent evangelists, Mulumbu, lost his wife with sleeping sickness. After many unsuccessful efforts he finally located a prospective wife in a nearby village. Since she is only in the inquirers' class we could not permit the marriage to take place until she becomes a baptized convert. Therefore we sent Mulumbu out for two months with a married evangelist. Last week I received the following note of distress from him: "This village to which you sent me is the place where my prospective mother-in-law was born. These people and those across the creek from Mutoto are the same tribe. They claim that it is the same as if my mother-in-law were here; that she turns from time to time. They are refusing to come to Church and to have anything to do with me. I have tried to tell them that the custom is evil, that the affair of God is of more importance, but they are obdurate. Please permit me to go to the village of Ditolo. There I may preach without embarrassment, but here I am constantly in hot water."

I knew that the poor fellows who get married in this land suffer much from the demands of their in-laws.



Students in the Boys' School, Mutoto Station, Africa. Their mothers have little worry over soiled clothes or stockings to mend.



Raising vegetables on the Mutoto Farm, Belgian Congo, Africa. Note the shade built over the vegetable plots.