

D. M. THORNTON

A STUDY IN MISSIONARY IDEALS AND METHODS

BY THE REV.

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"CAMBRIDGE DAYS."

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HANC NARRATIONEM VITÆ
D. M. THORNTON
VOLENTE ILLA CUI, SI CUI MORTALIUM,
DEDICANDA FUIT,
MAIORI DEI GLORIÆ
CONSECRAVIT
AUCTOR
AMICUS

Make Jesus King

By D. M. T.

“THE whole wide world for Jesus.”
All creatures great and small,
Come ye, bow down before Him,
God shall be all in all.
Go, Christian men united,
Fill'd with compassion, sing
The earth's awak'ning chorus,
Peal forth: “Make Jesus King!”

“The Gospel of the Kingdom.”
Go, teach, baptize, to-day
Let all creation listen
Before it pass away.
Those millions groping, longing
For peace, for pardon free,
Tell them the words of Jesus,
Ring out: “Come unto Me!”

“This generation calleth.”
Shall Christians not obey
Commands of Jesus agelong?
His promise stands to-day:
All power to Me is given,
My banner rests unfurl'd;
Lo, I am with you alway—
Evangelise the world.

PREFACE

“Thornton was the first man I ever met who devoted his intellectual powers to thinking out the wider problems of the evangelisation of the world and the spread of Christian institutions in mission lands. Although since then I have met others who were occupied with the same questions, I have never known any one who approached them with more whole-hearted devotion, a keener zeal for knowledge, a closer mastery of detail, or a more far-sighted and elevating faith.”—[*Extract from a Memorial Sketch, by a Cambridge friend.*]

THE above words, by a friend of D. M. Thornton's, and a man already highly distinguished in the field of scientific research, express very justly the reasons which dictated the writing of this Memoir. It is not that Thornton was the writer's dear friend and intimate colleague and leader in work—such a reason would not have been sufficient, had not he been, as he was, *representative*. And that in two ways; for, first of all, in writing his life one is thereby recording the history, at its most interesting stage, of the Student Christian and Volunteer Missionary Movement, which has been one of the most important Christian movements of recent times; and, secondly, one is directly brought face to face with the problem of the most formidable

opponent of the Christian religion in the whole world—the religion of Islam—and is given to witness the methods employed by a versatile, highly trained, and wholly devoted man, to bring the Gospel home to the followers of that religion. And in these days, when Christ's Church is more and more awakening to the duty and the critical importance of undertaking the evangelisation of the Mohammedan world, it is the hope of the writer, it is the hope of others who loved this man, that this book will help to deepen this knowledge, and this interest, and this growing sense of duty, as well as giving to the Church the spiritual inspiration of a life that spent, and was spent, yes, to the uttermost extent of its powers, for the Kingdom of God and for Jesus Christ our Lord.

The writer of this Life was, as has been already said, Thornton's partner in work during the whole of the latter's time in Egypt, except the first twelve months; and shared jointly with him in the carrying out of the various schemes the inception of which is narrated in this book. If this relationship is not much *en évidence* in the following pages, it is by no means because it was ignored by Thornton, whether in his letters and memoranda, or otherwise; but simply because it is not relevant to the subject in hand, especially as, in regard to the *conception* of those plans (which is what mainly forms the subject of

this book), Thornton's name might fairly stand alone. He was a man who sought and was grateful for all the help he could get in the carrying out of his plans for the Kingdom; and it is a source of happiness to the writer that he was privileged to render him some such assistance.

My best thanks are due to his widow and sister for help received in arranging material; to Miss Emily Barton and Mrs. Barker for very much assistance; to Dr. Eugene Stock for so kindly reading over this Life of his friend; and to the Rev. T. Tatlow and the others who contributed biographical reminiscences of the subject of this Life.

OCHTERLONY, 1908.

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CHAPTER I

CHILDHOOD AND SCHOOLDAYS

THE life of Douglas Montagu Thornton was like some air-drawn temple, of which the vestibule alone is built. Yet, in the depository of the architect there exists a plan; and, by that plan, the eye can build on to that vestibule and complete it. Such unfinished edifices may have two fates: sometimes that vestibule remains standing alone, until it becomes itself a ruin and the plan is forgotten or destroyed; but sometimes other builders come and, demanding of the architect to yield up his plan, arise and complete the work.

It is the second destiny that will befall the uncompleted life-work of Douglas Thornton. And our task is therefore to set forth the plan that guided his building; guided by which others may henceforth build.

It is, fortunately, a comparatively simple task, for he has himself, in a mass of writing which has been preserved, clearly set forth the plan. We may therefore very largely let his voice, speaking from letter or sermon or magazine article, tell its own story. The selection or

compression of this great mass of material, accumulated in nine short years of work in Egypt, will be the sole difficulty of the task.

He was a man of one idea and one aim ; but as that aim was all-inclusive, it can hardly be called narrow. So neither was he narrow. It is the interest of that end and that aim, then, that will constitute the sole interest of this Life. He himself found them absorbingly interesting, and generally a man who is himself interested is also interesting. But those whose idea of interest is bound up with variety may not find this book diverting. Or shall we say that perhaps it may alter their idea of what is diverting? He himself, in the singleness of his purpose, stripped his life, with something of sternness, of all that was superfluous or unrelated to the work in hand. It is not to be denied that this constitutes some difficulty to the biographer. But, on the other hand, this fact makes it easier for the book to convey the impression of the man. A Life of D. M. Thornton ought to convey, written not between its lines, but in its lines, the true impression of D. M. Thornton's life. That impression will be also a message. And that message will assuredly be an inspiration, a call to work, and a kinetic cause of action.

Thornton's childhood and boyhood were a clear prophecy of his youth and manhood. His character and career were regularly shaped from the first. And the stock, the material out of which character and career were shaped, lent itself kindly to the shaping. Born at Southwold, in Suffolk, on 18th March 1873, he was the third son of the Rev. Claude Cecil

Thornton, at that time Vicar of Southwold, afterwards of Northwold, Norfolk. His grandfather, the Rev. Spencer Thornton, died in 1850, at the early age of thirty-six, but his short ministry at Wendover, Bucks, was wonderfully fruitful, and his name is well known as one of the most devoted evangelical clergy of that day. His grandmother, Mrs. Spencer Thornton, was a Du Pre, descended from the Huguenots. She lived until 1898, and her long life was devoted to working for God. Her grandchildren owed much to her example and teaching, and who can doubt that Douglas Thornton's intense love for the Bible was first aroused by the teaching received from his mother and grandmother?

The name of Thornton has always been well known in missionary circles. Henry Thornton, the first Treasurer of the Church Missionary Society, and other leaders of the Evangelical Revival of the eighteenth century, belonged to another branch of the same family.

His mother's family, though not so well known, were also deeply religious. She was a daughter of John Barton, formerly a Quaker, who eventually joined the Church of England. She was one of several sisters, who as girls became earnest Christians, and from 1860, when one of their brothers, the Rev. John Barton, went out to India as a missionary, the interest of the family in missionary work deepened. Douglas owed much in later life to this uncle's example and influence, especially during his college

days, at which time Mr. Barton was Vicar of Holy Trinity, Cambridge.

So, from his childhood, he was surrounded by religious influences, and the knowledge that both his father and mother's relations had spent their lives as devoted workers for God.

He was a strong healthy baby, merry and contented; from the first he showed great strength of character. On the night before his baptism a gathering was held at Southwold Vicarage, and earnest prayers were offered, dedicating the child to God's service. The record of his life shows that these prayers, like Hannah's, were answered.

"There are more things in heaven and earth than are dream'd of in our philosophy," and of these things are the mystery and the fact of prayer. The deliberate dedication of children to God and the kingdom of God, both on the part of parents and god-parents, is a surer way of hastening the kingdom than we may have thought.

His mother died before he was six; but before then she had taught him to read and given him Scripture lessons herself. He was an earnest little fellow, it would seem. She called him "The Little Bishop," and there is a sentence in a letter of hers which gives a pretty picture of little Douglas, who, she says, "Is most devout at church, and follows the service most intently, which he can read well enough to do; and directly he loses his place for a moment he wants to be shown it again." And we have



D. M. THORNTON.

Aged 13 years.



D. M. THORNTON.

Aged 3 years.

another sketch of him by another: "A particularly sunny boy, affectionate, and very fond of flowers. He was very intelligent and truthful, and very eager and excitable."

He was all his life extremely open to home influences, and later on repaid to the full what he had received in a peculiarly touching faithfulness and love towards his brothers and sisters. On these he lavished thoughtfulness and care, and at every time of need his family learned to look to him as the son and elder brother on whom they could rely absolutely. The writer has before him the written testimony of his brothers to the deep moral and spiritual influence exerted by him on their lives. His own mother's place was taken by a stepmother, who was a true mother to him, and whose powerful influence on his life he was never weary of acknowledging.

And, as so often happens, he had yet another home-gift, a nurse, who also lavished on him almost a mother's love, which he to the full returned. His letters to her, generally on her birthday, entirely resemble those of a boy to his mother, so full are they of his deepest confidences, and so touching is the tone of familiar affection.

An English rectory, a large family of brothers and sisters, with plenty of babies, the love of parents and nurse, an atmosphere of faith and devotion to the Kingdom,—what nursery like this for lives which are afterwards to tell?

His father was proud of his boy's evident talent,

and was anxious to give him the very best education. Before going to Marlborough, he had gone to two preparatory schools, and we have a quaint extract from a journal written later, giving his account of those early years—

“I had no mother since the age of five; a timid boy, self-centred, I grew up, and was often misunderstood. In September 1882 I went to school at Rottingdean, four miles east of Brighton. I did feel lonely . . . I felt crushed and sorrowful . . . No one knows what I went through for years at that school. A fat and silent boy! of course, I was barred! I rose to the top of the school at eleven. I began *Homer* when I was ten years old!

“In order to prepare for an Eton scholarship, father sent me to Tabor’s, Cheam, for a year. I was put in the first class, and came out second in mathematics during my first term. The change of school had done me good. Here I was popular somehow, and got on well. I made some friends. I never did before.”

Here are a few extracts from his boyish letters at that time; the first is quaint enough to be given *in extenso*. At the top are two of the horrible smudgy “transfers” that were so dear to the schoolboys of the eighties.

[*Æt.* 11.]

“ROTTINGDEAN, *Feb.* 15, 1885.

“I hope you have enjoyed your birthday. I am sorry I did not write to you for it, but I was not sending a letter home, and did not want to waste my stamps, as I have used four on Valentines. I also hoped you liked yours, as I chose one I thought would be suitable for you. To be sure, you are getting aged; you are forty-two or forty-three; I don’t know which.

Do you know I found out by myself a way of finding when people's birthdays are? Say, as yours is, the 12th of February; you double 12 to 24, then add 5=29, then multiply 29 by 5=145, then add 2, as February is the second month,=147; you tell me the number, namely 147, and I tell you the date on which your birthday is on. Try and understand it, and if you can't, get Evelyn or Ada to help you. I keep my diary every day. Good-bye."

The transfers, the Valentines, the elaborate arithmetical problem pressed on his "quite aged" nurse, are very quaint and characteristic.

The next is from Marlborough, 1887, aged fourteen, but both the handwriting (which now for the first time is clearly identical with the characteristic script of later years) and the subject matter show that an immense step had been taken since the above artless boy's production.

"THE COLLEGE,
"MARLBOROUGH, Nov. 20, 1887.

"... There are only four more weeks and a day before we go home. Just think how soon it is, and I shall see old Molly again. But what a pity it seems that three should not come back, as before the girls went to school; but it is God's will that it should not be so. The exams. begin very soon, and there are also extra books which we have to read up. I am taking up two. One on astronomy, all about the sun, moon, and stars. It is awfully interesting to see thereby God's Almighty hand. For instance, the *star* nearest us is 20 millions of millions of miles, and the star farthest is about 500×20 millions of millions of miles. The sun is only the centre of a very small universe, with a few planets, such as the Earth, Venus, Mercury,

Jupiter, Neptune. But this is only one of thousands; the stars which we see are themselves suns and planets in their universe, but are so far distant as not to make any impression of heat on us. Then a man called Laplace showed what would happen to the earth if the world lasted long enough. Because it is getting nearer and nearer the sun, soon the people will collect to the north and south poles, as all snow and ice will melt away. Take, for instance, Egypt, which used to be a very fertile land, and now is half-desert. It is altogether wonderful."

One sees the D. M. Thornton of the future in the enthusiastic way he "demonstrates" his latest ideas in a letter. But the quiet allusion to "God's will" calls for special notice. It stands for more than the occasional pieties of boys of that age, for it alludes to an event which his subsequent life proved to be of first-rate and real importance in his spiritual history, and the spiritual history of every man is, after all, his only history.

Of even Samuel, child of Hannah, pupil of Eli, son of the Church, the Bible can say that before the age of four "he knew not yet Jehovah, neither had the word of Jehovah come unto him"; and relates an event which decisively established in the little boy a first-hand experience of God. The experience of many a child and boy, as borne out by their mature lives, shows us that Samuel's experience need not be exceptional; and little Douglas was one of these. For those who are anxious to learn how the Spirit of God works with children, directly, yet perfectly quietly, it

will be by no means thought superfluous to dwell a moment on this event.

In May 1886, when he was thirteen, his elder brother Cecil had a serious illness, which led to what the elder boy himself felt to be, and openly said was, his "conversion." He wrote to Douglas of the change which had come into his life, "asking me, like him, to turn and serve Christ, telling me I should never regret it." Douglas "tried, not sincerely, and failed"; but the next holidays his brother's illness impressed him, as long afterwards he wrote to Cecil's nurse, "Do you know, my being awake on some of those nights when you and Cecil thought I was asleep, and prayed together about his pain and me too, did me more good than any other thing in my life?" In September, Cecil underwent a serious operation successfully, and the news was telegraphed to his relations at Nottingham, with whom Douglas was staying. As he was walking to the post office, taking a telegram of thankfulness for the good news, a light came. Writing about it some years later, he says: "It was there that the light dawned. I thanked God for Cecil, then I felt led to thank Him for giving me health and strength while He saw fit to give my brother sickness. Then it dawned on me further, 'I have never really thanked Him for sending Jesus to die for me.' So there and then I did so, and then and there I gained assurance of forgiveness, which I have never lost."

There are many who distrust these youthful experi-

ences. But the point is, how can they be denied when they, as a matter of fact, *work*? Douglas never went back on this experience. At Cecil's funeral, as they were returning from the grave, Douglas's godmother said to him, "Now, Douglas, you carry on the work that Cecil had in his heart to do for God." And he did.

He went up to Marlborough shortly afterwards, having gained the second Foundation Scholarship that year, and during his five years there he was conscious of this personal touch with the Divine and the Unseen.

Of course that did not prevent his school-life being in all respects of the normal, jolly type with which we are all familiar. He worked, "slacked," played games, "ragged," and joked, just like any proper specimen of the *schoolboy britannicus*. And behind and under it all was this personal experience of God.

Not that it took a particularly striking form—some of his closest friends saw little that was striking in the boy. Perhaps that was as it should be. At anyrate, the witness of his letters are conclusive that his life was slowly, but surely, developing in every way.

Here are a few touches showing the thoughtfulness and affectionateness that was always so very marked—

"March 21, 1887.

"It is quite true, I rather dread the holidays, because I think it will seem lonely, especially after school life. . . . But I hope in some way to cheer you up, and to try and fill up the gap. . . . I pray for your mother,¹ and hope my prayers will be answered. This is one of

¹ His nurse's mother was ill.

my favourite texts, 'All things work together for good for those that love God.' I daresay it is one of yours also. I got a splendid present of *Daily Light*. . . ."

"June 20, 1887.

"I thought I ought to write a line to gladden your heart concerning the scholarship I got father, £30 for two years, isn't it nice?" [Rather a nice way of putting it.]

A characteristically thoughtful touch—

"Feb. 12, 1888.

"I hope you are not getting overdone with all the work and the little sleep I know you always get. One blessing is that you are able to do with so little, but please don't overdo yourself.

PRIVATE.

"Molly, I'm afraid in the holidays I very often speak unkindly to you in the holidays. I hope shall be better next holidays. One thing I am going to tell you which I have reserved till your birthday, and that is this. . . ." [Follows a great secret!] "I hope they are all comparatively well now, poor dears. Then, Molly, I want you to write to me and give me any confirmation advice you can. I think I am so lucky to be confirmed on my birthday, God willing. Not only at the same time do I feel that I am beginning a new year, but also a new period of my life."

"Ap. 1, 1888.

". . . I had such a nice confirmation day, though very cold. Father found two coats none too much! We had most lovely hymns.

"Before it, one to commit ourselves to God, and so forth, and then after being confirmed, 'Thine for ever, God of Love.' What a lovely hymn that is. I shall always remember it henceforth."

“Nov. 25, 1888.

“The Salvation Army is all alive here, as there is much wickedness, because the place has been neglected by sleepy clergymen. . . . I hope the Church Army men are doing good in the parish; they are bound to do good, I think, since they are themselves working men, and so can associate with other working men quite freely.”

The next letter (to his sister) shows exactly the extremely sane way in which he regarded the Christian life at school—

“Oct. 2, 1890.

“I am deeply indebted to you for that nice, kind and good letter you sent me, telling me not to fret, but to trust in the Lord. I daresay you are right, and I daresay I do fret a bit, and I am very thankful to you for so putting it to me, but you know it isn't wrong surely to feel how much one lacks, and to wonder when one can get in time to supply that need through Jesus Christ our Lord. The fact is I am too content to be good up to a low standard, which to a schoolboy seems as high as one can attain in school life. There be in sundry times various men, whom we should call eccentric, who show their religion markedly, even to cause ridicule. I think what our master wishes is to raise the morals step by step. They know that to most people real and lasting and effectual religion does not suddenly make itself known. They try to make boys be in the same position to the law of Christ as the Israelites were to the law of Moses. This law was far in advance of its times, and Moses tried to lead the people step by step to it. I admire all out-and-outness immensely, but a consistent school life, I think, is a thing to be more admired and looked up to than anything at our age. I feel sure you come as near leading that life as any, and I am sure this tells more than anything on earth in influencing other boys. But

I do believe in prayer, and I believe in it more than in Bible reading, if it is made after due thought and consideration."

And the following shows what he was thinking about on the eve of leaving Marlborough:—

"March 29, 1891.

"This is the last time probably that I shall write to you from Marlborough College. It is Good Friday; and, indeed, it has been a blessed day for me. I was more struck with Bell's sermon to-day than ever before. I think it was unmistakably the best I have heard him preach. The text, 'It is finished,' being the sixth of the Seven Words spoken on the Cross, and coming at the end of His term on earth when He had gained a triumphant victory over sin. Bell pointed out that Christ first prayed for His murderers, 'Father forgive them'; second, He spoke to the thief, 'To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise'; third, He entrusted His mother to St. John; fourth, in bitter agony that we cannot realise, He uttered those words, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'; fifth, He gave His only one wish for Himself, 'I thirst'; sixth, the triumphant 'It is finished.' He told that God had endowed us with almost godlike powers of discerning between good and evil, and so we were given a free choice, for so it seemed good to Him, and hence our great responsibility. Then this afternoon Pollock had us up into his rooms, and gave the whole Sixth a confidential talk; first pointing out what atonement and the forgiveness of sins really meant; then going on to read from different books how we live in Him, John xv.; then giving us hints (excellent hints) as to when we might be serving Christ in the trivial matters of life."

The following, written from a tutor's house, where he went in the spring before going up to Trinity College,

Cambridge, shows that his missionary interest had already begun, and in his school letters there had been clear indications of the same thing:—

“Jan. 18, 1892.

“I want everyone’s prayers *very* much. God was merciful enough to prepare me for the Parsee religion by having one companion a Parsee. Now, who could have thought it, can it be anything but providential, two others have come this term? One seems longing to get the light, and true light, and I believe he will really find Christ; the second is *very* well read in the Koran and all kinds of religion, and I want all the power God can give me to show him Christ. He perfectly admits that Christianity is far and away the most prosperous religion now, but he thinks it fell on good ground in going westwards at first, and I daresay he is right, but that is God’s will, no doubt. At present he thinks I would have him take a great deal in faith in order to believe. But enough of this to-night. I see now how far better it was for me not to go to Pembroke.”

Thus did he prepare for the University. Just before going up to Cambridge he had a further religious experience of definite importance:—

“I began to learn victory’s secret from one who had learned it from George Grubb. Selfishness and impurity were the besetting sins. Over both of these God showed me how to win His victories at Cromer in 1892. But this was testimony to fact, not revelation of Person.”

How this revelation of the Person came to him one year later will be seen in the next chapter.

CHAPTER II

CAMBRIDGE: THE STUDENT CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT— IN THE RANKS

“My grandfather, Spencer Thornton, was traced to have been the means of the conversion of thirty undergraduates when at Cambridge. I went up, knowing this, to do likewise, D.V.” (From *Autobiography*.)

These words are a very fit introduction to Thornton's life at Cambridge. It was fundamentally, and all through, a life of complete devotion to Christ, and to the business of influencing men for Christ and for the cause of Christ. It had phases. There was development in his religious life, both on its emotional and intellectual side, as well as in the ideal to which he looked. But the development never occasioned the least cooling of his fiery devotion to Christ, and the work of influencing men for Christ and His cause.

The reader of this biography should, however, be aware at the outset of certain facts concerning university life, and especially Christian life at the universities. Up to the time of Dr. Johnson the religious life of undergraduates was considered as sufficiently expressed in the frequent chapel services and similar “means of

grace," according to the pious intentions of the great founders. And noble results justified those intentions. But the evangelical revival of the Wesleys, which taught English Christendom to beware of identifying the conventional religious life with the real experience of religion, had its inevitable effect on the religious life of the universities too, and made earnest men feel the insufficiency of the prescribed services *alone*, and the absolute necessity for liberty of voluntary association in religious life and effort. And from the time when Dr Johnson wrote of certain Methodist undergraduates "who would not desist from publicly praying and preaching (Sir, they were examined, and proved to be mighty ignorant fellows!)," from that time it may be said that there were always men at Oxford and Cambridge who, in conscious devotion to their Master, Jesus Christ, drew together for mutual inspiration, and encouraged each other to influence other undergraduates along the same lines.

Cambridge was the great and traditional centre for this voluntary religious life and association among undergraduates. The great Charles Simeon was the first of a succession of senior men who set themselves to promote and encourage this movement; and the still greater Henry Martyn—significantly a "foreign" missionary—was one of its most splendid and also most typical results. The first organised association among undergraduates was that at Cambridge, called to-day the "Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union."

This Christian movement in the universities always showed itself sensitive to great religious movements outside the universities. And the great missionary revival of the eighties, which was itself due to deeper causes, powerfully moved Cambridge life and was reactively influenced by it. The offering of the famous "Cambridge Seven" for missionary work in China gave a foreign-missionary impetus to the Christian movement among the undergraduates in the university which has been characteristic ever since.

The movement spread to some other universities, and was met by one from the North, analogous to it, though different in its ethos, led by Henry Drummond, far famous for his memorable work in the Scottish universities. These two streams, with their similarities and differences, met and rolled on together. Those were stirring times.

A similar Christian movement had been going on in the American colleges; and here, moreover, an association of "Student Volunteers" had been formed, that is, university men who felt the claims of the foreign field so keenly that they banded themselves together by signing a declaration signifying their intention of becoming missionaries.

This "Student Volunteer" Movement, as we may at once call it, found it very easy to strike root into the prepared soil of the British universities; and in 1892 the British "Student Volunteer Missionary Union" (S.V.M.U.) was formed, and immediately flourished. *Floruit, floret.* It was accompanied both

in America and in Britain by an organisation to plant Christian Unions after the manner of that at Cambridge, in *all* universities and colleges. These unions were banded together into one National Union, now called "The Student Christian Movement of Great Britain and Ireland"; and this Movement, and the other National Movement of America, the Continent, the British Colonies, India, Japan, etc. (for the stream rolled onward thither also), were afterwards federated into one grand organisation, "The World's Student Christian Federation."

This extraordinary evolution was not yet complete when Thornton went up to Cambridge in 1892. But it is because Thornton became one of the most outstanding figures in the Student Movement, first at Cambridge itself, and afterwards in its national and world-wide aspects, that this preliminary sketch had to be given.

Just at the time when he went up to Cambridge, however, the Christian Union of that university was comparatively out of touch with the larger movement that had begun in Britain, and especially in Scotland, though there were already some "Student Volunteers" among the undergraduates. Consequently we find Thornton throwing himself hotly into the local Christian life and work, but not yet in touch with the new ideals and methods which that movement was to bring with it. He and others like him found plenty to do, however. Undergraduate spiritual life was fostered by "College Bible Readings" and

meetings for prayer. The missionary side was represented by weekly missionary addresses. The great evangelical tradition of the duty of winning others for Christ and for service, as we have seen in the first paragraph of this chapter, had not been forgotten; though the *extent* of its observance varied with the intensity of Christian life in the place, and the *methods* of its observance varied with the temperamental and theological cast of men's minds. As in all similiar associations there were members fervid, lukewarm, and cold; broad and narrow in outlook; extravagant, extreme, moderate, and—very moderate. In youth's *mêlée* every temperament was found, and constant was the clash of views and of methods. The more life, the more ferment. New things were ardently welcomed by some, suspected by others; and frequent was the clash of the Progressives and Conservatives of those days. The national Student Christian Movement, to which the University Christian Union was from the first affiliated, was one of these new things, promoters of those discords which "rushed in but that harmony might ensue"; and Thornton, ever the stormy-petrel of advance, played a very prominent part in these developments. It will be sufficient to touch thus summarily on this aspect of Cambridge Christian life, on which little emphasis will hereafter be laid, though it had a very important influence on Thornton's career.

The first year of Thornton's Cambridge life was

therefore, marked by extraordinary fervour within and without, by ardent efforts in the direction indicated in the first paragraph of this chapter. Having been in residence for a term before actually entering Trinity, he had, he wrote, "got to know lots of men and the ways about Cambridge," and this gave him "a lift above other freshmen; and they naturally looked to me." His enthusiasm for Christ's gospel and cause was very glowing. It was intensified by a Boys' Mission in the Christmas vacation under Mr. Edwin Arrowsmith, and again by Mr. George Grubb's visit to Cambridge in the succeeding term. Yet more was to come; what he himself called "the Vision of the Person," he had not yet experienced.

Already the missionary interest was well to the front; he followed up his interest in the Parsi students in London by a similar interest in Indian students at Cambridge. He joined one of the "Bands" for missionary study. He regularly attended the weekly missionary meeting of the Cambridge Missionary Union, and was proposed for the secretaryship of the Union for the ensuing year. He wrote an article for a magazine on Uganda, with the prayer "O God, may it create an interest in many boys for Uganda." In all of these ways we see coming events casting their shadow before.

A peculiarly refreshing Thornton anecdote, illustrating the fearlessness and directness of his methods and their quaint unconventionality, is told by his college friend, the present Royal Astronomer of Ireland—

“He began operations by calling on all the Indians he could hear of; hunting up Oriental names in the list of University men, and getting each victim to betray the names and addresses of more of his compatriots. Many of these calls involved breaches of that rule of Cambridge etiquette, which ordains that a freshman may not commence an unsolicited acquaintance with men of higher standing; but Thornton was never a stickler for etiquette; and the Indians, though evidently puzzled, received him (or us, for I went with him once or twice) very well.

“The ground being thus prepared, he sent invitations to all his new friends, and to an equal number of Christian Union men, to come to his lodgings in Silver Street, one Sunday after lunch. When I arrived, I found the little sitting-room full of men, with Thornton beaming introductions: ‘Ahmed Ali, let me introduce Smith of Trinity: Mr. Ahmed Ali of Christ’s. The room is rather full, isn’t it? but *we shall be going a little walk presently.*’ Then the whole scheme broke on us; which was nothing more or less than that the entire company was to do the ‘Grantchester grind’ (the traditional Sunday afternoon walk of University men), paired like the young ladies of a school out for an airing, each Indian being mated with a white man. The grotesque effect of the procession—which sent street boys into convulsions before we were ten yards from the doorstep—was heightened by the impressive stature and animated appearance of the last couple, who were Thornton himself and a gigantic smiling negro from Jamaica.”

But he never shirked the far more testing work of influencing his fellows of his own race. The same friend who narrates the experience just narrated tells how Thornton, on the first meeting with him, while returning from the boats to college, led the subject

round to religion, and triumphantly captured his man for the College Bible Reading. He did not shrink from speaking for Christ in the open-air, and here again there are stories characteristic of his burning earnestness and total unconventionality. Witness the following account by his friend, the Rev. G. T. Manley, Senior Wrangler in 1893:—

“Once at Hyde Park Corner (in Cambridge) the attention of a huge crowd was riveted by his suddenly seizing a child of a year old out of its mother’s arms and holding it shoulder high with the exclamation, ‘Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven.’ On other occasions he spoke to the folk after the open-air and got them to kneel under the old tree that stands there, and offer themselves to God there in prayer.

“God gave him two faculties which made him unlike other men. On the positive side he had a strength of will and purpose which some mistook for wilfulness, but which interpreted itself to him as the Divine ‘*I must.*’ Thus, once an idea had rooted itself in his mind there was no more questioning except as to how every obstacle was to be overcome. The other faculty was an unconventionality, and almost a lack of humour, in the way in which he took most seriously a course which others would have shrank from as being extraordinary to the verge of ridicule. To him the kneeling down in the road pleading for a soul’s salvation was no extraordinary act, but a simple recognition of the eternal issue. In the same way once in a village open-air service he rushed into a public-house to speak to the people. ‘*We must get at them, and they won’t come to us,*’ was his motto. So in he went, and in a few minutes was talking to the girl behind the bar about her soul. To any other there might have been something more than ludicrous about this, but not so with D. M. T.

The girl also was carried away by the natural earnestness of her appellant, and in a few minutes was kneeling down behind the counter in prayer to God. On another occasion a certain Queen's man was known to be taking part in an open-air service on Parker's Piece, and some agnostics passed a note round the College Hall that 'X. Y. will hold forth on Parker's Piece at 8.30 this evening.' The result was a goodly attendance of scoffers, who interrupted the said speaker with audible remarks of an uncomplimentary nature. D. M. T. to the rescue! Up he marches to the objectors: 'Look here! If you fellows have no caring for your own souls, might you not have some for the souls of these people. They are anxious to have their souls saved, is it gentlemanly on your part to prevent them having the opportunity?' This unexpected line of attack carried them with him. They were silent through the service, and then asked him back to their rooms to open out to him their doubts and difficulties. His downright earnestness and unconventionality carried the day."

So passed his first year. Naturally he became a marked man; such an uncompromising position brought with it "separation." How far this should be carried, or in what *way* Christian separation should be expressed, is a matter about which men continually differed in the University, as they have done and will do outside it. Thornton's attitude at Cambridge was radical; and though he tempered it afterwards he never reversed it, nor changed his mind, essentially, about it. He regarded an attitude of separateness essential till the very end, and years later wrote from Egypt—

"I pray God to keep alive a band of Puritans, for they are the ones that make the best missionaries all the world over. . . . Surely what we want now is more

fire. I do not see much sign of it, the fire that comes from tribulation and persecution I mean. Would that the Union had not such an easy time of it now! Let us promote a foreign Campaign again. Where are the prophets with the vision of the world's need? Let them arise and call the movement to go forward. . . ."

Not that he had any sour disinclination to mix with his fellow-men and engage in their pursuits. Quite the reverse: he had social gifts and propensities; he had a fine voice; he joined the First Trinity Rowing Club, and was chosen to row in one of the Lent boats. . . . But his subordination of all things to the single aim was absolute.

And in his first Lent term he was forbidden to row in the boats again owing to a breakdown of health. This illness was a landmark. It completely broke his connection with the Rowing Club, and in the weeks of enforced inactivity, as the busy stream of University life rushed past his sickroom, he thought deeply over the plan of his future life-work. To the friends who came to see him when convalescent he freely confessed the change in his outlook, and poured out his soul in far-reaching designs for the evangelisation of the world. "This illness has made a great difference to my missionary plans," he said to one not very sympathetic boating-man who called. The other made an irreverent reply about the advantages which the "niggers" would gain from the circumstance. Thornton took up the idea quite gravely, and astonished the company by citing various cases of apostolic heroes—St. Augustine, Raymond Lull, John Wesley, Henry Martyn, and so

forth—whose careers had been profoundly influenced by apparently trivial incidents!

And his reading? This is the best place to say a few words on that subject, which has a great bearing on the whole story of his life. The friend, whose tribute to Thornton's abilities, both natural and acquired, was quoted in the Preface, puts the case like this—

“When he came up to Cambridge, Thornton had read more mathematics than most schoolboys, and indeed had only just missed an open scholarship at one of the Colleges: at Trinity, in his first term, he was sent to the best lectures, and was generally regarded as likely to take a good place in the Tripos. Very early in our acquaintance he told me that in this he was being over-rated, that such mathematical knowledge as he possessed was really the result of good teaching rather than of natural aptitude, and that he knew himself to be incapable of fulfilling his friends' expectations of a first-class degree. The truth of this self-estimate soon became evident: his interests were in mankind rather than in the impersonal field of pure science; and his mind, though vigorous and creative, was lacking in that faculty of patient incisive analysis on which success in the mathematical and physical sciences is so largely dependent. But I believe that he always keenly felt the disappointment which his comparative failure in the schools must bring to a home circle; and for a term or so struggled bravely against the inevitable descent.

“One of the decisions to which he came at this time [the illness in his second term] concerned his studies. It was now quite clear that he would never be a distinguished mathematician; and he faced and settled the question of how much time and energy should be given up to the Tripos. One of the strongest points in his nature was that he always took up the problem of an unsatisfactory situation in good time, and never let

things drift. He decided to do just so much work as would earn an Honours degree without discredit, and for the rest to devote himself to preparation for a life-work in the mission-field. . . . I never questioned the wisdom of this choice. . . . Thornton, from the time that he surrendered his mathematical ambitions, became an undisputed leader in Christian work."

The fact is, his education came by other channels than through the Mathematical Tripos. His wide interests, and intense power for reading and assimilating, fully made up for failure in the schools. He saw that the critical circumstances at Cambridge demanded some man, or men, to give up very much time to doing and organising Christian work. As he himself said, "During my first year I became conscious I could lead other men": and deliberately he set himself to do the work. He himself summed up the matter in later years as follows:—"I believe that two or three men have to sacrifice themselves in a (College) generation." In other words, this sort of career must be considered strictly exceptional. Thornton, being exceptional, was the exception. Wisdom is justified of *all* her children.

He thus summed up his first year—

"It was in London that the desire for souls was born. The autumn of 1892 brought with it my first continued desires for purity of heart. During my first year (at Cambridge) I became conscious I could lead other men, but had no power to do it. Never shall I cease to be thankful that I got to Keswick that summer. For God showed me that the power of the Holy Ghost was needed in my life. I became conscious of His power, and proved it at once at Llandudno."

It was at Keswick, in his first long vacation, that this momentous experience was given him. Like many another undergraduate, after his first year at College, he went down thrilled with the new experiences—intellectual, social, spiritual—that had come into his life, yet filled with a yearning for something more. He determined to spend some of the vacation in doing Christian work among the children who spend the summer in the watering-places round our coasts.¹ While he was engaged in this work, a friend urged him to go and attend the Keswick Convention. This Convention for the deepening of the spiritual life was preceded by a conference organised by the Student Volunteer Missionary Union, which was devoted to foreign missions. The latter greatly intensified and fixed his enthusiasm for foreign missions, which burned on to the day of his death. But it was at the former that he gained what he chiefly needed—the spiritual apprehension of the living Person of Christ. At one of the evenings of the Convention he went to hear certain speakers well known in the religious world—

¹ Thornton was incomparable at this sort of work. His missionary maps on the sand will never be forgotten. An army of young workers would be organised. Some country like India would be traced on the smooth sand in pebbles. The rivers and lakes were put in in green seaweed; the Himalayas in black seaweed, topped with salt (for snow!); and the towns and mission-stations indicated by sand-pies. Then the missionary problem of the country would be “demonstrated” to the crowds of young people, with a simplicity and vivacity which, as in Faraday’s lectures on a candle, were really the result of a complete grasp of the subject.

“It was crowded and stifling,” he writes; “the meeting began. H. B. Macartney rose up full of the Holy Ghost. He electrified everyone in a word, so it seemed to me. This is something of what he said: ‘Now it seems to me what all we people want to-night is to get into the presence of God at once. If we wish to speak about God the Holy Ghost, let us believe in Him and realise Him. Shall we all say, “I believe in the Holy Ghost.” We all did . . . I had confessed my faith in Him, and He came in all His fulness into my soul. Immediately I seemed to see Jesus . . .’ The truth seemed so easy now, ‘We in Christ and Christ in us.’ No sooner had he finished than I felt impelled to testify. So out I went, and as the door at the side was locked, I jumped out of the top of the window. Down into the market-place! “Let me speak to-night.” And I did. And so the life in Him began in deed.”

His second year at Cambridge was a three-times intensified repetition of his first. During that year the ferment in the Union was prodigious, and Thornton, of course, headed the Extreme Left. His fame penetrated to Oxford, and stimulated men there. He sold a good deal of his furniture and ornaments, and he ate starvation lunches, in order to have money for the work of God. He evangelised furiously. His rooms became a storm-centre for prayer. His work among individuals was more daring and successful than ever. God was in all his thoughts. . . .

Youthful excesses? A youth that is not excessful rarely makes a man who is successful. As Lord Wolseley said of Gordon, “If he is mad, I wish that more younger officers of the British Army were as mad as he.” It would be very dangerous, in the light of

his whole life as we see it now, to criticise this part of his life as people saw it then. It is safer to say, without recommending Thornton as a complete model to the Christian man at the University to-day, that his fearlessness as to men's opinion of him is to be entirely coveted. Better a thousand times effective peculiarity than ineffective ordinariness.

And now occurs his first introduction to the wider "Student Movement" which so greatly determined the remainder of his career.

"June 13th [1894].—Round to Dodderidge's; meet J. R. Mott, an American. Settle for a meeting in my rooms on Thursday morning, 14th, 10–11 a.m. Mott gives us an address on the progress of the Student Volunteer Missionary Union in America . . . which is very helpful."

J. R. Mott became afterwards his lifelong friend, and a constant source of inspiration. He was the leader of the Student Movement in America, and already had dreams of a world-wide movement which have been so grandly fulfilled. The Students' Conference at Keswick that summer—the second of the annual series—was a more momentous affair than the previous one, which had failed to impress Thornton.¹ Mr. Mott and his fellow-countryman, Mr. R. E. Speer—*par nobile fratrum*—had come over, and a mighty effort was to be made to deepen and to broaden the Christian movement in British universities and colleges.

In particular, the watchword adopted by the American

¹ What had impressed him was the Keswick *Convention*, not the Students' Conference at Keswick, as has been explained.

“Student Volunteer” Movement was to be preached for the first time in this country. It has since become famous. It became the animating force in Thornton’s life—

THE EVANGELISATION OF THE WORLD IN THIS
GENERATION.

The conference, and especially the address in which this watchword was, like a challenge, flung before British university and college men, made an ineffaceable impression on Thornton’s sensitive mind and receptive spirit. The whole inner man suddenly expanded; new visions floated before his astonished eyes; horizon opened out on horizon; deep called to deep. His flaring zeal steadied down into a clear, burning flame-jet of enthusiasm for God and His kingdom, giving both light and heat. Here is his entry of that momentous evening—

“Speer: . . . the address was on the subject of ‘The Evangelisation of the World in this Generation.’ For the first time some ten of us at least began to realise that we, individually, were responsible for this. It was an awful time. B. and I had to get away quietly three miles out on the hills from 9–12 p.m. to let God speak to us face to face. It was an awful time. But then came the stillness of resting on Him, and casting this world-wide burden on Him.”

We might say that the remainder of his career was determined by the enunciation of that watchword that evening: as he later put it, in both noble and truthful words, “This glorious watchword which has become our own, and now dominates our lives.”

In connection then with the above, the following extract from a letter of his is calculated to strengthen our faith in God, and in the fact which is called individual guidance:—

“July 19, 1894.

“Just a line to say that you may as well be very definitely in prayer as to God’s will for you and me for this next month. I have been repeatedly asked, and have repeatedly refused to go to Keswick, never entertaining the idea of the Convention proper. But now, twice to-day again, I have been pressed to represent Christian work of the *past* year there at our *Students’ Conference*, July 30–Aug. 3. It seemed at first so clearly the Lord’s will to stay here, but now this, and the fact that on Saturday next my coach finishes the first part of his coaching here, it seems a leading to make the break then. . . . Anyhow, I may as well say that I am waiting for God’s clear guidance all round.”

Thornton’s third year at Cambridge was one of increasing devotion to the missionary cause under the new stimulus of his touch with the wider college movement in Britain and beyond the seas, and the Student Volunteer Missionary Union, the declaration of which he had signed:—“It is my purpose, if God permit, to become a foreign missionary.” He did not improve away his old methods of evangelism and individual man-winning,¹ but he strove also to intro-

¹ The following words of a close friend and comrade of those days show well how the two aspects of activity were and are harmonised:—“It was a settled thing amongst us in those days that there was a course of development in the Christian life almost as clear as in university work. A man must first be interested in his own college, and then as he developed a small knowledge of affairs and became a college secretary, he

duce into the Cambridge Christian Union the wider vision and outlook which had now come into his own life. And a concrete opportunity was to hand, to aid him in this endeavour. The leaders of the Volunteer Missionary Union decided to hold a great Student Missionary Convention at the beginning of the year 1896, the root idea being to place the world-wide missionary call and challenge before the colleges once in every college generation, *i.e.* four years. (And this scheme has been carried out.) More than a year was to be given to preparing for this momentous event, and working up delegations in all the universities and colleges, and so we find Thornton, as early as February 1895, aflame with energy and zeal in doing this preparatory work at Cambridge. An extract from a letter of the period will describe better than anything else his work at this time—

“On Monday, the thought of having a missionary conference at Liverpool for, we trust, 1000 students, was simmering in my brain. How could we in Cambridge do our part to stir up interest?”

“On Tuesday morning I get a note from Eugene Stock asking me to tell him what he is to do. I connect the two together, and make him out a programme of breakfasts and teas and halls in every

should be led on to an interest in inter-collegiate affairs, and from that his outlook must extend to other colleges until he could look at all the student world as one great brotherhood to be won for Christ, and as workers for His kingdom. After all, it was but the application of the Lord's order, beginning at Jerusalem and going in widening circles to the whole field. The same ideas are educating another generation to-day after the same fashion.”

college, I think twenty-four items in all, from Friday evening at 6 p.m. to Monday evening. Then it occurs to me that, Stock being here for Sunday, here was the solution to the question of some profitable getting together of our Student Volunteers. We will advertise the conference *then*, and say Stock will give us his advice, etc. Meantime Butcher and I had got out—after much prayer—this circular letter telling of great things bound to attract thought and notice, under God, I believe. We get Monro, the scholar, to give us the quotation below, which means—

‘Go ye :
Now all is at stake!’¹

where Themistocles is inspiring the Athenians to fight the Persians under Xerxes, hundreds of thousands strong. This meeting was attended by about seventy men. I have seldom been to a meeting with such power present. *Never* in Cambridge I know; you see much prayer had gone up for it. But I was looking further ahead. This meeting is in Cambridge, and as Cambridge is the *greatest missionary centre*, perhaps in the world, it was right that we should rise to take an active part in this conference. We want one thousand men there, and at least one hundred and fifty from Cambridge, when all the greatest authorities on missions, and all the picked men of all societies (that are missionary) in all lands are going to speak to us there. We are going to pray and work so that this International Conference will have delegates from America (several), from all parts of Europe, from India, China, Japan, Persia, and Africa, etc. You see we must have our eyes opened.

“Last vacation I was reading and thinking over this awful responsibility. ‘Is the world to be evangelised?’ Yes, we cry, God willing, yes. Never let us shrink from doing God’s will. I am under orders to obey God, and *must* obey.”

D. M. T.

¹ *Aeschylus*, Persæ, 402, “ὦ παῖδες Ἑλλήνων ἕτε νῦν ὑπὲρ πάντων ἀγών.”

Thornton took his degree in mathematics with Honours at the close of this university year (1895). He sums up this, his last two years as an undergraduate, as follows:—

“My second year was one of discipline. Loneliness, hard work, constant dealing with souls, and a few deep friendships were found. All this prepared for the revelation at Keswick, 1894, that I was called to lead . . . the hearts of men. Never shall I forget the bewilderment of that night when I first heard that Christians were responsible for the evangelisation of the world in this generation.’ How to bring this before the minds of men was the question! It was evident that wider sympathies were needed.”

Thornton was approached by the leaders of the Student Movement to come on to the staff of the Movement, and give up his whole time to the development of work in the colleges. But as it was both his and his father’s wish that he should be ordained, the latter was very averse to this course, as he feared it would deflect the current of his life from the channel in which it ought to, and most usefully would, run. Thornton had a very hard struggle over this, but in the holiday in Norway mentioned above, he was made to feel that he was being rightly guided. He, therefore, came up in October to a fourth year, and went to read theology at Ridley Hall. This plan would give him a year for steady theological reading, and opportunities of fostering the movement in Cambridge, and elsewhere as well.

At the conference at Keswick that summer, his outlook was again widened. Not only did he come to a clearer and more detailed knowledge of the extent of the college world in Britain, but he witnessed with awe and praise the formation of the World's Student Christian Federation—that organisation which federated the various national Movements, and so crowned the whole; and in an enthusiastic letter he describes Mr. John Mott's "setting out on a world-wide tour to make a profound reality The World's Student Christian Federation."

At that time he was put on to a special committee to look after the interests of the Theological Colleges in connection with the Movement. He wrote—

"The future of my work seems harder than ever. I see a clear call to try to enter some of the Theological Colleges this year, and link them on to this great Movement. This must be done in the vacations."

This work in the Theological Colleges in connection with the Movement became one of great importance as we shall see.

But he felt that his first and all-important duty was to secure large delegations from Cambridge and Oxford to the Liverpool Conference.

"It was easy then to be misunderstood, and the only absorbing passion was to press on. It was a hard fight. Several earnest and influential men at Cambridge held aloof. They feared this great rising Movement. Had we not learned to pray, the battle had been lost, and the Movement died away

and Oxford and Cambridge taken no part. Then I began to see why I was meant to remain up here this year."

It came to his ears that Oxford Union was more than lukewarm in the matter of the Liverpool Conference. "Thornton to the rescue!" Oxford was boarded, and the following summary of the result, from the pen of its meteoric visitant himself, is no exaggeration:—

"Within thirty-six hours, had seen and prayed with all the leading men in Oxford Christian work. Man by man they were won over; their President took five hours alone. The result was that they sent thirty men to Liverpool, whereas I doubt if six would have gone otherwise. . . .

"Now came Cambridge. Every college was visited and re-visited. Over eighty men were got to come to Liverpool, and we felt the victory would come here too."

"Then came the conference (at Liverpool) and all that meant."

What it meant will be clear in the next chapter. With this conference the fighter "in the ranks" of the Christian Movement in the colleges becomes a member of its staff, one of the directing and controlling minds in that great Movement.

CHAPTER III

THE STUDENT CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT—ON THE STAFF

THE Liverpool Conference took place in January 1896, and Thornton sailed for Egypt in the autumn of 1898. Into these three years he packed an immense amount of work of first-rate importance. "It is incredible," writes the present General Secretary of the Movement, "that the official relationship lasted for only two years. There is hardly a department of the Movement's work which does not show traces of his influence, nay, more, there are at least two important departments which owe their existence in their present form to him."

THE WATCHWORD AND THE MEMORIAL TO THE CHURCHES.

The watchword, "The Evangelisation of the World in this Generation!" was formally adopted by the British Movement after the Liverpool Conference. The adopting of this watchword was not, of course, a prophecy that the world would be evangelised in the present generation, but simply an affirmation that

it might be and should be so evangelised (since every generation of Christians is responsible for evangelising the world of that generation); and a self-dedication to a life consonant with that faith and that aspiration.

In a letter written immediately after the conference, after describing how the Movement, as a result of the conference, was to be extended in France, Spain, Switzerland, Holland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Germany, he writes—

“And as we formed the executive report, we were led after much deliberation and prayer to adopt the watchword—

‘The Evangelisation of the World in this Generation.’

There were nine men and three women students who discussed the matter from 11 p.m. to 2 a.m. The words became an inspiration to us all. We were honouring God, and He in turn set His seal to the work . . .”

And he summed up his impressions of the conference later in a terser fashion—

“God’s Love: that was the greatest message to me of the Liverpool Conference.”

He went back to Cambridge, to work harder than ever at the task of building up work for missions in the university. He proposed and carried the forming of a central committee to co-ordinate the different missionary organisations of the university; he worked to secure new “Student Volunteers”; he circulated literature; and he preached the watchword. But,

more important than all this, was a step forward taken by the Executive Committee of the Student Volunteer Missionary Union, of which Thornton was a member, and, of course, a leading spirit. What this was will be seen from the following account by a fellow-member of the Committee, the Rev. G. T. Manley, whose words have been already quoted:—

“That watchword was in our hearts, and moved and shaped our lives. It was the result of long discussions as to the way in which it could be realised that two or three important lines of work were developed, in all of which, as in everything we did, Thornton took an active part.

“One of these was the ‘*Memorial to the Churches.*’ After long discussion and prayer the Executive of the Student Volunteer Missionary Union became convinced that the one way in which the watchword might be fulfilled was by *getting the various Churches to adopt it as their own.* We felt ourselves but infants (we were not much more in the ways of the world), but we felt deeply that God had given us this motto to pass on to others. Consequently a memorial was drawn up praying the various Churches to adopt it. It was drawn up in my rooms one evening. Dr. Rutter Williamson was the Chairman of the Executive, and he and O’Neill came to stay the night with me, and we three and Thornton sat from about 8 p.m. till 4 a.m. before the work was done. Thornton, of course, had to leave at midnight by college rules.

“The Lambeth Conference of 1897 provided us with an immediate objective, and we prayed earnestly and planned strenuously that it might begin a revolution upon the missionary problem.

“Thornton and I were delegated to see Archbishop Temple upon the matter. We took the draft of the memorial, and he read it through until he came to a

paragraph which stated that the first missionary of the Church of England after the Reformation was in the nineteenth century. 'That's not true,' was his characteristic remark. He promised kindly to take the matter up, saying, 'I only hope you'll get the Bishops to take it up. I've been trying to move them for the past ten years, but they are hard to move.' The Bishops did not adopt the watchword as a practical programme, but the conference received the memorial with sympathy, and patted the Student Volunteers upon the back.

"It was a great disappointment."

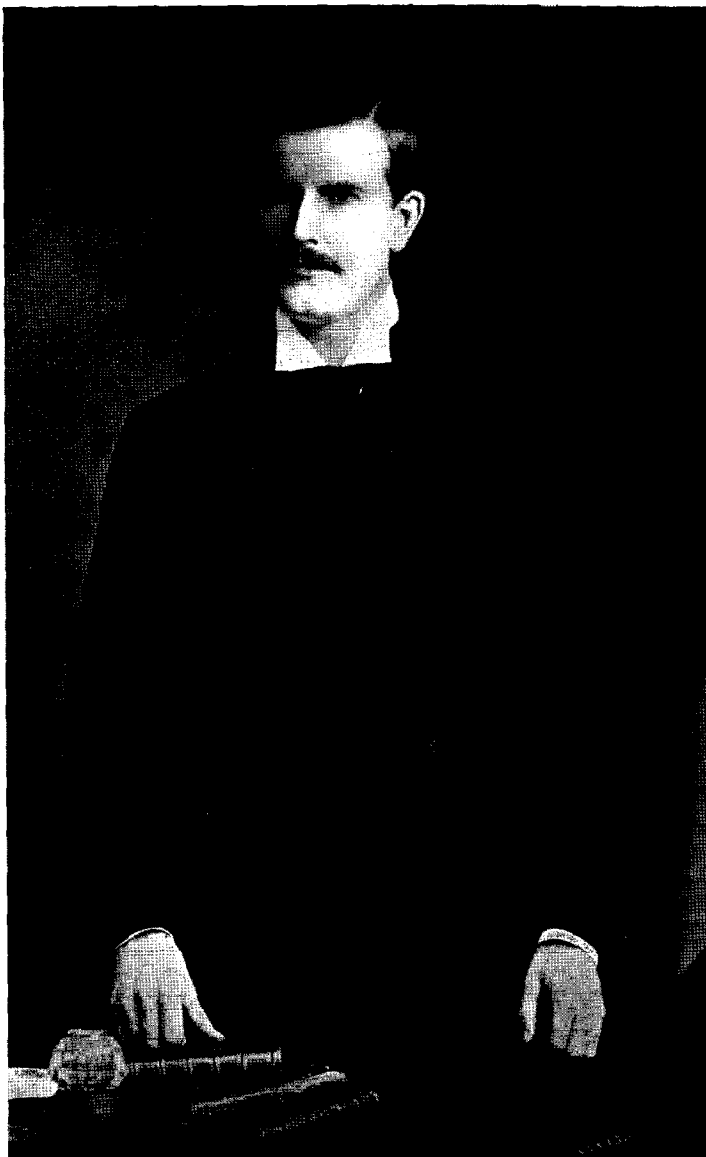
Thornton's own observation on this memorable interview with Dr. Temple is as follows:—

"Temple accepts our watchword as an aim to put before the Church, and a possibility. He will bring our appeal before the assembly at Lambeth, and let the Bishops hear it anyhow. He thinks they will be too old to adopt it as policy, as most of them are over fifty and have not a generation to live. He intimated to us that we had a call to draw together Christian forces. And added, 'You may be able to rouse the Church but . . . I can't.' What a confession! and what an inspiration! And now to prayer."

In April he wrote—

"The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel want a deputation of Student Volunteers for the 17th, to present to them the memorial before full committee. This is an answer to prayer, and a triumph. We shall yet see the whole Church moved to a great advance. We must expect this."

A great opportunity was given him that autumn of bringing forward this subject in a prominent way. He was asked to read a paper at the Church Congress



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D. M. THORNTON.
S.V.M.U. Days.

Elliott & Fry

at Shrewsbury. Here is his lively account of what took place—

“Three things were in my favour, and undoubtedly did secure the interest of that great and representative audience—

(1) “The *Birmingham Daily Post* was right in the kind reasoning of the words, ‘his youthful appearance no doubt gave him a very sympathetic hearing.’ (2) E. Stock was true when he said that a layman had a much better chance than a ‘parson.’ (3) The terrific tornado that came and struck the building just when I was a quarter of the way through, causing rain to come in all over the place, was all in the programme. You would have roared with laughter at the situation. Here was I, as hard as I could, ploughing away through the gale, determined not to be beaten by the elements, and triumphantly getting a hearing in answer to at least fifty different people’s prayers. There, too, were the people sitting below with no little fear that the whole roof of such a temporary building would be blown away. The Bishop of Ballarat set the comical fashion of sitting on the platform under an umbrella. All the audience then followed suit, and the bishops got out their skull-caps. The Bishop of London also put up his coat collar, and quite forgot to put it down again before speaking; and capping everything that I had said, specially addressing himself to the clergy, implored them to bring the subject of missions into their regular teachings from the pulpits. He even went so far as to say that no man could become a perfect Christian until ‘missions became an integral part of his life.’ Now he might have passed over what I had been trying to emphasise, but, instead, he went and reiterated point after point, and so impressing them officially on the clergy.”

One passage in his address we may quote as being especially characteristic, indicating, as it does, his estimation of the value of the Movement, and his hopes for its future—

“With unfeignedly thankful hearts we look back over the wonderful way in which God has led us during these last few years. He has brought hundreds of men and women to a new obedience to His royal commission: a higher tide of love has flooded their hearts, a deeper friendship has revealed the living Christ, clearer visions have passed before them, and they have entered into more abundant life. The triumphs of the past have cleared our sight for brighter glories; already we almost see the rosy hues of the morning, and waiting, seem to catch the footfall of our coming Lord. We rejoice to see our colonial and continental brothers clasp hands with us, and form one strong union to ‘make Jesus King.’ We wait to see the students of the East bow down before Christ Jesus, and become with us the messengers to their nations. As those that look for His appearance, we would press forward with a deeper fervency of prayer and effort, that before another generation shall have passed away the Gospel may be preached for a witness unto all nations.”

All this sort of thing suited, of course, Thornton’s enthusiastic nature, and developed his innate genius for dreaming and for scheming. But at this period his need of being supplemented by those who could control as well as urge, and who could work for an ideal without losing sight of *present* limitations or overstraining existing material, became more than ever obvious. When wisely handled, Thornton was usually amenable

to the rather galling discipline of this criticising and restraining influence. But sometimes he was not so, and his volcanic temperament at those times, then and afterwards in Egypt, found vent in making much commotion. It is difficult for a man of this build to realise, especially at the time, another man's point of view, and this fact leads him at times to be unsympathetic and harsh, unjust even. One wonders what was the whole inner history of that matter between Paul and Barnabas. . . . Thornton, however, preferred to be stood up to, though a perfectly Homeric conflict was apt to be the result. But this does not contradict the fact that, although his plans were often liable to practical criticism, as premature, they were frequently right in idea. The Rev. Tissington Tatlow, the present General Secretary of the "Volunteer" Movement, writes in this connection—

"It was probably this, together with the largeness of his schemes, that led one friend who knew him only slightly at the time to describe him as 'the young man who deals in worlds and archbishops!' It really described him very well, but he was more than that, he was a prophet. He was the greatest prophet the Student Movement has ever had. He looked into the future, and then devised his schemes. Sometimes the Executive laughed at those schemes, they seemed so impossibly big. Sometimes the Executive were rather bewildered, but Thornton always held on, and though he was sometimes, I think often, rash about details, he was generally right in the main sweep of things, and I have seen recent Executives carefully working out schemes which had been propounded to earlier Executives by Thornton, and ruled out of court as too big or too impracticable."

May it not be that this Watchword, and the Appeal to the Churches which was and must always be its logical corollary, will yet come to their own? Thornton, at least, never lost sight of them; his whole life-work was laid out with them in view, and we find him thus writing from Egypt, years later—

“M—— thinks that to evangelise the North-West Provinces alone in this generation wants a greater upheaval than the Reformation produced. X—— puts the question fairly plainly for the Eastern Soudan. I should have to say the same about the Delta of Egypt, where at present practically no light penetrates beyond the few leading towns. The Eastern Soudan is an appalling problem. Arabia is still largely inaccessible. E. Syria and Palestine are an almost desperate case. Absolutely no work is done among Moslems in Turkey in Asia,¹ except scratch visits of our missionaries and one colporteur to places in Mesopotamia. And so on and so on. Meanwhile the Devil’s forces are working hard. Drink shops are being set up by Greeks all over the Delta. Englishmen are disgracing our name here more and more every year. Keen men go back, and weak men live in sin, and some even take bribes. Now it seems to me that in view of all these facts, and there are much worse and sadder ones which I forbear to tell till we meet, the S.V.M.U. ought to have some better answer to give than it has given, and the Appeal to the Churches ought now to be followed up with a great movement for the awakening of Christendom.”

And again, in a letter dated 12th December 1900, after describing how he was getting on in Arabic, and saying that he needed to spend every spare scrap of energy upon the language, he breaks away from his

¹ 1908—This is not the case now.

own concerns and once more gets on to the problem of world-wide evangelisation. This time his interest is in language translation. He writes—

“There are at least a hundred languages, dominant ones, which need a good Christian literature. There are at least a thousand others out of the supposed four thousand which need Bible translations of some sort or other if the world is to be evangelised in any primary sense in this generation. . . . To put it simply, our task is to undo the work of Babel. The missionaries of Nyassaland are boldly facing the task of building up one language out of several of the spoken dialects there, Zulu and non-Zulu. From correspondence I am having with Uganda I see they are just beginning now to face the same question, and Uganda and the environs need linguists now if any place does, and so do other parts of Africa and Asia and South America. I estimate that for this kind of work alone we need at least five hundred scholars. Then we come to the widely spoken languages of Asia and Africa in which the New Testament, and, in most of them, the Bible is ready. Is this all they need? My dear fellow, I have been to the American Press at Beirut and seen there the result of the seven Arabic scholars (missionaries) after life-long study, and I tell you it is as a drop in the ocean. We need a hymnology in Arabic, a whole range of topical theological works, an army of controversial tracts, etc., as we are beginning to have in India, and there will be an enormous need now for this work in China. Think then what this involves, nothing less than groups of scholars at work at each of the great languages of the world, as well as native preachers and writers. We need it for Chinese, Arabic, Hindustani, all the Sanscrit group of languages, Persian and allied tongues, Turkish, Dravidic languages, Mongolian languages, Oceanian, etc. etc.

“And every one of these needs scholars and decades

of work. How can work at home in our seething islands compare with it? I am fairly warm upon this matter. Oh that someone among the Student Volunteers would rise up to-day as a prophet upon this matter, and show to college men the real issues, and be led to call forth more Volunteers! It is my prayer."

What this watchword meant to Thornton morally, intellectually, and spiritually may best be described by himself—

"June 22, 1906.

"Don't think us mere enthusiasts over this scheme. We mean a great deal more than this in the words, 'the Evangelisation of the World in this Generation.' The only way this work can be done simultaneously all over the world in a generation is by an all-round consecration of the Church of Christ in every land. This means that all nations in Europe will have to become revived, or else the whole of Europe cannot itself be said to be evangelised. It means all colonies of all European nations too. Yes, and all the heathen. Can any work be more comprehensive, more engrossing, and more hard? These visions of the future, whether realised or not, bring with them ambition to lead thousands, tendencies to pride and self-esteem, and temptations to be seeking greatness. Like snares they have to be cut again and again, and another humbling time is needed. It is here, in God's own appointed path for me, bringing, as it may, the dazzling heights and the rising tide of success, that I need the prayers of you and all my friends. The life of faith, the walk of holiness, and the graces of humility and reality are all so needed; and one often feels ashamed of drawing forth the sympathy of others, for the heart is so cold and mechanical the old fresh zeal seems to lose its colour. Oh to grasp more of the overwhelming love of Christ—His world-wide com-

passion, propitiation, and intercession! This is the only remedy for the world. How little we know of it! I want more of the secret of the words, 'As dying and behold we live, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing and yet possessing all things.' The only things that can stop this work are faithlessness, pride, and prejudice. I almost fear the last the most. No argument, truth, or inspiration will touch a prejudiced soul, still more a prejudiced Christian. The Lord subdue them in His way, and give us all larger views of His kingdom!"

THE "MISSIONARY STUDY" IDEA.

The second great idea that was borne in upon the leaders of those days, and Thornton first and foremost, was that the Watchword would not be adopted, much less realised, by the Christian Church, unless floods of light were cast on missionary facts, and *knowledge* took the place of ignorance. He immediately grasped, of course, that this meant effort—planned, deliberate, and organised effort; and he was instrumental in initiating a scheme of missionary study for the College Christian Unions, and writing a text-book, *Africa Waiting*, which in some ways is still a model for this sort of book. How sound was this "missionary study" idea is shown by two facts: first, that it has gone on increasingly and victoriously in the Student Christian Movement ever since; and secondly, that it has been introduced into the Churches themselves, and in them there is now a deeply significant movement for promoting missionary study among Church members, and particularly the rising generation.

The following letter shows the characteristic spirit with which Thornton entered on this task. Mountain-ranges of possibilities disclosed themselves to his eye as he viewed the task from the heights on which he habitually lived:—

“It is now decided that I have to engage in the task of writing a book on Africa: the first, from a missionary point of view, that will embrace the whole Continent in its topics. So I am getting into correspondence with such men as Pastor Coillard, of the Basuto and Barotse Missions, and Mackenzie (L.M.S.), who was used to Khama’s conversion, and Grenfell, the great Congo explorer, and Fraser, concerning South Africa and Nyassa problems. Arnot will help me with geographical and political and native questions south of the Congo region. Then, of course, men like Pilkington, of Uganda; Dr. Guinness, of the Congo; Bishop Tugwell, and Robinson, of the Niger, etc.; Bishop Ingham, of Sierra Leone; and the Americans, *re* the Cameroon country, will be consulted. Lastly, the North and South African Mission leaders.

“This great undertaking needs much prayer. Much material will be gathered by this means, and this will lead (D.V.) to a general African magazine for the public, later on a year-book for African missionaries, and possibly future works. Such a study will be hard, and followed by at least fifteen hundred American students, and five hundred Australian, South African, and Indian students. Possibly by Chinamen and Japanese. Certainly by some of our continental volunteers. The French, and German, and Swiss, and Dutch will all be much interested in Africa, so I hope to get all their missions represented. Not that Germany is doing much, while Holland less even than Germany. But this work should set each European country to work in evangelising its own possessions.

“Remember that many continental students are watching our educational programme. If we can get out such a work it will be just the means of starting them, too, with a systematic study of missions. This opens out realms of thought and new possibilities before us; vaster and even too great to understand as yet, for I suppose I am right when I say that no man of twenty-three has such a key position to work from to so many different nations as is now given me.

“The evangelisation of Africa is our cry! Why not in this generation? Why not! God is moving faster than we think. After this, of course, the same has to be done for China, but that we must take up later on, by my successor.”

He had left Cambridge in the summer of 1896, and worked at his task all the ensuing autumn and spring, staying with his aunts at Croydon, and going up almost daily to the British Museum, where he consumed vast quantities of geographical and missionary literature bearing on the problems before him.

The work did not end with writing a text-book. It involved writing manifold subsidiary studies and programmes of work, and directions to those who were to lead the study-scheme in the various colleges. To those he would write long and painstaking letters, sometimes running to four sheets, going into every detail of the subject in hand. It is not often that such laboriousness about minutiae goes with such soaring visionariness of outlook.

It was at this time he wrote his only hymn¹—

“I confess to it being a surprise to me to find the substance of what is now the hymn given and recorded

¹ See p. vi.

within thirty minutes, and in answer to prayer too. For not only have I for some time prayed that the Lord will raise up a poet to voice the watchword to the Churches, but on 30th December, at our quiet day, I asked the other secretaries if they would do the same, little thinking that I should be called upon to lead the way and draw forth other talent. For now this hymn will, of course, produce competition and something better for certain; and so our poet will be found."

Pressure was put on him to stay in England longer and give more time to the student work, but nothing would deflect Thornton from his "purpose to be a foreign missionary." With every temptation to stay, and with the certainty of becoming in time a well-known personage in the Church, exercising influence from some central position, he preferred to stop in the ranks and go as a private in the missionary army abroad, with the complete obscurity that that involves,—the beginning all over again, the absorption at first in the most elementary and commonplace work. To a man of Thornton's type and with his opportunities, such a step seems nothing short of "the sentence of death in himself,"—the death that to the Christian is the door to life, how narrow none but he knows.

He therefore offered his services to the Church Missionary Society this year and was accepted. The following letter is interesting in view of his future life:—

"30, 4, '97.

"I have definitely backed out of Educational Secretary work on 31st July. I am told that C.M.S.

would be willing to send me wherever I felt called to go. That means to the Mohammedans certainly. Where? There are three places which all have their attractions, and which from considerable reading now on the Mohammedan question seem to be very important places to occupy—(1) Bombay, (2) Cairo, (3) Hausaland. The first has been in my mind since 1891. The second grows upon me more and more, for I believe prophecy indicates the future importance of Egypt in this question. Hausaland is undoubtedly the opportunity of the hour, and dearly beloved Walter Miller longs for me to go with him. He is offering for this work almost at once. But I think the Lord is leading to (1) or (2). It may be that I should go to the Punjab to learn Urdu first before settling in Bombay. I can't say yet. Arabic, too, must be studied, and where? I need your prayers."

THE MISSIONARY IDEAL AND THE THEOLOGICAL COLLEGES.

We have already seen that the importance of influencing the Theological Colleges with the missionary ideals of the Student Movement had for some time presented itself to Thornton's mind; and, after finishing his work as "Educational" Secretary, his sense of its importance grew. This was, then, the next problem to which he addressed himself. In Thornton's life, as we shall see, the chronological order is generally the same as the logical. The fact speaks volumes for the ordered nature of this thinking, planning, and acting. Thornton saw that to win the Theological Colleges for the ideals expressed in the Watchword was to win the Church of the coming generation.

The connection of the Student Movement with the Theological Colleges had been rather tentative and hesitating. Thornton saw that it must be strengthened, and that missionary study was capable of being the bond. No sooner had he determined upon this than he devised the means of bringing it about. There must be a special conference for theological students, in the Easter vacation, at Birmingham, like that at Liverpool, only not so large. The fact that this only left four months to prepare for this conference, and that Liverpool had proved that such a task is a killing one, daunted him not a whit. Plans were drawn up, estimates made, programmes arranged, the smallest details set down. His foresight and power alone made the thing feasible, as will be seen from the following account by the Rev. Tissington Tatlow:—

“It is impossible to tell in one short paragraph what Douglas Thornton did for our Theological College Department. He began trying to draw theological students into the Movement at a time when no one else was working at the very base of the problem, and he continued that work until the Theological College Department in its present form was an accomplished fact. It was chiefly owing to his endeavours that a special week of prayer for theological students was very widely observed in Theological Colleges for several years. During the winter of '97, while Thornton was studying at headquarters the problem of the Theological Colleges, I was travelling in these Colleges on behalf of the S.V.M.U. About Christmas we joined forces, and together drafted a memorandum to the Executive about the Theological College problem and its relation to the Student Christian Movement. This memorandum surveyed the efforts

of past and present, and suggested that a special conference for theological students should be held during the spring of 1898. The proposal was discussed at the Christmas Executives, and the conference was decided upon. I do not think it would have been possible to have held this conference had it not been that in anticipation of the Executive's decision, Thornton had worked out the entire plans for such a conference in advance, and, when the Executive's decision was reached, he produced and laid on the table a memorandum which covered every department that needs attention in connection with such a conference. He threw himself into this effort during the spring of 1898. The Theological Conference, which was held at Birmingham, April 1898, laid heavy burdens on the men who organised it, and its ultimate success was in no small measure due to the courage and faith of Thornton, who had a prominent part in the actual conference, acting as its Chairman. This conference was the source from which our present Theological College Department sprang."

The writer of the above extract and the writer of the present work were Thornton's co-adjutors in this Birmingham Conference. They well remember the enormous work Thornton put into it, his unfailing resourcefulness, his command of detail. They remember also the conference itself, a time agonised with anxiety, want of sleep, and over-work. The idea was new, the men who came were strange to each other and to the work—far more curious than enthusiastic. Moreover, they were theological students and therefore—critical. The anxiety of the conference to those who realised the issues involved was therefore supremely great, and the physical strain involved by the late hours—12 midnight, 2 a.m.,

3 a.m., etc.—was terrible. The programme for the next day had sometimes to be elaborated at two o'clock in the morning after a day of most wearing work; Thornton being so tired that he would frequently talk nonsense, the other two being so equally tired that it was only by an effort they recognised it was nonsense that he talked.

But the next day he would be in his post as Chairman, apparently none the worse. And the end was peace. After some difficult crises the delegates went away convinced, and from that time the Theological College Department of the Student Movement has been a working reality.

It was during the four months, which were all he had for the working-up of this conference, that he actually found time for a visit to the United States to attend a great Student Volunteer Convention at Cleveland. Here he addressed six meetings of the Convention, and had numerous interviews with the missionary leaders. While his addresses were greatly valued, the leaders of the Student Volunteer Movement have always said that his most useful contribution was behind the scenes. He gave a great deal of time to personal interviews with prominent men. A special feature of these interviews was the discussion of the Faith Policy of the Church Missionary Society with the secretaries of six of the leading American missionary societies. Leaders of the Episcopal Church and editors of newspapers were also seen, and the policy of the Student Volunteer Movement discussed with them. At the conclusion of the Conven-

tion Thornton visited a few colleges in the States, and then hurried home to make the final preparations for the Birmingham Conference.

THE SPIRITUAL BASIS OF THE MOVEMENT.

As if to complete and crown the services rendered by Thornton to the Student Christian Movement, the last set of problems at which we find him working before—and after—his departure for Egypt were intensive, inward, spiritual: the unseen basis upon which all visible action, whether individual or united, is, as a matter of fact, wrought out.

Being a thorough-going Anglican by birth, training, and conviction, though absolutely free and even original in his views on purely ecclesiastical matters, it came natural to him to see, and grasp the meaning and value of expressed agreement in fundamental faith, more commonly and drily called creed. It was one of the unique features of the Student Movement that, although it embraced members of the Right, the Centre, and the Left of the Christian assemblage, men who were traditionally anti-creed, as well as pro-creed, it was nevertheless guided by God to give expression to its spiritual basis in one pregnant phrase. This phrase was not so much an intellectual formula as a word expressive of a heart-attitude to Jesus Christ. The first form that this Basis took, in the days of Thornton's official connection with the Movement, was—

“A belief in Jesus Christ as God the Son and only Saviour of the World,”

that is, a confession of personal reliance upon Christ as truly Divine and as the source of Salvation.

If this expression was altered a few years later, it was to intensify it, not weaken it, by changing its generalising character, so as to become more personal and applied, more adoring, and more Scriptural in expression: thus—

“I desire, in joining this Union, to declare my faith in Jesus Christ as my Saviour, my Lord, and my God.”

Thornton took a good deal of part in the prolonged discussions that produced these results, but his special contribution was in their application and use; and the way he grasped the importance of *acting*, in regard to this whole matter.

Thus, for example, he was the great leader in insisting that the High Church School in the Anglican Church could and should be brought into touch with the Movement without the smallest infraction of principle on any side. In the keenness of his hope and the reality of his sympathy, he undertook pilgrimages to various Church theological colleges and Church societies, urging now the adoption of the Watchword, now attendance at some conference, now organic connection of some sort with the Movement. And everywhere he relied on the basis to show that such alliances were defensible and valuable. On this point he advised a visit to the late Bishop of London, Dr. Creighton, to ascertain his views. The interview pro-

duced the following remarkable letter, written by the great Bishop expressly for publication and use:—

“FULHAM PALACE, S.W., Dec. 2, 1898.

“MY DEAR MR. GAIRDNER,—The practical point on which you ask my opinion is this: Do I think that members of Theological Colleges in connexion with the Church of England would in any way compromise their position, as thorough and loyal members of that communion, by joining the British College Christian Union, which aims at uniting students of all denominations for the purpose of promoting missionary zeal? I do not think so. I regard the basis of a ‘belief in Jesus Christ as God the Son and only Saviour of the world’ as one which is independent of the question of ecclesiastical organisation. When practical work is to be done we must recognise that it must be done by each of us according to the principles of the ecclesiastical organisation to which we belong. But the object of your Union is to prepare the way for practical work, by prayer, by study, by spiritual endeavour. These are objects and methods which are common to all Christians. They can be pursued in different ways. But all may unite in resolving to pursue them. Such union for the general purpose of promoting missionary work does not involve any surrender of individual convictions about the best form in which the Christian truth can be expressed. It is in the mission field especially that forms of organisation are subjected to the most searching test. No one religious body can undertake all the work that is to be done. Combination among students might help to remove misunderstandings, which are too often engendered by the ignorance which comes from exclusiveness.

“Your endeavour has my warm sympathy.—I am,
yours truly, “M. LONDON.

“W. H. T. GAIRDNER, Esq.”

And the work that he did in this connection, though its apparent fruit at the time was small, has proved most valuable and important. It led, for one thing, to almost annual conferences between some representatives of the Movement and earnest missionary-hearted High Churchmen, with confessed advantage to each side. It led to much fruitful thinking on the meaning of unity, and the place of doctrinal confession in true unity; to the mutual respect and understanding which contact brings; and more than that, it led to High Churchmen freely attending the summer conferences of the Student Movement, imparting and receiving fresh zeal and enthusiasm. This sort of co-operation is valuable, just because it represents deliberate action based on expressed common faith. It is the slow and the long path towards Christian re-union, but it is the *sound* way, because every step in it is made good, and never has to be retracted.

Thornton, however, had great visions of what might come about one day. In the first place, he took up the line that the Movement ought not to consider its own basis as anything but a minimum. He saw that the enlarging of the platform until it included all truth was necessary before all could stand on that platform together. His ideal for the Student Movement was that it should take up, freshly, sincerely, and enthusiastically, the attitude of seeking and welcoming truth from whatever quarter it came. He thought that this attitude was, in reality, so rare that for the Movement to announce it would be not banal but naive and start-

ling. What he meant was that the Basis should be looked on as a nucleus, round which should gradually collect the results and the conclusions of unanimous Christian thinking, all the more valuable because representing untold spiritual, moral, and mental toil. Such basis would thus be organically formed; it would be the first creed whose express purpose was to include and not exclude; to unite and not scatter. It would never alienate, for it never would be added to save by the goodwill of all; and, in whatever respect it was felt to be incomplete, that incompleteness would be the signal for more, not less, prayer and love, upon the basis of unity already attained and expressed.

For this reason it was a bitter moment to him, when a sincere endeavour to make the Nicene Creed the expression of the unity of theological students, at Birmingham in 1898, failed. It was premature, and it was dropped; but to Thornton the experience only dictated more endeavour, more sympathy, more prayer. He grieved, too, when it was decided not to let *baptism* have place in the Basis, on account of the one little Christian community whose views on baptism (as he said) are not a protest against baptism itself, but against mechanicalism, a protest *for* the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost. But he never let his disappointments become discouragements.

Such were the ways in which Thornton bravely and with originality faced the great questions of Christian union, both before and after he left

England for Egypt. They led him out to a vision of Christendom, in which federation, rather than absolute uniformity, was perhaps the farthest point to which his sight reached. Federation: neither the confessed dividedness of to-day; nor a viscous adhesiveness, which is only gained by the refusal to continue the quest of truth in Church matters at all; nor a uniformity in which all the Churches have had to come round to the views of one; but a mutual recognition and co-operation based upon an ever-enlarging common denominator of faith, believed *and expressed*. And his last and maturest appeal, written in 1901, is this—
“Let us work out the form of union that is in the mind of God! In the ages to come I believe heaven’s witness to the value of the Movement will vary according as we succeed or fail all to come to a full-grown man in the fulness of Christ. These are some of the reasons that make me feel that, whereas the adopted basis is a suggestive guide and a powerful confession of personal belief for our students as a whole, yes for the World’s Student Christian Federation too, theological students should be praying and working for the extension of the common ground between them, both for their own sakes, and for the sake of the Churches at home and abroad, of which they will soon become the servants and the leaders.”

Can anyone deny that in those thoughts Thornton is even now before his time, and that they constitute a call to Churchmen, conforming and non-conforming alike, to address themselves more seriously to this great problem?

CHAPTER IV

ON THE THRESHOLD

It is always a question of deep interest to see the way in which a man of this calibre is guided, not merely to the mission field (as we have fully seen), but also to a particular mission field. Thornton had had unique opportunities of surveying the field of battle as a whole, so that it was to be expected that he would have definite ideas as to the point at which he should most advantageously put his life in pawn. He had already been attracted to India; he had gained the Maitland prize for an essay on "Parsis, Sikhs, and Jains." It is certain, too, that he was fully aware of the enormous opportunities in the Far East; but in 1897 these were not so clamant as they have become a decade later. So too, he had been writing on "Africa Waiting," and considering the problem of that continent as a whole. This work had been capped by a series of studies which he outlined on Islam. The result was practically inevitable. The problem of Africa is the problem of Islam, for it is *there* (in the words of the Cairo Student Volunteers' cable

to the London Conference of 1900) that "Islam defies your King." Even the magnificent successes of missions to heathen in Africa, such as the Lovedale, Bechuana, Barotsi, Central African, Uganda, and West African missions, only emphasise the failure of the Church in relation to advancing Islam.

He saw, then, that the problem of problems before the Christian Church, the hindrance of hindrances to the evangelisation of the world in this generation, was *Islam*. To Thornton this would be only another way of saying, "Then I go to Islam."

He would not, however, have been Thornton had he rested content with this general decision. It must not only be the most difficult and needy field, but it must be the centre of that field. This, as his studies had led him clearly to perceive, and as will be often repeated in his diaries and letters, was *Cairo*. For the centre of the Moslem world must be, to him, an Arabic-speaking country, for he already saw the primary importance of the Arabic language, the language of languages in the Near and Middle East. This excluded Turkey, India, Persia. For this cause and for the reason that it was not central, Hausaland was excluded, though he was immensely drawn to that wonderful field, and was strongly tempted to volunteer for it. This left the Arabic-speaking Moslem centres, Mecca, Damascus, Jerusalem, and Cairo. And the most important, as the most possible of these, was Cairo.

Cairo, then, be it! In August 1897, at the Students'

Summer Conference, he provisionally offered for this field in a private interview with the Rev. H. E. Fox, the Honorary Secretary of the Church Missionary Society.

The following words of his own give the best insight into his motives in this singularly interesting matter :—

“Nov. 22nd, 1897.

“MY DEAR MR. FOX,—I want to tell you that I feel stronger every day about going to Cairo, and it will take a good deal now to convince me that I am meant to start the first few years of service in the mission field in any other sphere. I had ample opportunity of once again studying the Indian mind while at work on the Essay,¹ but in the *light of our Watchword* I still feel that the hardest spots of the Moslem world do need proportionately more attention than C.M.S. has been able to give them even in these last thirty years.”

[TO THE WRITER, FROM CAIRO, 1899.]

“Remember that on the one hand what you write here in Arabic will soon reach India, as quickly as it can reach England. It will also find an entrance into other Moslem lands. . . .

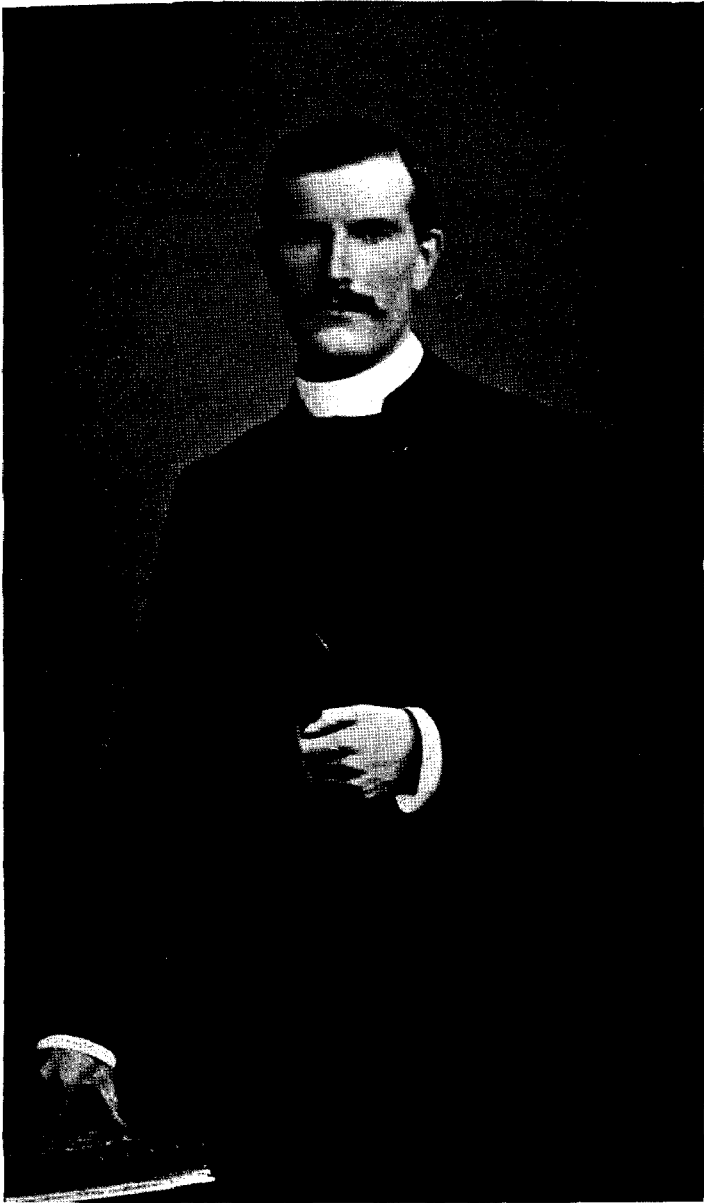
“I feel it to be a serious thing to say to you that I feel the call to Egypt greater than that to Central Africa or elsewhere, because how can any one judge except with human judgment? Doubtless the need is greatest in Central Africa; or in one of the densest populations of the globe where there is no missionary at work, *e.g.* Bengal. But the more one studies the question the more one feels the need of bases and strategic points, and not *vice versá*, in spite of the wonderful work the Monros are doing in another line. It is impracticable to be too diffuse. Work done is

¹ The Maitland Essay mentioned above.

never followed up, and seldom brings forth good fruit. On the other hand, unquestionably the Moslem world is the line of greatest resistance, and hence the last that is likely to yield; but yet again the Arabic language is read by as many people as Chinese, and probably by nearly as many as English. So that one's influence is likely to be the wider. All these things have to be taken into account."

The matter was as good as settled before the end of the year (1897). It was arranged for him to sail in the next autumn, and so, after the Birmingham Conference of the next spring, which was his real farewell to direct work for the Student Movement, he went into retirement at Islington College to prepare for Ordination. He was ordained Deacon by the Bishop of London (Dr. Creighton) on 2nd October 1898 in St. Paul's. It was a joy to him to have been ordained by a Bishop of London for abroad, and in a Church dedicated to St. Paul.

He was now engaged to be married. The decision was taken, like all his decisions, in the light of The Work: any other way of looking at marriage was inconceivable to him. He knew himself, and knew that he could do little without one to share all his thoughts and plans, and give him the full measure of love that his nature craved. And he was right. His Betrothed was Miss Elaine Anderson, daughter of the late Sir William Anderson, K.C.B., Director-General of the Royal Ordnance Factories. Of her it shall suffice to say this: that what his nature craved that she gave him. They were married in Cairo on 7th November 1899, after he had been just a year in the field: he having advanced, of



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D. M. THORNTON.

Elliott & Fry

At Ordination, 1898.

course, a large number of excellent reasons why the wedding should then take place! And to them was born, in 1901, their only child, his little son, Cecil. His married life was what he hoped it would be—need we tell more? It was a family life wholly dedicated to the Cause; in this, as in all else, the Kingdom came first, by the deliberate choice of both the husband and the wife. But that did not mean that the beautiful family life was sacrificed. It was not. His was a real home; and if the husband and father could give but little time quantitatively to the amenities of home-life, what he did give was great in quality; so that little Cecil to this day remembers his father as the one *par excellence* who made his life happy, on the strength of those few, rare hours which he could give wholly to his little boy.

His ideals for missionary life, and for married life as well, can best be found in the following noble words, written to his Betrothed shortly before sailing for Egypt. There is the revelation of the man; the revelation on the threshold:—

“I want this letter to be from my heart . . . I want you secretly before your Maker to make a firm resolve that you will help me to be true to my past convictions, wrought out on my knees, and in the presence of the life and Book of Christ.

“I must be true to God and conscience all my life. I will not, by the help of God, allow the world to dazzle me, in wealth, in popularity, in literature, in soul.

“I see before me two divergent ways. The one is that of settlement and ease, the other that of pioneering

as a preacher-prophet all the time. I do not feel prepared to say that God wants me to be living comfortably—in the sense of settled down. I trust that you always stand in readiness to bear a separation if the Lord shall cause it. It may be we shall stay in Cairo many years. I may be summoned to Hausaland, or other lands.

“Again, I trust you will not think me selfish if I have to work at nights, in years to come. I fear there will be very little ‘drawing-room’ time in my active life. I feel I must work while it is called to-day. God willing, Cairo must undergo a transformation of religious life. How to bring this about calls for our constant prayers. It must be done.”

With these remarkable words, which are worthy of reading and re-reading, we follow Douglas Thornton in thought to the great Eastern city which henceforth was to be his home.

Did he remain true to this ideal? Did the self-revelation on the threshold of the mission field remain bright and unclouded until he set foot on another Threshold just nine years later? Let the unconscious self-revelation of that last night bear witness that to this we may answer, Yes. He *did* “never let the world dazzle him”; he never did “comfortably settle down”; for when he died he was on the verge of making a great break with his Cairo life; he *had* “very little drawing-room life in his active life”; he *did* “work while it was called day”; and, witness his last plans for visiting the Soudan, for being itinerant preacher in Upper Egypt; witness the impassioned voice echoing in its dying delirium down the silent hospital corridors, that he WAS “a preacher-prophet ALL the time”!

We cast our minds back at this life-history up to this point, and we realise the extent of his loss. Such unparalleled experience, research, knowledge, such unique preparation, such depths of self-devotion! And to be withdrawn after nine years' work!—at the age of thirty-four! . . .

Thy will be done.

CHAPTER V

THE FIELD AND THE MAN

IN recent years people have become better informed about Egypt and the Egyptians than they used to be, for a variety of reasons, and the English reader of these pages will therefore very possibly have a fair idea of the country and city where Thornton found himself at the end of 1898. Yet, judging by the questions which the Anglo-Egyptian finds himself asked by tourists or at home, it is perhaps advisable just to sketch in the outlines of that environment, in order that the reader may follow Thornton's thought and action intelligently from the outset.

Racially, the dwellers in the land of Egypt are still mainly Egyptian: that is to say, their stock, even though Arab and other elements have been grafted on to it, is still mainly the old Egyptian stock, coming down from the days of the Pharaohs. Nor do their religious divisions alter the general truth of this,—the older Moslem¹ families have no doubt less or more of Arab blood in their veins, and the wealthy families, Turkish or Circassian; but

¹ Moslem = Mohammedan. This information is not always superfluous!

many Moslems must be just as purely Old Egyptian in race as the Copts themselves, for the simple reason that they are only Copts who have turned Moslem. Now the Copts are racially as nearly pure Old Egyptian as it is possible to find. In religion they are Christian. They represent the fragment of the famous Church of Egypt, which held to the faith of their fathers when the rest Islamised, during the centuries succeeding the Moslem invasion, which occurred in the seventh century, A.D., very shortly after Mohammed's death. And alas! the leakage has even now not ceased; hardly a month passes but one hears of some perversion to Islam.

Ecclesiastically, these Copts are the descendants of those Eutyhians who broke away from the Churches of both East and West in the fifth century and formed the Monophysite heresy in Egypt. And thus the national Church of Egypt remains to this day, neither in communion with the "Orthodox" Greek Church of the East nor with the "Catholic" Roman Church of the West, except for some who have given in their allegiance to the latter and are called Copt Catholics, forming less than a tenth of the whole. The total number of Egyptian Christians is still under a million, and the Moslems outnumber them by about fourteen to one. The Copts are found all over Egypt, but they are most numerous in Upper Egypt,¹ especially in the Province of Assiut.

¹Upper Egypt, all South of Cairo; Lower, the Delta North of Cairo.

Owing to its great isolation, both geographical and ecclesiastical, and the hardening effect of continual persecution and oppression, the Coptic Church gradually fell after the Moslem invasion into a very low condition of spirituality—a fact they themselves admit. Still, it was Copts who kept the torch of Christianity alight all through those dark centuries, and experience teaches that they have not been, and are not, unwilling to be helped. Their doctrinal point of dispute with the rest of Christendom fades away in the realities of practical religious life. And, though they retain doctrines and practices not recognised by the reformed Anglican Church, these things do not make them so inaccessible as Romanists. For one thing, they enjoy an open Bible. The Scriptures in Arabic are read in their churches, and Bible reading and Bible distribution is encouraged. They have no doctrine of Purgatory, and this makes a very great difference in the *practical application* of certain doctrines which are not recognised by the Reformed Communion, viz. Prayers for the Dead, the Invocation of the Blessed Virgin and the Saints, and the Mass.

It may not be superfluous to say here that Arabic is the language of the entire people, including the Copts. The old Egyptian or Coptic language gradually faded before the sacred language of Islam, and is now a dead language, only used in the prayers of the Coptic Church, though the use of Arabic in some of these prayers is gradually becoming commoner.

No missionary effort from the West ever was made in

Egypt before the nineteenth century. Islam remained in undisturbed possession. At first Cairo was not the most important of the Mohammedan cities. Damascus and Bagdad bulked more largely in the Moslem mind than the capital of Egypt—El Kâhira—Cairo, a city which, indeed, was not (properly speaking) founded till the third century of Islam. But as the Caliphate, with its seat in Bagdad, declined, Cairo, which was already of first-rate importance, became more important still. Her supremacy was not political; it was more notable than a political supremacy—which, indeed, has never been hers,—it was intellectual and educational. The university mosque of El Azhar,¹ coeval with the birth of Cairo itself, became an international college, where thousands of students from all over the Moslem world, from the Pacific to the Atlantic, and from Turkestan to the Equator, gathered, and to-day still gather, to imbibe the traditional learning of Islam, the Koran, the Commentaries, Arabic, Logic, and Law. And Cairo's distinction was only intensified when the shifting world-centre of gravity made the land in whose territory lay the Suez Canal the most important country of the Mohammedan world.

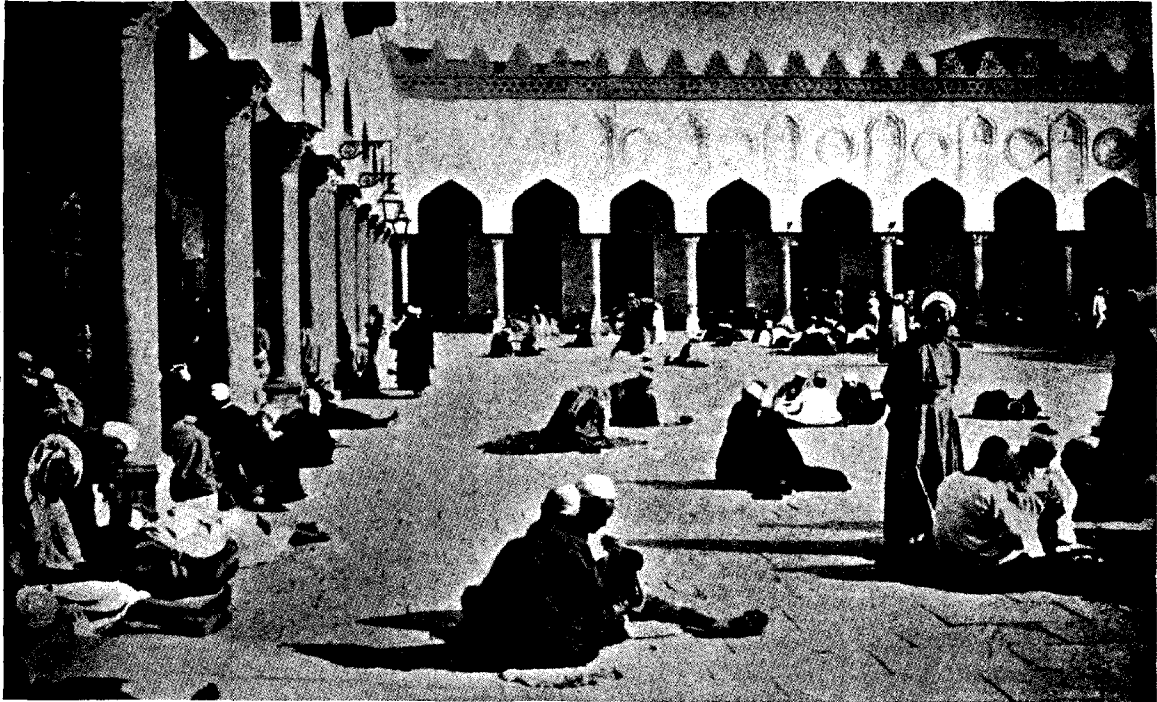
The Church Missionary Society was the first in the field. A well-known C.M.S. missionary, the Rev. J. R. T. Lieder, worked in Cairo from 1825 to 1862. As the Moslems were generally inaccessible in those days, he tried to help the Copts. There was no

¹ "The Flowery" (Flourishing).

thought of trying to form an Anglican body out of Coptic converts; the great object was by literature and theological instruction to enlighten and help the clergy and other educated Copts. And the results showed then, as in the time of Douglas Thornton, that sympathetic effort of this sort is welcomed and does very great good. The mission was nevertheless withdrawn in 1862.

The next workers were the (American) United Presbyterians. Their ultimate end, like Lieder's formerly, was, of course, the evangelisation of Islam. But they also found that the difficulties of the task made it appear more fruitful to help the cause of enlightened Christianity in Egypt. And truly a strong and enlightened Christianity in Egypt will greatly accelerate the work of modern evangelisation. The Presbyterian missionaries, however, had no objection to raising up a native Presbyterian Church composed of those Copts who responded to their preaching efforts. And a large and enlightened community, with churches, schools, and a self-supported pastorate, is the result of their work. And they have had not a few conversions from Islam also.

Finally, after the British occupation, the Church Missionary Society re-entered the country with a view of definitely evangelising Mohammedans. Educational and medical work was started with success. And then the late Rev. F. F. Adeney, himself an able missionary, but greatly hampered by ill-health, appealed for men to come out and work among educated Mohammedans,



THE COURT OF THE UNIVERSITY MOSQUE, EL AZHAR, CAIRO.

especially mentioning the students of the famous Azhar mosque, whose accessibility had been repeatedly proved. The sending out of Thornton in 1898 was the first answer to that appeal.

“Educated Mohammedans” is a term embracing very divergent types. These divergences, however, reduce themselves to two main classes, between which there is a great gulf fixed; those who have had a traditional Islamic education ending with the Azhar University, and those who have had a Western education ending with the Government Secondary School or Higher College. In dress the same divergence is for the most part marked; the former (the “Sheikh” class) wearing orthodox Oriental costume, and the latter (the “Effendi” class) wearing Western dress, with “tarboosh” (or fez).

Such was the nation, and such its races, religions, sects, and language to which Douglas Thornton came in the autumn of 1898.

He was coming to the centre of Islam, and of its inner circle, the Arabic-speaking world. And it has been seen in the last chapter how clearly conscious he was of this fact; and in the next chapters it will appear that neither the change of his environment, local or personal, nor the pressure of great preliminary tasks, blunted his perception of it. On the contrary, under the stress of this ever-present fact, he, with wonderful prescience, foresaw and stated almost all the lines of work which he ultimately initiated or wished to initiate. It speaks volumes for the unique

nature of his preparation that maturer experience, for the most part, only endorsed the policy he advocated in the very first half-year of his residence in a totally new field! From the point of view of missionary strategy, Thornton started, unlike most missionaries, full-grown, mature from the very first.

On the other hand, he, like the rest, had to go through the trying apprenticeship of the first years abroad, doubly trying to a man of his calibre, whose mind is full of great schemes, and whose whole soul burns to speak out the message within him. Instead, he must go to school anew; he must pour out his soul over sounds and guttural letters and grammatical rules; he must be a dumb man first, then a stammering blunderer, to the very people whom he longs to reach; the truths he burns to preach he must put into language the painful inadequacy of which he is conscious of, even as he speaks; he must be content to say one-twentieth of what he means to say, and that in language so bald and tame that even to himself it almost transforms the glorious truth to a poor, thinly-expressed platitude; he must, further, become responsible for some work or works which he never started, in which, perhaps, he feels little interest, and for which he does not pretend to be qualified,—work that may be a mere piece of trivial detail compared with the plan drawn in his own mind. Even to a dull missionary this apprenticeship is extremely trying; to a man like Thornton it is simply a death that he undergoes, because he knows

he must pass through its grave and gate to the life of freedom beyond. And, in an Arabic-speaking field, the stage is an exceptionally long and difficult one.

Bravely, however, did he attack it, doing "the nexte thyng." And, in the life of petty detail, relevant enough but none the less detail, which he must now live, he found strength and inspiration in often lifting up his eyes unto the hills of his ideals and aspirations.

This double aspect of these early years is best brought out in his own words—words spoken to his colleagues in Cairo at one of their weekly gatherings some years later. They also afford a vivid glimpse into the essential character of the man—

"There are two events in my missionary life which have made a deeper impression upon me than any other that I can recall. The first was an address by our late remembered Secretary, given in our old flat soon after we were married, at the weekly Bible-reading. In it he spoke, especially, I think, to junior missionaries, or so at least it seemed to me. He told us that the folks at home fondly thought that outgoing missionaries somehow became different to ordinary mortals when they sail, and are supernaturally endowed, but that the experience of those who have been out longest in the field goes to show that life in the mission field is like life begun over again. We not only have to learn to talk and read and pray again in unknown tongues, but we have to learn how to be Christians, and live a Christian life as well.

"Another scene between the Gizeh tram and ferry I well remember, when Mr. Baylis, summoning up his courage, said to me, 'Thornton, you are different to anyone else I know; you are always looking at

the end of things. Most people, and myself included, find it better to do the next thing.¹

"In some such words he closed a conversation of criticism upon the well-known Watchword of the Student Volunteer Missionary Union.¹ My only reply later on, in the Old Cairo tram, was something like this, if I remember rightly: 'I find that the constant inspiration gained by looking at the goal is the chief thing that helps me to persevere.'"

These words give a very vivid glimpse into the mind of the man who now left his great work in England to take up an even greater in Egypt. One remembers his striking figure, well over six foot in height, broad and well set up, and holding itself "in rather a grand way," as one of his friends has well said. Thus he was a decidedly impressive figure to greet, or to watch as he spoke. With head slightly flung back and shoulders well opened out, and the look of a man who is proud of something, his appearance was entirely worthy of one whose missionary thinking was "in continents" and would, beyond question, have been "in planets," had the revelation of the Kingdom of Heaven reached beyond our little earth. He had, moreover, a fine voice, a tenor, with, however, the virility of a baritone, and very wisely he had had this voice carefully trained, so that not only was his singing very fine when at its best, but his speaking in a large hall or in the open air was very effective. No sort of apology was

¹ His interlocutor might not, of course, accept this as giving a fully correct impression of his meaning.

there in that erect figure with the grand air, or in the commanding yet intensely sympathetic voice, that many will remember, in hall or on beach, preaching the Kingdom of God and appealing to the consciences of men. And on that last night the same voice pealed down the corridors of the hospital, as, with the old imperial gestures, he all unconsciously preached Christ for the last time.

The strongly-developed gentle and sensitive side to his nature was clearly apparent in his mouth and chin, which were full of sensitive and sympathetic character, and, as such, quite beautiful, whether they conformed to a sculptor's laws of beauty or not. In Egypt, moustache and beard rather concealed this trait, and gave his whole face a much sterner look, quite in keeping with his splendidly regular nose and broad, full forehead. This sterner look, concealing the gentler, but not really altering it, was rather typical of a similar modification of his idiosyncrasy, which now in Egypt, as he himself knew, dropped a good deal of the expressed tenderness which so characterised Cambridge days. It is a change to which every man is liable in exchanging the genialities and congenialities of college life and work for the every-day wear and tear of a mission field. He is conscious of it, he may fight against it, he perhaps thinks that it was better with him formerly than now; yet it is inevitable. The youth is becoming a man, and the integument of his character may have to be hardened into firmness. The tenderness will still be there, but it will find a different expression.

Nothing about him was more expressive than his hands. They were, as a strong contrast to his great height and bulk, almost as small as a woman's, beautifully shaped, with tapering fingers, nervous to their very tips. A man's strength and a woman's tenderness were speakingly manifest in those hands—the hands of a surgeon or some cunning artificer. They were never still. His passion for action and orderliness would come out quite unconsciously at table, when the never-resting hands, with infinite delicacy of touch, would unceasingly arrange and rearrange the forks, knives, spoons, and glasses, till all the lines were super-accurately parallel, and all the angles right-angles to the decimal of a second.

A similar orderliness, which by its very excess often defeated its own object, marked his arrangement of books and papers. Not a single magazine or paper, however trivial, could he bring himself to destroy; he would bank them up in beautifully ordered piles, which, however, as he never had time to see to and store them finally away, tended to collect in ever-increasing strata (but always beautifully arranged) all over his study.

Method indeed pervaded everything he did. He was really great at organising, as we have already seen. At the Birmingham Conference his remarkable efforts were entirely successful, and if he was at times partially unsuccessful it was simply because he had not the time to give the organising all the attention it needed, or because the missionary

element in him got the upper hand; for in the mission field visionary and organiser often have to be one and the same person, from which fact flow many difficulties.

Thornton did not pretend to be an all-round man (it would have been fatal had he been so). He was perfectly aware of his limitations, and quite humble about them. The point at which ability in him flamed forth into genius was not an intellectual but a moral and spiritual one, his genius for consecration to the Kingdom of God. Apart from that, his talents were considerable, if not startling. His educational acquirements have been already alluded to, and it has been seen that his most striking abilities were extra-academically developed. His topographical sense, his feeling for locality, was raised to a very high power by the wide and deep missionary reading he did for *Africa Waiting*. He thus seemed to have an instinctive feeling for the value and significance of situation. Put him in a new country, like Cyprus or Syria, and he "had the inside out of it," to use an expressive vulgarism, in a few days. It was this faculty, when applied to missions, that made him such a true Pauline. It came natural to him, intellectually as well as spiritually, to regard a continent, nay, a world, as a unit, and to grasp and insist on the strategic value of a certain place in relation to the whole. He would talk, amid friendly deriders, as though he were contemplating the extension of missionary operations to Tobolsk, in Russian

Asia, or Sokoto, in Hausaland. It was simply because he had perhaps that morning, in the Azhar University, met and talked with a Mongol from Tobolsk or a Hausa from Sokoto, and thus to him the places had literally become near, as he co-ordinated them in the world-synthesis which his own studies and thinking had established in his mind. He had the Mohammedan world all mapped out in his mind, just as he had a house when he had gone over it for the first time, for a mighty house-agent was he at Cairo: and he would at a moment's notice produce a wonderfully accurate plan of either the one or the other.

An ideal, a vision, was, then, absolutely necessary to him. He could not work without it. And it is this that explains the largeness of his views and the magnitude of his schemes; their uncomfortable magnitude, as those responsible for other schemes, and for the financing and controlling of the whole, often very naturally thought. As he himself wrote a few years later, "I find that the constant inspiration gained by looking at the goal is the chief thing that helps one to persevere."

His genius was, then, primarily synthetic rather than analytic, intuitive rather than logical. Of course it is impossible entirely to separate the two in anyone, but in most men one predominates. Thornton had also a power of analysis, but it was apt to be defective. He could argue logically, but being more keen about the conclusion to which he had arrived by intuition than

about the premisses by which he afterwards sought to establish it, he not seldom appeared very illogical, especially as (like most men of this rapid order of mind) he would approach his subject from many points of view, with an appropriate argument for each, which arguments, when compared, often turned out contradictory. To other minds it often appeared as if a conclusion, so questionably established, must be itself unsound. (*Hinc lacrimæ.*) But this was by no means necessarily the case. Everybody saw the inconsistency, and that he really thought backwards, not very convincingly sometimes; but the wise pondered the conclusion. And as has been remarked, that conclusion generally turned out *right*, and he himself to be before his time in insisting on it. The trouble, if any, resided in the fact that he, like many men of this type, liked to be thought logical as well as intuitional; and a quite unnecessary passion for seeming consistent, and being in the right, would make the man himself blind to the inconsistencies of his arguments, and set him harmonising the same, or meeting the arguments advanced by others against him, with sophistries that were rather galling to those whose formal logic was more correct. This was a pity, for it tended to create a mistrust that retarded even the schemes which were perfectly sound. But so it will be till the end of time. We remember the picture of a Baring working with a Gordon in a certain famous recent autobiography. The brake is not merely a useful but a necessary institution. And it is Nature who has decreed that when the

machine has to be slowed down, friction is the mode of energy that she uses.

This explains the universal reputation he had for rashness; and the fact that he, whose genius was emphatically practical, was often written down unpractical. In a sense this reputation was unmerited, and one sympathised with his indignant disclaimers. In the sense indicated above, however, they were not unfounded. We are, all of us, paradoxical creatures. And another aspect of this particular paradox was that he was often tolerant of criticism, and humble under rebuke, yet when criticised would often make a tremendous fuss and to-do, sometimes being less than just to his critics, and so, unconsciously, deterring them from criticising in the future.

The same traits came out in his practical genius, for he was intensely practical. In finding and fitting up a house, in organising concerted work, in mastering details related to publishing, type-setting, printing, and a hundred other things, he was admirable. He thought that versatility was a missionary obligation. In the early agonies of bringing out a periodical in Cairo, his colleague once demurred to going into the machining-room and criticising the inking apparatus of the printing-machine, mildly suggesting that the printer knew his business, and that he did not. "I am a missionary, and it is my duty to be ready to do anything and everything," was the uncompromising reply.

He was so full of ideas of how things should be done,

and so keen to put things through, that the Oriental, entirely unequal to keeping the pace set, sometimes exhausted his patience more than was right. And the same trait often made him unduly anxious to have things done in *his* way—the practical counterpart of his little weakness for seeming in the right in argument. On the other hand, he had a real and generous sympathy for those whose mistakes were the honest result of temperamental deficiencies.

Indeed, generosity was fundamental with him. No one knows the extent of his giving, because he was ever stern in his insistence on keeping the left hand in ignorance of the doing of the right. But generosity is more than “giving.” Jealousy or meanness simply did not exist for him; another’s success gave him as much pleasure as his own. When his colleague came out to Cairo, he put at his disposal all his hard-won linguistic experience of his first year, and nothing touched one more than to see the pride he took in a colleague’s achievements, even when they surpassed his own.

On the side of pure intellect he was not original; but he had infinite capacity for taking pains. His method of assimilation was curious. It might be called wholesale—so much so that you might have concluded that it was purely imitative. He would read a book for an address, and in the address pass out what he had taken in pretty much in its entirety. And yet there *was* assimilation: in some indefinable way you felt that it *had* become his. Sometimes he took the trouble to

write the thing out, though, indeed, the writing proved but the transcription of the book itself. But the getting of it down on paper made it his, and one felt it was his. In this way he attained a sound, serviceable knowledge of theology and history and allied subjects, so that he could, without difficulty, both write and talk in an interesting way on a large variety of topics.

The same laboriousness characterised his language-study, as we shall see. He had not a great gift for languages, and he owed it entirely to his indefatigability, and his power of discerning and working towards an end, that he acquired so serviceable a knowledge of the difficult Arabic tongue.

Like many men of a mainly practical cast, the poetic and the prosaic lay rather in streaks in his nature. The former was certainly not absent,—who could be a visionary without having a poetical side? But technically, it was inchoate. And very much the same could be said as to his humorous side. No man with such a gorgeous laugh or such a love of fun could be called deficient in humour. But he had blind spots in this connection, and was often more amusing than he tried to be. He had a delightful way of mixing up two kindred proverbs or idioms. Once he told his companions that “he always had two strings up his sleeve.” They then asked him if he also had another card to his bow? Such things enliven heavy committee meetings. At student conferences or committees the airy and

irresponsible type of Hibernian wit was quite unintelligible to him, but he would smile on the bhoys when they seemed to be enjoying themselves, even though he failed to see where the joke lay. Very likely he had made it himself, and the Hibernians were only audibly enjoying it. At such times he would rock himself backwards and forwards ejaculating, "Oh, those Irishmen!" intensely pleased, if still in the dark. Æsthetically, he had a keen eye and ear for beauty. Landscape always spoke to his heart, and he was sympathetic to its significance. In music, his taste though untrained was extraordinarily sure. One always knew the passages—some of the great passages of music—where one could elicit from him a deep inarticulate sound, in which enjoyment and yearning were indistinguishably blent. His singing was very fine and expressive, though he never had time to increase his small repertory of songs. But his singing of the songs he had was essentially that of an artist, and none will forget the concentrated passion he threw into his sacred songs which formed one of the chief features of the annual Christmas "musical" at Cairo.

In contact with men Thornton manifested great qualities. In Cambridge days, an Oxford man (who had seen him in his glory) described "the genius of D. M. Thornton in keeping a large party of freshmen going." He could keep them all entertained and at their ease. He was successful with boys at boys' camps, and he was supremely successful

with children at seaside and other services, where his passionate fondness for little children and tenderness for them—traits which were later on only emphasised by the sterner side of his character which marked Cairo days—made him an ideal worker among the young. The wonderful devotion which he lavished upon every individual of the family of his stepmother has been already mentioned. It can be gauged by this one fact: before he offered to the Church Missionary Society, he—Douglas Thornton—actually offered to his stepmother to stay at home if she felt she needed him in the bringing-up of the younger boys!

He was a splendid friend, loyal to the core. How thoughtful and kindly he was is revealed by scores of letters to old friends to whom he would write, in some cases regularly, in other cases from having had their names brought to his mind in some chance way. Those in trouble were sure of sympathy and help from him.

In Egypt he left a beloved name; a name that very possibly will become proverbial in years to come. This was not because he found it easy to adapt himself to Eastern ways, or because he was in all respects intelligible to Egyptians. Quite the contrary. The outward reserve which grew upon him after 1898 made the multiplicity of salaams prescribed by custom in Egypt quite painful to him; and yet, later on, he became himself quite distinguished for profusion of salaams. The handshake, a duty before,

became a real pleasure. His high sense of the universality of Christ, the brotherhood of man, the sacred missionary duty of being one with the people to which he had come, went very far to modify the inveterate Anglo-Saxonism of his natural man; or at anyrate threw into relief the reality of the effort, and the love that inspired it. That spoke for itself, and it is this that has left the final impression in Egypt, easily effacing incidental misunderstandings or partial failures in temper or in sympathy. The broad impression remains of a man who understood Egypt and the Egyptian, and was the true friend of the people, strong in the sympathy which comes of fundamental love for men, and that sympathetic study of the manners, habits, thoughts, and aspirations of the people, which is born of love.

And what appealed to all appealed to the Egyptian also, the quality in which his talents rose to genius, his total self-consecration and self-abandonment to the "one thing,"—the Kingdom of God. He sought first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness; and to the memory of such a one all other things may be added. It is not necessary to elaborate this aspect here and now, for the whole of this book is simply the elaboration of it. It will speak for itself. We shall see how every hour, every waking thought, every journey, every holiday, every letter, every talent, every interest, was dedicated to the one cause. Nearly two thousand pages of letters and many other papers of his remain, and it might with truth

be said they *all* either directly concern the work or are in intimate relation to it. He did masses of writing, often sitting up late to finish. What impelled him? His one interest,—the Kingdom. It was impossible to stop him working; only a journey in a foreign country, the language of which he, fortunately, did not know, could keep him from efforts which proved as tiring as work in Egypt itself, by turning the busy brain into new channels of interest, topographical or antiquarian. England became a perfect trap to him. During his furlough, ironically so called, his “holiday” consisted in writing more letters than ever, meditating vast schemes, and arranging and holding all sorts of meetings. It was not right. And yet some men seem impelled to do this sort of thing, self-devoted to a cause which never lets them rest; and in them this self-squandering becomes part of the appeal of their lives. Others who follow will have little difficulty in being wiser: yet from his unwisdom sounds the call to a like self-devotion none the less loudly.

It was difficult to keep pace with him. To see him was to know what that word means—

“To scorn delights and live laborious days.”

He would plan, discuss, or write till far into the night; rarely did he take an evening off work; sometimes he was waylaid as he went out for a very short spell of exercise by a Sheikh or some other one who sought speech with him, and without a murmur he would give

up his plan and sit down to a conversation which would perhaps last far past his dinner-hour—a totally negligible appointment. In the train, on the steamboat, on the desert expedition, he was ready for the opportunity which if he did not find he would generally make. When a friend saw him off to Upper Egypt on one of the last occasions he went and found him an empty carriage. “An empty carriage!” he said. “Why, man, I want to fish!” And before the train had started the friend on the platform found himself ignored, and D. M. T. hard at work in a carriage full of Egyptian officers and effendis. He was inexhaustibly fertile in new ideas, and plans for advance. “Sometimes when he spoke with us,” said one young Copt, “he would lean his head on his hand in silence. We thought that his thoughts had wandered, but when he raised his head it was to bring out some new idea or proposal: he had been thinking all the time!” And so it was. All day, and, if he lay awake, in the watches of the night, the restless mind turned over and over the problems of the work, how to realise his dreams, ever trying to make two and two come out at more than four. Or the bell of the Catholic convent at dawn, or the sound of the muezzin in the watch before the morning, when the air seems eerily alive with microphonic sound, would turn his thoughts to God and to prayer; and when the morning was come he would tell us of his visions of the night.

Neither wife nor friend could check him, though he palpably aged during the last two years—this man of

thirty-four!—and though doctors warned him that the pace could not be kept up. “I feel an old man,” he once confessed during that last year. No doubt the strain on his whole organism predisposed him to the ravages of that fatal enteric fever which brought him down after his inspiring and memorable missionary journey in Upper Egypt. And the last delirium was the final revelation of his total self-absorption in the great Employ; when for eight long hours we heard him turn from aspect to aspect of the work, and from fellow-worker to fellow-worker. The work was not the employment of his life, it *was* his life. And the last distinguishable words overheard from him were just these, “*The Work!*”

Such a phenomenon is not an effect without a cause. But what was the cause behind such intensity of self-devotion as this? Seek it in the life of Paul. The devotion to the Kingdom, whether on the part of the old Apostle or the young missionary, had its secret in their self-surrender to its King. The story of the time when Christ called and was answered has already been told. It is enough to say—and the facts make the statement obvious—that the fire then kindled burned to the end.

But into that secret place where the soul meets with its Lord, who shall intrude? The direct and conscious communion between the spirit of Douglas Thornton and Christ's Spirit, *this*, and only this, can account for the strange intensity with which he sought first the Kingdom of God. The genesis of this experience has

been already described in his own words, where we have the history of the "Revelation of the Person" of Christ first during his brother's illness, and then at Keswick in 1893. "The Revelation of the Person!" that most awful of realities! the meeting of a soul with God! That this revelation was never withdrawn is guaranteed to us by the story of his life. It is here, and here alone, that we find a cause adequate to account for so great an effect as the labours of Douglas Thornton.

CHAPTER VI

THE FIRST SIX MONTHS

THORNTON started working hard at the language, but as he found he had largely to make his own method of study, it was a considerable time before he found his feet. The interesting study of the language methods he evolved may be therefore postponed until a little later.

He arrived on 24th November, and on 27th November (Advent Sunday)—after three days in Cairo!—he wrote “a short preface to his journal on the need of the city of Cairo”! It is well worth while reproducing this in full—

“This, the first of ‘The Egyptian Nights,’¹ must be ushered in with ‘dignity’ befitting so great an occasion. The world has for hundreds of years been acquainted with the ‘Arabian Nights,’ but never yet have any tales of nights spent in Egypt been the subject of a similar work!

“It is right that such Nights should be spent in the greatest Arab city of to-day, even as they were spent in the greatest Arab city then. And Cairo is worthy of such a theme, with its 500,000 souls, including men from almost every nation under heaven. It is, indeed, a meeting-place of the races of men! Here are to be

¹ His fanciful title for his journal letters.

found the Armenian, the Syrian, the Greek, the Turk, and the Jew; the Egyptian, the Berber, the Sudanese, and the Negro, with many descendants of the prophet Muhammad himself, and other Arabs of the Northern and Southern tribes. Then there are the French, the English, and the American in no small numbers, with a sprinkling of other European nationalities. I daresay that before long I shall have discovered others also. Truly this is a centre of the East!

“But Cairo is not only cosmopolitan, it is the centre of Muhammadanism. More shall be said later on about the University of Al Azhar, which I have been sent here to seek to influence. In subsequent letters I shall hope to give you some account of the various Muslim sects, especially those to be found here. In time I hope to have learnt enough of this masterpiece of languages to be able to discourse upon its beauties, and its influence in the world. Then we shall have to hear something about the sacred book of Islam, and what it teaches its followers, both as to religious, and political and civil duties. No place better than Cairo can be found in which to learn all these things. And it will take many years of work. At present I can but look forward and wonder how ever it will be possible to grapple with all these things. We count on your prayers as often as God shall lead you.

“Then again, Cairo is the capital of a country,—one which has over and over again been conquered and ruled by other world-powers, such as the Persian, the Grecian, the Roman, the Arab, the Vandal, the Turk, the French, and, last of all, the English. But still Egypt is a country of its own, and after age-long changes as to its size, *i.e.* as to whether it should extend only as far as the desert of Nubia, or as far as the farthest source of its wonderful river, the Nile, it is once more called upon (since the recent victories of its soldiers, led by English officers and supported by British and Sudanese troops), to govern at least 1,000,000

square miles, not even including the two more southerly provinces of 'Bahr al Ghazal' and the 'Equatorial.' At the very lowest estimate these contain 15,000,000 people, but more probably nearer 20,000,000.

"So then we see that if Cairo is influenced for Christ, not less than one-eleventh of Africa is influenced thereby as well; and if Cairo is influenced, the indirect effect will be felt throughout the whole Muslim world, with very few exceptions."

Nor was this the limit of his outlook. On the very day after his arrival he writes of a quiet day for the mission at Helouan (after expressing his thorough enjoyment and appreciation of it all)—

"The only criticism I have to make is that the prayers were too largely self-centred, *or Egypt-centred.*"¹

And then—

"On the way to Helouan you get a lovely view of the Pyramids of Giza across the Nile, with the background of endless desert behind them. As the sun sets over this scene *the thoughts of Africa unevangelised beyond are very stirring.*"¹

And, when he addressed a meeting of Egyptian "Gleaners' Union" members by interpretation, he writes—

"I hope the 'Gleaners' will now begin to think and pray more about the Nile Valley and the whole Sudan. All the way back [to Old Cairo, where he at first resided] I talked about Northern Africa with Habeeb. I explained my text-book to him, and showed him Livingstone's epitaph, etc. He seemed much astounded at it all."

¹ Italics not in original.

*O vitula gracilis atque formosa Ægyptus, stimulator
ab Aquilone venit ei!*

The subject of the Nile Valley and its evangelisation was greatly on his mind that first year; Omdurman had just been fought, and it seemed already possible to advance into the Upper Nile provinces and start work among the black tribes of Gordon's first administration in 1874. He himself was told to hold himself in readiness to go south for a time, if necessary. We have some very interesting memoranda of his on this subject, showing how he loved to grasp a great situation, even if he was also apt to jump to a rather large conclusion—

“Dec. 22. After tea spent the whole evening reading *Emin Pasha in Central Africa*, and annotating. It was quite a revelation to me to find that the Shuli, north of Unyoro, speak the same language as the Shilluk around Sobat. This seems to me to point clearly to the need for us to attack and learn this language. It must be a very strong one to have been preserved during such a migration.”

After this we are not surprised to find the following entry for the next day:—

“Dec. 23. Spent the morning in writing to the family, re the Upper Nile valley races. I think I have made an unmistakable case out for Shuliland being occupied from Uganda as a base.”

Before he had been ten days in the place, he had come full up against the problem of the Coptic

Church, and as that problem remained with him till the end, and some of his best work was put into it during his last year, it is very valuable to see the way it first presented itself to him. It may be said at the outset that his first conclusions wonderfully resemble his finally matured ones, even down to details. And, with certain reservations, it may be said that in the interval also between these first and these last he did not change in his ideas.

Here is the way it began—

“Dec. 3. . . . I then repaired to All Saints’ Church for a quiet time. . . . At the west, and behind the font, is an inscription to General Gordon, with the last words to his sister inscribed on it. This had a sobering effect on me, and I went next door to call on the Butchers in the spirit of prayer.”

The result of his visit and conversation with Mrs. Butcher, a well-known authority on the Coptic Church, and a great friend of the Copts, was a foregone conclusion. It set him studying. He much appreciated his intercourse with the Dean and Mrs. Butcher. The two who first met that day—the old clergyman, who fell on sleep after a long and beautiful service rendered to his generation, and the young one, who was cut off in the midst of his days—received their home-call in the same year, nine years later, and were laid under the cypresses in the British cemeteries between the Nile and the Arabian desert.

Thus he writes—

“My visit to the Butchers set me reading. I at once procured Mrs. Butcher’s book, *The Story of the Church of Egypt*, and read carefully what Stock has written about the C.M.S. policy as propounded at different times, *re* the Eastern Churches.”

His views matured rapidly, as he characteristically took immediate steps to get into touch with as many Coptic leaders as he could. He called formally on the leading Coptic priest of Old Cairo, holding that it was no more than his clear duty to do so, “just as you would call on a parish clergyman at home”; and he received calls from them. Of one such he wrote—

“If genuine, one cannot but feel the old man is a Latimer, the preacher of a Reformation; or a Wycliffe, without a Wycliffe’s knowledge.”

This was perhaps rather premature.

Here is his account of one of these early calls made after church on Christmas morning, and described as follows on the same afternoon. It is interesting in itself, and shows well how his mind was working:—

A COPTIC PRIEST’S HOUSE IN OLD CAIRO.

“Come with me to the remains of an old fortress, called Kasr-el-Shamma, which lies just behind the C.M.S. Hospital and the other side of the Helouan rails. We go through an old gateway which shows many signs of age, yes, and even of wars; for in days gone by it was within this fortress, and others like it,

that the Coptic Christians sought to preserve their treasures from the ravages of the fanatical Moslems. As we pass along, we notice that ancient pillars have been placed as thresholds to the doors of the inhabitants. It is a surprise, too, to see so many buildings, not all of them in use, but left just as they are, until perchance their stones are needed for some other building, and thus removed, leaving crumbling rubbish behind them.

"After several windings, we find our way to the priest's dwelling-place. The door is opened by one of the family, and we are taken up and up the stairs, in this case to the second floor. One wonders what is kept in the regions below! Sometimes it is the cattle; at anyrate the place is very dark and stuffy, even in winter.

"Having mounted the stairs, we are led through the parlour or kitchen to the guest-room which opens out of it. The fireplace is on the left, and the reclining sofa drawn up to its side, just as in cottages at home. Further stairs lead up to the top storey, but there seems little or no furniture in the parlour, not even a table. So we enter the guest-room. Just over the doorstep are several slippers to be worn within, so as not to dirty the Turkish carpet. A handsome oval table stands in the middle, overlaid with a marble slab of a kind that is very common here. There is no tablecloth. Around the room on every side are simple reclining sofas. Their construction is of the simplest kind, but they are of the greatest convenience. They consist of long boards, covered with hair cushions of the same size, and the backs are made of the same material and the same size, except that there is no woodwork at the back. Such sofas can be folded up and easily carried. These sofas had cream coloured covers over the somewhat faded drugget below. In some houses they have movable arms or supports, so as to divide the sofa into two or three. Only two rocking cane arm-chairs varied the sitting accomodation.

"The walls are painted, and even have a dado. So are the windows, three in number, two of which overlook the winding court below and the roofs of the houses opposite. There are no blinds, but lattice-work over the top half of the window. Sometimes it is over the bottom half, and in Moslem houses it is a complete covering. In front are white curtains, canopied as in many English houses with curtain hangings. These are blue and bordered. There are a few pictures on the wall, and the first one you notice is that of the Madonna and Child, both of them being crowned. Two others have ordinary gold frames, and three photos are cased in leaf-shaped frames, evidently made of plaited palm leaves painted green and gold. I notice one open grating on the left, near the roof, letting in fresh air from the bedroom. Underneath it is a chest of drawers, which forms the sum total of the fittings. While upon it lie one candelabra, two massive bronze candlesticks, a soiled brass bottle for water, and a stand lamp for reading purposes, only the shade has disappeared. I must not forget to mention the large American clock, or the wood-beamed roof.

"You see that one of the leading Coptic priests in Cairo is not a wealthy man. His house is plain and fairly clean, but nothing more. I would not have been able to have given you this account unless he had been out, and so enabled me to make some observations. I was escorted hither by Mrs. Butcher, the English chaplain's wife, to see him. He has just returned my call this afternoon, and wants me to come again. I will not then describe his church, which Mrs. Butcher showed me, until he has shown it me himself. All I will mention here is that his and the other church that I have seen are full of antiquarian interest. I hope to make a fuller study of them later on.

"May I, in closing, ask you to pray for this Christian Church? God has preserved it all through the times of Moslem persecution, for over one thousand years.

Its numbers have largely increased since the incoming of the British, and the consequent religious toleration introduced. The Coptic laity have been educated in large numbers during the last generation by the American Mission in their schools all over the country. But the Coptic clergy are in many cases ignorant. They need a great awakening. There are signs that it is coming."

The following entry, also on Christmas Day, shows, however, that, *more suo*, he was critic and inspector as well as sympathiser:—

"Over the Coptic church I was much interested in all I saw. I felt called upon to reprimand the keeper for the slovenly way in which the vestments were kept, and for the grease on the altarcloth."

On the 9th January (1899) he enlarged his experience by visiting the Coptic headquarters at the "Patriarchate," and the newly established Theological Seminary established there. Looking back now, one is touched to think of that first visit; for he was to have most important relations with that Patriarchate and that Theological College; and nine years later two bishops and two deacons from that Patriarchate, and a tutor from that college, were to give addresses over his grave, and at the memorial service held later by the Copts for him.

"*Jan. 9th.* I went to call upon the Coptic professor, and to be taken by him over the Coptic College. . . .

"On being asked whether I thought the singing nice, I said I wanted to ask a question,¹ 'Why did they not

[¹ Diplomatic !]

encourage prayer in a language understood by the people?" Our Coptic professor objected here, and said it was necessary to preserve the Coptic language. But Prof. Mincarius, the leader, seemed to argue that the idea was right, and would come in time. One felt that some good must come from the study of the Word, but that what is needed is some supplementary agency within the college for the deepening and awakening of spiritual life of the students—yes, and professors. This is a matter for earnest prayer."

But he was not content with visiting priests and professors; from the very first he had succeeded in getting in touch with some of the most leading and earnest Coptic laity. Some of those who figure in the very earliest pages of his diary are the best and most valued friends of the Church Missionary Society to-day. Only two days after the talk with Mrs. Butcher, he had a call from one of these gentlemen. He was much pleased with this visit, and writes—

"*Dec. 4.* Holding, as he does, such a high position in the country, I would like to see him taking the lead in starting a C.M.S. within the membership of the Coptic Church. This would lead on to establishing a college for training Coptic evangelists, priests, etc., to be missionaries of such a society. This in turn would do much to revive the Church itself, as the C.M.S. has done to the Church of England. The difficulty is this, that very few Copts recognise that they have a duty to Moslems and Arabic-speaking races."

A very great deal of future effort and work can be detected, in germ, in this interview, held on his tenth day in Cairo!

A little later we find him having two more interviews with the leading Coptic laymen, earnestly discussing with them the question of the improvement of Coptic candidates for the priesthood.

A third Coptic layman, a most valuable man, now one of our best friends, was visited later on, at the time when the Cairo staff was making preparations for commemorating the centenary of the Church Missionary Society. Sermons were preached in Cairo and Alexandria—upon these it is unnecessary to dwell. A more important proposal was to hold a meeting for Coptic gentlemen and clergy, and describe to them the aims and work of C.M.S., and appeal to them to do something towards Moslem evangelisation. Thornton visited this gentleman in his house—

“ — Bey became most friendly, offered to introduce me to all his Coptic friends (the men of influence) and Bishop Comboni. He gave me some most encouraging facts about the enlightenment of individuals, the state of education, and the starting of Coptic schools, the manifest results of Lieder’s work, *e.g.* in the case of his father. He attributed to the patient work of Lieder the fact of the possibility of the present reform. . . .

“I came away full of thankfulness at such an unexpected reception. One felt that here one was dealing with a like mind, with a man who has secured a leading position, and is open to all that is good and true.”

The meeting, when it came off on 24th March, greatly pleased and encouraged him. Twenty-five Egyptian gentlemen were present, including the editor

of one of the Coptic daily papers, two lecturers of the Theological College, etc. Not only missionary questions, but others, such as religious instruction in schools, were brought up, and the help and co-operation of C.M.S missionaries were asked, especially as to how to improve the study of the Bible. Whereat Thornton remarks in his diary—

“This was in itself a challenge to me to take up the work of Bible exposition.”

And his comment on the whole incident was—

“This day, if I mistake not, will prove to mark the first public return to the old C.M.S. policy of influencing¹ the Copts for Christ, as well as Moslems. Almost, in spite of itself, C.M.S. policy has had to take them into account at last, through the spirit in which we have sought to work for the centenary.”

It may surely be said that this enthusiastic outburst was justified by the history of the next ten years, and that Thornton himself was the one chiefly instrumental in the fulfilment of at least some of these hopes. He lived long enough to do some Bible exposition work, which is being found useful by Coptic teachers and students. The reform of Bible teaching in Coptic schools did not come until the school-year just before which he was removed by death—a characteristic instance of how very slowly the Oriental mills grind. This reform has been very largely due to the efforts of the very gentleman whose first

¹ i.e. helping them in every way, not proselytising them.

interview with Thornton has just been related. And one of the last services upon which Thornton was just embarking was to give advice upon the text-books for Scripture lessons which had been used, or should be used, in Coptic primary schools.

Followed the inevitable memorandum! Its interest is too great to allow of its being omitted here.

THE CONDITION OF THE COPTIC CHURCH.

“In answer to several enquiries as to the Copts in Egypt by friends at home, I will endeavour to place before you some facts that I have been able to ascertain about their history for the last fifty years, and their present position in the country from an educational, religious, and national point of view. In so doing, it may be that considerable light will be thrown upon the extent to which C.M.S. is able, and please God will decide, to help them during the present generation.

“It was the accession of Mohamed Ali to power at the beginning of the century that witnessed the amelioration of the Copts from the terrible state to which they had been reduced by centuries of Moslem persecution. His long reign of nearly fifty years (1803-48) saw the introduction into Egypt of many European ideas. The Copts were not slow to profit by them, and mingled freely with Europeans, gaining from them many new ideas. And it was at such an opportune time as this that the first C.M.S. mission to Egypt was started. The preliminary visits of Jowett (12th wrangler, 1810, and fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, and first University graduate to go forth in the service of the Society), which were paid between 1819 and 1825, were followed by the five missionaries from the Basle Seminary. Gobat, the most well known of these, afterwards became Bishop in Jerusalem. But it

was Lieder who seems to have persevered at his task the most, so much so that he stayed here till his death in 1865. In all he seems to have done more than thirty years' work in Egypt.

"The eventual success of his work, though not in the exact way that he had hoped, is shown by the fact that the greatest reforming patriarch whom the Copts have ever had (Cyril x., 1854-61) used regularly to attend Lieder's Bible-class before his consecration. So, too, one of his pupils became Abuna, or head, of the Abyssinian Church. But not only so. There are still to be found priests in Upper Egypt who were trained by Lieder, and have long been engaged in preaching the gospel to their congregations in a quiet way. And if I may be pardoned for saying a word, which was told me by one of the most influential Coptic laymen of to-day, I am led to believe that a great deal of his desire for the reformation of the Church was implanted by his father. Now his father also was a pupil of Lieder. Truly his works do follow him.

"And yet the strange thing is, that the general idea among the leaders of the C.M.S. at home is that this first mission was a failure. It certainly came to an end in 1862, three years before the death of Lieder, partly due to this impression. There were many reasons why it was not felt possible to carry on the work in Egypt. India and China and other parts of the world, with greater needs, had just become open to the gospel in a special way. What claim then had Egypt, with its 5,000,000 people, as compared with India's 250,000,000, and China with its 350,000,000 souls? Little, indeed. So, too, Cyril the reformer had just been removed by poison from his beneficial work. This gave little hope that the task of 'the enlightenment of Oriental Churches' would prove to be successful. And the disasters which befel the Constantinople Mission of the Society so soon after, seemed to show that there was little security to missionary enterprise in the Turkish Empire.

“ All this was changed by the advent of the English in 1862. The Egyptian Government is now conducted upon the principle of toleration to religions. And though the Coptic Church seems still to be the only one that receives no contribution from the Budget towards its ceremonies and places of worship, there is more and more respect shown to people of other religions by the Moslems. In fact there cannot be said to be any external reasons of importance which can prevent the much desired reformation. On the other hand, many things have helped to hasten such a process. The work of the American Mission has not only prepared the way by the diffusion of the Scriptures and the widespread education of the people, but it has stirred up the leaders of the Coptic Church itself to do the same. The 140 American primary schools are being competed with by the 50 Coptic schools that have recently been started. In both of them English as well as Arabic is studied (still with the alternative of French in the latter, as leading more directly to advance in the legal profession). And now in the Coptic schools a move is being made for the regular teaching of the Bible. These schools compare well in numbers with the Government primary schools, which are as yet only 40 in number. So, too, a Coptic college has been started in Cairo, to vie with the Government colleges which are run on similar lines. Lastly, a Theological College has been established for training young men for the secular priesthood of the Coptic Church. And though the staff of teachers is not efficient enough, nor is theology or Church history taught to any adequate extent, still a start has been made.

“ It is at such a time as this that the C.M.S. centenary is being observed, and in order to carry out the spirit of the home committee, it was felt right by the members of our mission to seek the co-operation of all Christians in Egypt at the time of our rejoicings. A meeting, therefore, was called of many leading Coptic laymen

at the house of one of them, to submit to them a letter we are issuing to Christians in Egypt for their approval. The subject of the tract being 'The Duty of Preaching the Gospel to the Moslems,' it was a bold stroke to ask them to circulate it and act upon it. But, so far as we can see, it will prove to be a successful one, for every leading Copt is to receive a copy of the tract. The meeting confessed that Copts did not try to win the Moslems, for they were so hard to win. But they all expressed a desire that the Bible should be taught in all their schools. Many of them wished to come together again to consider how to promote the better study of the Bible. Some said they would come to our evangelistic meetings and try and help us now and then. The leading member of the meeting, the editor of one of the largest daily papers, carried the whole meeting with him in his appeal to us to help them towards reform."

From what has already been seen of the way Thornton's mind worked, it is not surprising to find a memorandum upon the subject of work among young men in Cairo, another subject which was to engage his deep attention in the future.

He wrote—

"I am trying to discover what percentage of the one hundred thousand young men of Cairo know English sufficiently to come to lectures. It is certain that their number is increasing rapidly, and the demand for a knowledge of English is very great, especially so since the Sudan campaign. Lord Cromer's recent report is an excellent study along this line, as an indication of the progress of English ideas under Government, and hence Moslem, auspices. I see he has it that the number of Government scholars who learn English in Government schools—40-60 I believe in number, containing about 5000 pupils—has increased from 1063 to 3869, while

those studying French have decreased from 2994 to 1881; and this number will next year undergo a still further reduction, because the study of French used to be necessary for all who wished to be 'avocats.' But this autumn the study of French or English will be optional.

"Lord Cromer's report, however, only deals with a small percentage of schools in Egypt. I don't know how many Jesuit and Roman Catholic schools there are besides, but the Copts now have 50, with 2000 pupils, and the American Mission has 160 boys' schools, with 8000 pupils. In the latter, English has always been taught; in the former, English and French have been taught, and the percentage is much the same as in the Government schools.

"I take it that at least $3000 + 8000 + 1000 (?) = 12,000$ boys are now learning English in Egypt, *i.e.* 2000 more every year (the course is six years). And notice that of these 75 per cent. come under some Christian influence. It is a wonderful record as compared with India.

"From the above it is obvious that a knowledge of French is needed to reach the older generation of men in Cairo, but that English will reach a growing number of the rising generation. Arabic is necessary for all, but especially good Arabic for literary purposes, and colloquial or Fellahin Arabic for reaching the masses.

"These are the tools.

"For these reasons I have adopted the plan of learning Arabic colloquially through the medium of French, from a French Arabic scholar, while, especially from a theological point of view, I am studying classical Arabic by comparison with English. The latter is of course very slow, hard work. The former plan, ever since I regularly adopted it, has proved an unhopèd-for success. I think colloquial Arabic in French, whenever I do not know the Arabic word. And by so doing, I am learning two languages at once. It is an experiment, I

admit, but seeing that some of the best dictionaries and grammars and other works are in French and Arabic, and by the Jesuits, I think later on I shall find it a great success. *N.B.*—When I got to Calais, I had even forgotten how to ask for a cup of tea.”

The key to successful relations between the Church Missionary Society and the Copts is the fact that the former never for a moment loses sight of its direct object of Moslem evangelisation, and Thornton from first to last held faithfully to this principle. And the following incident (from this early period) shows that he already thirsted to begin the direct work among individuals, for which he never lost his keenness:—

“FIRST APOLOGY FOR MY CHRISTIAN BELIEF IN
EGYPT.

“The day for which I have long been waiting and preparing has come. And for the first time I have been put on the defensive as to the fundamentals of my faith since I set foot in the mission field. Never has an hour and a quarter been spent with greater thankfulness that I am a disciple of Jesus Christ. None but those who have tasted the joy of vindicating the eternal claims and message of Jesus can enter into one’s feelings at such a time. Hitherto I have always had to lead the attack, when speaking in broken French or in half-understood English with strangers upon the electric trams, or, as in one case, with a member of the Egyptian Ministry. But to-day two visitors were brought to me by my Arabic teacher, to converse upon some of the verities of Christianity. Both of them were lawyers of good position in Cairo.

One of them has been before to another of our clerical missionaries."

The full account of the discussion need not, however, be quoted in full. It ranged over the questions of Magic, the Witch of Endor, Eternal Judgment for Sin, Dives and Lazarus, Purgatory, Miracles, and the Resurrection! Here is the impression which this incident made on him—

"At this point the interview was closed till next time. Our friends will come again. They are anxious for further conversation. And there are many like them in this great city. Time will show how many, and how accessible. But of this I am confident, from comparison of experiences given me by other missionaries in India and in Africa, that nowhere is there more toleration of religion in the Mohammedan world than here. (And here I would correct a widespread and false impression going about at home on this point.) It may be that many of the Ulemas of the Al Azhar are fanatical at heart. It may be that they and many others among the populace would oppose in public if they dared. But the laws of government are based to-day upon the principle of toleration, and hence there is a door, almost as yet untouched, for literary and conversational work among the educated Moslems here. Their very closing words to me were to the effect that some of the books on my shelf should be put into the hands and language of the Mohammedans. This is

A CHALLENGE.

May God raise up a band of men to come out here equipped for this work of preaching Christ in the greatest city of Africa and the Moslem world, from which have gone forth during the last hundred years

more missionaries of Islam than all Reformed Christendom—yes, and Christendom itself—has sent to champion Christianity, and show to the world the Love of Christ which passeth knowledge.”

The observations about French are a rather amusing example of the elaborate way he liked to do things. He stuck gamely to his Arabic-French teacher, but, in the excitement of learning Arabic, the French came less and less spontaneously; so it got rarer and rarer, and the lessons ended by being in Arabic only. The fact is that if Arabic is known, French is almost entirely unnecessary; though once he got to know a Turkish Pasha, and needless to say earnestly sought to influence him for Christ, and talked French on that occasion, for the Turks frequently know little Arabic.

The object in this chapter and the next is to show how all the lines along which Thornton afterwards worked were foreseen and laid down by him with extraordinary perspicacity within a few weeks of reaching Cairo. Several have been already mentioned, and another one of first-rate importance must now be discussed—the question of evangelisation by means of literature.

CHAPTER VII

THE FIRST SIX MONTHS—*continued*

ON the 7th February, after a little over two months in the field, Thornton wrote as follows:—

“I cannot tell you how much more I am impressed by these aspects day by day. We must see the thinkers of Christendom *Φιλόσοφοι* of missions. So far we have had only individual workers at the problems. Why not whole teaching staffs? *Why not?* A modern race of ‘schoolmen upon missions’! If the historical and philosophical aspects are grappled with, we shall win a better-educated type of student, as well as those whom God has so far given to us. For they will see that Christian philology needs their aid, their greatest gifts. These languages are giants. So far they have been well-nigh giants ‘Despair.’ Why not giants ‘Hope’? I hear from Dr. Guinness (whom I have seen here lately more than once) that Dr. H. Guinness’ travels in South America, Peru, etc., have made him stagger at the enormity of the task that lies before translators still. I forget the number of languages he says there are. Several thousand to those forty million people alone! Then Africa has its six hundred at least—five hundred quite untouched as yet, and Asia, too,—who knows how many more? Now, if our motto be the Will of God, there must be some way of coping with this mighty task. But surely it is quite as im-

portant as the student question in itself? I think, myself, that scholars will do much better work in grappling with these languages than specialising on what is called 'student work.' Organisers, who are men of God, and winners of souls, can do the latter. None but painstaking scholars can do the former. The more we know about the mission field, the more we shall realise the truth of this. Races and tribes in Central Africa that have no 'Word of God' crowd to my memory as I say this.

"What I long to see the C.M.S. Committee doing is to frame some *definite policy* prayerfully—mindful of other needs as well, I know,—*e.g. to lay it down that Cairo be made the centre of an all-round mission for training Egyptians, as well as healing Egyptians and teaching their boys and girls the a b c.*

"Given such a policy, then to aim at—accomplishing it, and at making such a decision known in an appeal for men. The importance of laying a strong foundation here should be recognised as much as it was by our military officials, who for thirteen years have been training Egyptian soldiery to fight the Dervishes.

"An appeal ought to be got out" . . .

And he thus closes—comprehensively!

"Lines of Work Urgently Needed.

"I. Evangelistic services, which could be conducted in any number of centres if only we had the native staff to work them.

"II. Bible classes, for teachers, Copts, and Moslems,—varying in size from one to dozens.

"III. Training classes, for teachers and young men in the city, in English, over and above the elementary school standard. This work *should* be taken up by a Young Men's Christian Association, which is badly needed here.

"IV. Literary work. Formation of a devotional and controversial Christian literature for the Moslem world. The work at Beyrout is nothing like sufficient, excellent though it is. Besides, the Syrian and Egyptian colloquials differ in important points and words. A whole series of aids to the study of the Bible are needed here. They have no such series in existence, only isolated books, and these not of the best in many cases. Such work would be equally useful for the Sudan in years to come, and it will take many years of labour, with the aid of native scholars.

"V. Educational work. There ought really to be a High School, like the American one at Assiut, for there is plenty of room for one.

"I think these will be enough for the present, though, you see, I have not touched the medical or women's work at all."

This is remarkable. He had been just two and a half months in Egypt, and yet there is not a single item mentioned here (except No. V.) which he did not attempt in due time—*nullum fere genus non tetigit, nullum quod tetigit non ornavit*:—and much of his last "furlough" in 1904 was spent in exertions—fruitless and dispensable, it is to be feared—to realise No. V. also.

The idea mentioned fourth took quite permanent possession of his mind. On Easter Sunday he wrote to a colleague whom he expected to join him—

"Long have I meditated on Stanford's map of the Nile Valley. Every visitor to the house¹ must have a look at it. Day after day I open it and study its

¹He had now moved from Old Cairo to reside with a colleague in the north of the city.

contents. It is the burden of my heart that all these tribes be reached. It was Gordon's wish . . .

"But now look at Egypt, India, China, and Japan. In Cairo, undoubtedly, you can learn the best Arabic in the world, and get one or two excellent teachers. What is more, were you to go to India or other Moslem lands, e.g. Sudan, Persia, etc., later on, no time spent here could be wasted. Everyone that has studied Arabic at Masr (Cairo) is respected all the Arabic world over.

"Remember that, on the one hand, what you write here will soon reach India as quickly as it can reach England. It will also find entrance into other Moslem lands, and, not least, the Nile Valley. Written and classical Arabic is the same (nearly) all the world over. . . .

"What the Moslem world needs are Christian tracts and Christian expositions of the Bible. It needs them sorely. It may involve a visit or a mission to India, so as to find out what exactly is needed there. It certainly will involve a correspondence and a drawing together of Moslem workers. My scheme for a conference of missionaries to Moslems at Cairo may be nearer than we think. It would help to unify our methods of work, and to remove overlapping in our work, and to strengthen one another in the Lord, and to give our works wider circulation among each other's missions. So much for direct literary work. Now, how can preparation be made for this? Surely by Bible classes and expositions. And where better than in Cairo can these be given? What other city under Christian influence has more Moslems or more Christians in the East? You have hundreds of the latter here to influence, educated and enlightened, even though not often really converted. You have the thousands of the Al Azhar of the former, several of whom are beginning to enquire. I can see clearly that you and I could (each three evenings a week) hold Bible classes, that, on good authority, would (I believe) be widely attended. At these we might take

courses of teaching, as St. Paul did in the house of Tyrannus. In this way we could build up in time a topical and paragrammatical literature upon Christianity and the Bible. Then if the work grew beyond our powers, we could petition for more workers from home. I can see no limit to the likely influence of this work. It will touch all North Africa, and Syria, and Egypt whence the Al Azhar students come. It will profoundly influence the Coptic and the American Churches here. It will supply the East, in a lifetime, with what it needs, next of all to the Bible, and maybe we should be able to revise the Bible also. By God's blessing it should lead to the reformation of the Coptic Church by her own members (the time is ripe for it), to the raising up of an army of voluntary evangelists and workers filled with the love of Christ. And so a vast area would be influenced.

"This is my vision. This my programme. It does appeal to me mightily. I cannot possibly carry it out without you. God knows that. This, then, is my appeal, brother, to you. The Lord bless you and guide you to His will."

It is really impressive to read these words, and to see how almost *practically all* the methods he dreamed of here—some of them things that were not even upon the horizon—were, one by one, put into execution.

Evangelisation! It was always before his mind, whether at his doors or at farthest range. He takes a few friends round the Cairo bazaars and streets, and writes (mark the close)—

"I took them the round again from the Muski to Saida-Zainab and back *viâ* the Abdeen. We passed courts open to the road, with fountains and gardens within, cafés, with men seated on a pedestal reading

the Koran aloud, shops of every description and size, lighted minarets and dark passages, groups at cards or dominoes, families chattering over their soup, fruiterers with orange piles ablaze with light, tinsmiths, goldsmiths, jewellers, bakers, tinkers, tailors, apothecaries, and the like all huddled together, line upon line of them,—the most favourite occupation seeming to be that of bootmaker, or maker of that speciality—the Egyptian shoe.

“It was a great experience, and all the ride lay through parts of the city quite unreachd, four miles at least of the very heart of all. Truly one realised the need in a wonderful way.”

But not Cairo only. The total problem of Mohammedan evangelisation was ever with him. His house lay on the northern edge of the city, and it was his delight to go up to the roof and pace up and down, and meditate, and pray. Let him speak about the thoughts that came to him on one such occasion—

“A MEDITATION ON THE MOSLEM WORLD.

“It was the day of prayer for the Mohammedan world, and so I went up on to the roof of our domain to meditate, a place from which you get a very beautiful view of the city. And as I paced up and down from east to west an allegory came to me. . . . I saw, as before, three kinds of scenery about me—the Delta, the Desert, and the City. But as I once more gazed upon them, and spread them out before the Lord, they seemed to me to typify three different kinds of spiritual soil. . . .

“To the north and north-west stretched the Delta, green with crops and irrigated lands, all ripening for the harvest. The sight before me was like a European

scene. There were the field of grass and clover and of corn, trailing away into the horizon as far as the eye could reach. The trees, but for here and there a palm, gave quite a homelike appearance to it all. They spoke of plenty, of lands well-watered and supplied with spiritual life. They reached out in the direction of Europe, America, and Christendom.

“And then I turned me round towards the east, and behold the Delta suddenly changed into a desert. Far, far away, from north to south, beyond the sandstone hills and arid plain, beyond the mirage with its false impression that there was water to be had (in an oasis in the desert), stretched the lands of Islam. Towards the south the Citadel seemed to buttress off this desert from the valley of the Nile, but there lay these lands beyond in barrenness. Yes, from Syria to Arabia’s burning southern point all was spiritual desolation. What a contrast to the fruitful fields. For here we had only the dazzling monotony and iron freedom of the desert. How true a picture of the spiritual condition of these lands.

“Once more I turned my eyes and rested them upon the southern scene. The sun was quickly veering round and rising fast, and were it not for shade upon my eyes it would have been impossible to gaze upon the sight. But, Oh the beauty of it all! It spoke of all that Africa might be one day. The Nile itself was hardly visible at all, but everywhere one saw the traces of its influence. Beyond it lay the beginnings of the Libyan desert, bounded by the ancient pyramids of Gizah, which, though they be so great, looked quite insignificant in the view. On this side stretched the miles of Cairo’s city. First came the mounds behind which lies Old Cairo. Then all the dwellings of the European quarter near the river bank. And there were the hundred masts, boatmen, traders from the north and south, who moor their boats along the riverside below the city. They all derive their living from the Nile. Without its yearly inunda-

tions these pyramids could never have been made. But with its fertilising power the Cairo of to-day has risen to be the city that it is. For this great city upon the eastern shores is very largely built with the very stones which formed the fabric of ancient Memphis on the western bank. I was impressed with the fact that Memphis, with all its glory and paganism, had passed away beneath the shadow of those imperishable tombs, and given place to Cairo, the creation of Moslem power and dynasties.

“It is this city of Cairo, the creation of Islam’s sway, that I saw before me. What meant these hundred minarets and domes? One by one I counted them. At least one hundred were in view. They tell me five hundred is the number if you could see them all. Gracefully these beautiful works of art rise into the sky. All uniform in general, they pierce the sky in every variety of way. They witness to a solemn fact as well as the history of twelve hundred years. The fact that Islam now, not Christianity, is the faith. The few and simple Christian Churches that remain and witness dimly, be they Copt or Catholic, are as nothing to them. And as for Protestants, they have but two Churches—American and English—with four other places where there is worship regularly. Yes, Cairo is a Moslem city. Its eastern half lies almost entirely untouched by Christendom. I felt it as I gazed upon it then. And though the days of paganism are over, and God is acknowledged as the Lord of all, yet five hundred thousand souls within these walls know not that Jesus is the Saviour of the world.

“But notwithstanding, Jesus Christ is Lord and Lord of all. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom endureth throughout all ages. So surely as Paganism fell from its lofty place, so too will Islam pass away and give place to Christianity, when Christ is revealed and known. Well will it be for Christendom when she has been purified from end to end by the Spirit

of the living God and filled to overflowing with devotion to the Lord she owns. For not till then will Africa's largest city, the greatest Moslem city in the world, become the centre of a forceful Christianity to thrust forth constantly increasing numbers of emissaries of light to every land."

Or sometimes his thoughts went afield to the very utmost limits of the Moslem world. For example—

"Feb. 14. I was also brightened by the arrival of a letter from John Mott, thanking me for my Mediterranean effusion. It was an inspiration . . . to feel that work done then in my weakness was not in vain, for it has set him thinking upon several points. I am so glad he is meditating making some investigations about Russian students when in Finland, and only hope they will be successful. My theory that Russia must evangelise Central Asia is taking hold. Oh for a great awakening in the Russian Orthodox Church!"

It is not then surprising that the question of reinforcements lay then, as always afterwards, heavy on his mind. And so we find him now propounding on the germ of an idea which he afterwards developed, and to which he was constant till the very end, that of making Cairo a centre both for actual missionary work and for the training of missionaries for other Moslem lands. He writes—

"An appeal ought to be got out stating—

"(1) The difficulty that Arabic presents, and hence the need of patient scholars who will be content to work on till they master Arabic;

"(2) The importance of concentrating on Cairo (as being a fairly healthy place), with a view to future permanent extensions . . . ;

“(3) The enormous gain Egypt has over other countries, from the fact of its enjoyment of toleration, etc.”

“*An appeal ought to be got out!*” That was written to the writer of this book, privately, in 1898; who writes the words, and makes the appeal publicly in 1908!

But he never neglected the least duty that lay to hand. Immediately after this entry about Central Asia, he continues—

“Dean Butcher wrote asking me to preach next Sunday. This, too, was an encouragement, for I have had so few opportunities of personal work or preaching while here I felt it right to accept. My subject is now ruminating. At present I feel inclined to preach on ‘our motives for preaching.’”

The very few occasions on which he was asked to preach in All Saints’ Church were a source of the greatest pleasure. He valued the privilege. On 4th December he had written—

“I was delighted when he (the Dean) told me it was sermons that he needed. It would be such an opportunity to preach there. I thought of Henry Martyn at Calcutta.”

Lastly, it is hardly surprising to learn that he felt constrained to write to his Society a memorandum setting forth his views as to the past, present, and future of the work in Egypt! It is not a precedent that young missionaries, after three months and a

half in the field, should be invited to follow, and on this occasion, too, heads were shaken. But Thornton was an exceptional man, as we have already seen; and time has proved that his views, and even his effusions, were worthy of being studied. It was never safe to neglect them. Most juniors had best reserve their observations for a more mature season. But when the exceptional man arrives, two things have to be observed,—the man himself has to learn to make his observations in the right *way*, so as to carry his seniors with him; the seniors have to learn how to learn from one who is possibly able, in spite of his want of local knowledge, to benefit them enormously by his fresh and spontaneous ideas. Each is a difficult lesson.

What he wrote, however, need not be quoted here, for the substance has already been given, and it has been already seen how absolutely sound in the main his ideas were. It was, perhaps, a nemesis on his headlong unconventionality in writing, on his own authority, to headquarters, that what he wrote perhaps contains the one line of policy (insisted on, of course, with the greatest confidence and many arguments) on which he thoroughly recanted in later years.

Two suggestions, however, must be quoted, as they complete the list of activities foreshadowed by Thornton during these first four months and a half.

The training of Egyptian workers, whether Moslem converts or Coptic, was the last plan he was actually to have carried out in 1908 had his life been spared

to the work on earth. And in the spring of 1898 we find him writing—

“That a hostel be started near to some special centre of evangelistic work, such as the boats at Shubra, or the meetings at the Mohamed Ali school, but wherever started, so arranged as to encourage all simplicity of life; that this hostel should be open to lads from Jerusalem, trained in the preparatory schools there, so that as long as Turkish rulers leave no opening for young men in Palestine to do aggressive work, they may have that advantage and indispensable training before their ordination here. Similarly, that this hostel be open to any young Copts that bear good enough references, who wish to be under Christian influences, but are at present in either the medical or the law schools. Lastly, that this be the place where young Moslem enquirers can come and find fellowship, and Moslem converts a refuge and a training for future work. I think from what I have said there is a large enough sphere from which to gather men for such a place. And if there, under personal influence, may we not expect as great results as are being attained by similar hostels in other great tempted cities.

“I see no reason why this hostel should not be started as soon as I have passed my second language exam. And I feel that it is the first step to take. But as it will probably involve new buildings, or at anyrate a very careful selection of old ones, it is none too early to be thinking about the best site, the object of the Institution, and the method of conducting it. And before we begin to do this, there must be a prior decision as to the merits of such a thing. Meanwhile, the present standard of our primary schools can be improved, and the way be prepared for some kind of practical secondary education later on.

“I would suggest that evening and morning courses of lectures and Bible-readings be given in this hostel, or

some more suitable place. Several of the missionaries might be able to contribute to the course. Our clergy might each take their turn at theological, historical, and biblical subjects. It would be good for them to have to do so. Our already overworked doctors might under other conditions be able to contribute occasionally to the scientific side of the work, or at least three evenings a week might be set apart for definite evangelistic work. In this way our present staff of catechists and native teachers would have an opportunity of getting further help and training, our catechumens would be able to receive regular instruction, the number of our workers of more than one kind would probably increase, and the way be prepared for a native ministry.

"I commend these suggestions to your thoughts and prayers."

Nor was evangelistic extension, the work to which (in conjunction with the training of workers) he had finally dedicated himself just before his death, neglected in this survey. He writes—

"A hundred villages need to be thoroughly followed up. There are hospital patients and even many converts¹ whom we have practically never reached. The work of reaching them, supervising catechists at work, and supplying the pastoral needs of Old Cairo, will in itself need two clergy. The field is so vast . . ."

And thus these two chapters foreshadow his whole career in Egypt. The rest of this book is a mere comment upon how he initiated, or attempted to initiate, or helped to initiate *all* these lines of work. It may be useful to enumerate them here—

(¹ Inquirers would have been more correct.)

Sudan Evangelisation—

(His last journey was to have been to the
Moslem Sudanese.)

Helping the Copts—

In Scripture instruction
In encouraging their priests
In literature
Through their theological students
In their missionary life

Evangelising the educated men of Cairo—

By Bible and other classes
By personal interviews—controversial or apologetic or otherwise
By evangelistic services

Evangelising by literature—

The whole Arabic-reading Moslem world by
means of Arabic literature
Conference of all workers among Moslems for
expediting this end

Educational—

A Christian High School for Cairo

Training—

Training workers by means of Bible classes
Training them by advanced classes
A hostel for promoting these ends
Training missionaries by residence in Cairo as
being the literary and intellectual centre
of Islam

It were *folly!* were it not that the nine years that followed prove that Thornton never lost his grip of a single one of these ideas; never ceased working at them or planning for them; never went back on their advisability and possibility and necessity; and, moreover, that he made no essential addition to them, nor modified them except in the details of method as circumstances dictated. He dreamed sane possibilities, and was ready and able to press forward to realise the dreams. If he sometimes went too fast and was blind to the limitations imposed by his means and materials, that was probably inevitable in the nature of things. After all, it is the function of the driving-wheel to drive.

CHAPTER VIII

A GLIMPSE WITHIN

THERE is something very deadening about the first stages of a missionary life,—the violent shifting of the whole moral and spiritual centre of gravity, the enforced dumbness, the contrast between aspiration and reality. The old spiritual emotions, which seemed so real and so valuable, are apt to fade with the passing away of the environment in which they lived. Contrary to the common view, it may be the homeland that is the home also of romance; in the hard glare of the Orient, romance may quite easily wither away. Only the spirituality the roots of which are far beneath the surface, stretching deep down to a spring of the Living Waters, has a chance of maintaining its freshness and strength.

For this reason it may be of value to have a glimpse of the spiritual and emotional life of one with whom spirituality was a real thing. Even such a one could talk, in a letter of the summer of that first year, of “the total darkness of those first eight months.”

Gordon, after writing some great memoranda stating

his views on world-politics, wrote to his sister, "I feel deathlike." And there is undoubtedly something deadly in much planning and organising, and Thornton was aware of this. He writes—

"It is evident that X. and I have absolutely different ideas about missionary work, and as he is such a holy man, I intend to sit at his feet and learn from him, —his patience, his simple faith, his evangelistic zeal. It may be that I overestimate the value of organising. . . ."

To the last Thornton checked his organising zeal by means of this wholesome recognition of individualism and directness.

"*Mar. 7.* A month since my allegory on the Moslem world" (see p. 117). "It is a comfort to know that so many are praying for us. I have been getting very prayerless of late, and so, after a day of Arabic, a short walk by the side of the canal in the setting sun was very peaceful and refreshing. The weather was delightful, just the right temperature. I read through the Psalms for the evening of the 8th day by mistake, as I paced along, and the refrain, 'Put thy trust in God,' seemed to wake my dull soul to fresh confidence in God. Oh, to live out Psalms xli.-xliii.!

"*Apr. 2. Easter Day.* . . Got to work at my sermon for Sunday morning next. . . I had a lovely time in the evening before going to bed, with the stars, upon the roof, as I asked God to give me His message for the congregation of All Saints."

"The roof" was a great resort of his in those days. Every visitor to the house had to visit it, and have the allegory of 7th March "demonstrated" to him. Up there he could transcend the details of the present

and pass into the ideal world, to get a new vision for our shadowy world of "realities."

Later on he would sometimes go off to the gardens of the Gezira Palace and meditate, gazing over the calm beauty of the Nile there, with the sunlit houses of Bulac across the stream, and the white outspread pinions of the Nile boats.

The Eastertide sermon was preached next Sunday—

"*April 9.* The second lesson—1 Cor. xv. 1-22—was almost too much for me. I quite got carried away by it as I read it. Then came the sermon. . . . The Dean seemed pleased that I had quoted Lecky. The Lord knows that I tried to uplift Christ Crucified and Risen."

In the evening he took a favourite subject connected with the Church's missionary duty—

"The congregation seemed to follow me, though I fear I was speaking rather above their heads. This was corroborated after by an overheard remark about a lady who wanted to know 'why he can't let these Mahommedans alone? they are not idolaters!' I came straight home . . . I could not, however, sleep between 1.30 a.m. and 5.30 a.m., because of dogs howling."

Both the morning and evening sermons had been a great strain. Altogether it is not surprising that he "could not sleep between 1.30 a.m. and 5.30 a.m., because of dogs howling." Three of these hours were spent in writing to the *Record*! That was very characteristic.

In May he had to go to Jerusalem to be ordained presbyter. On the 19th he was off Jaffa in the early morning.

"It was Jaffa. I hastened on deck to see my first glimpse of the Holy Land. *It was with as great emotion as I ever experience nowadays*¹ that I gazed on the site of ancient Joppa."

The above very clearly shows how shattering to subjectivity, even in one originally so emotionally built as Thornton, half a year in the East can be. It is characteristic of the change that was coming over him in this respect that almost at this point the journal ceases. It was never resumed. In the stern self-scrutiny to which he henceforth increasingly subjected his personal and emotional life, he felt that diaries encouraged self-centredness and a subtle untruthfulness. It needs persons of the strong objective type, like a Cellini, a Pepys, a Scott (in how curiously different ways!) to write a *true* diary. But his letters, which from his second year onward are very numerous, more than take the place of the journal. In them his mind's eye was ever on the object, and the self-revelation is, like that of his last unconscious night, all the more convincing because undisturbed by any influences of subjectivity.

His experiences in Palestine made him fall deeply in love with the country: on him the sacred scenes could make their utmost impression. On the morning

¹ Italics not in the original.

of his ordination (28th May 1899) he spent an hour alone on what he liked to regard as the site of Calvary (the "Gordon" site)—

"There, under the shadow of the rock, out of which a rich man has evidently hewn his tomb a long while ago, I re-read Romans vi., which has meant so much to my life at different times, and tried to realise afresh all that it meant to me on the verge of ordination.

"And now I wended my way back out of the quiet of the spot, up the turf-cut steps, and through the ill-kept garden, out of the gate, and up the steep slope of Calvary's western side.

"The sun was burning strongly, and in spite of my umbrella, my black boots almost seemed to crack with heat. But there was time to re-read Isaiah liii., and once again, with a fuller light, imagine all the scene. There, by the cairn, I stood and faced Jerusalem to the south. To my right, in the hollow, lay the empty tomb 'with the rich in His death.' Straight in front you see the whole of the north wall of the city, with Herod's gate on your left, and the Damascus gate just below you, leading to the Via Dolorosa. Between the two stands a hill within the wall, on which our C.M.S. Girls' School now stands. But otherwise the whole city seems to sink away from you. The mosque of Omar, close to the site of Mount Moriah, you can hardly see. The tower of David on Zion on the other side is scarcely any higher. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre (the old traditional site) is lower too. Behind all these you can just see the hills of Moab in the horizon, between Mount Olivet and the Judean watershed.

"All this was just what Jesus saw when on the Cross. There, on the crown of that hill, a point that can be seen from everywhere, Jesus must have died. And here was I, just at the very hour that He was nailed to the Cross, 1870 years afterwards, seeking from Him

alone my commission to preach of Him, and to commemorate His death.

"I turned to go, and just as I was going I noticed an open grave to the east of me, and several Moslem fellahin sitting close by against the wall that hides the drop of fifty-six feet below, and Jeremiah's grotto. And then to the west—the way that I had come—I heard a dirge, and looked to see from whom it came. It was a Moslem procession making its way out of the city by the Damascus gate. The company were headed by young men carrying palm leaves, not as here in Egypt, but evidently a remnant of Christian times. So here was a Moslem funeral actually going on, just at the place where Jesus died for all. It made one realise the force of the change that has come over the country since those days.

"This was enough for me. It was for the Moslems that I am to give my life! With these thoughts in mind I walked away from the top of Calvary to St. George's Collegiate Church where I was to be ordained."

In the evening he preached on Matt. xxiv. 14, and walked home with some of the Praeparandi lads with whom he had made great friends.

"And so we walked home together by starlight, for the sky was full of stars, and spoke of all God's glories. I wish I knew the names of some of them. I felt that after this I could have roamed the hills of Galilee with those lads, and sought to teach them what He taught the Twelve so many centuries ago. Here, in a Moslem land, these lads have little chance of doing active Christian work alone in after years. We have yet to see how on the morrow God gave them all an opportunity of talking to a Moslem sheikh about their faith and Lord."

The incident alluded to in the last line was a conversation with a young Moslem Syrian sheikh, a student of Al Azhar, in Cairo, on the Mount of Olives—

“Now we descended, not in time to go to Bethany, but for a little of prayer before we returned. And we had just sat down on the brow of Olivet when a young sheikh from the Al Azhar (Cairo), whose father lives on Olivet, came and sat down with us, seeking for a talk. For some time he has been enquiring, and used to come to our Bible dépôt in Cairo when he was there. But his doubts are very real and deep. This knotty question of inspiration troubles him. He has read the answer to the Mizan-al-Haqq, which takes up the opinions of the more advanced European critics about the date and authorship of New Testament books. One of our Jerusalem missionaries had told me only that morning that this man had stumped him on some of these points. So I was on my guard. It was a grand beginning for these lads. Nasra, the leader of them all, interpreted for me.

“We limited our discussion to Luke and John, and then, as the sheikh seemed to know more of Luke, our conversation hinged on this—

“(1) Could Luke have been with Paul or not when he wrote his gospel? (If so, our friend would admit that the gospel was inspired.)

“(2) And, if inspired, what does the narrative contain?

“I put it to you friends, what line would you have taken with this man? Oh, the patience of Nasra as he heard the man, and then epitomised my answer in each case! And what a contrast to the others who kept playing with the man. ‘We have never learned the answer to these things,’ he said, ‘we must know them.’ But six o’clock had struck, we had to be off. I said good-

bye to all, and rode quickly back along the summit of the mount, for I had a meeting to address that night."

At one such meeting his subject was twofold—a talk on "*He brought him to Jesus,*" and a demonstration of a map of the Nile Valley. The intensive and extensive together, were characteristic of the man.

And so he bid a reluctant farewell to his beloved Palestine, and returned to Cairo.

During the summer and autumn he worked hard at the language, taking no holiday in consideration of this Palestine episode and his approaching marriage. On 7th November the marriage ceremony took place, and he took his bride to Upper Egypt. Thornton revelled in Egyptology,¹ but denied himself the luxury of studying it. He felt he had no time to give to it, as, indeed, he had not. This visit to Upper Egypt, which he used to the full, had to suffice him. When he went again it was not to study antiquities, but to hold up the Living Christ among the Egyptians of to-day, just before he passed to the land beyond the west.

¹To hear him "demonstrating" the Great Pyramid was an experience! He inclined to the Piazzi Smith heresy. You cannot "demonstrate" much, as you crawl (doubled up) down the first shaft. But it is on record that Thornton once redeemed the time there in evangelising the dragoman who crawled behind him!

CHAPTER IX

APPRENTICESHIP

THE newly married couple set up house in 19 Sharia Gamia Sherkess,¹ in the Bab-el-Luk quarter of Cairo. A few days after they had "got in" to their new home the present writer had the privilege of joining them, newly arrived from Britain, and of being admitted into the intimacies of their domestic life. Thus was woven a threefold cord which was never broken, and was found unbroken on that last night when, in the strange providence of God, the three who met together in those first days, met again as at the first, and wife and friend held his hands as he descended the shelving bank of the dark River. . . .

With much trouble he had already evolved a system of language study, and had advanced some way in it himself. With a true instinct he had decided that unlimited pains must be given to pronunciation and reading. His natural gifts of ear and voice were reinforced by some study of Swete's *Phonetics*, of which he writes: "I heartily corroborate Pilkington's advice about Swete's *Phonetics*, but chiefly in order to

¹ The Street of the Mosque of Sherkess.

show one how many differences there are in *vowel sounds* (he says thirty-six)." And so he was in a position to do that most difficult task, train his teacher to teach him aright.

"I found that no one seemed to know whether their reading-teachers were teaching them accurately or not, and it was for six months a puzzle to me to find out what I ought to do. But at last, in June 1899, I secured an Arabian sheikh from the Koraish tribe, who had naturalised as an Egyptian. . . . As soon as I secured him I made progress, and in seven weeks read the Morning Prayer, and in nine weeks the Communion Service, for the first time."

He found that prolonged practising of reading between lesson-times was quite as indispensable as doing exercises in translation, etc. And another thing that he found invaluable was the practice of intoning when reading Arabic, with its strongly contrasted long and short syllables.

"I had no idea how much physical exercise would be involved in a two-hours' reading-lesson, if one determined to *exactly* reproduce the tone and expression and sound. . . . I find that intoning is the secret to sounds. *Crescendo* a hard sound *on a note*, and you find whether it is true or not."

Those were great days. Thornton would be in one room intoning loudly, the lodger in another intoning equally loudly, and his Bride, in a room between the two fires, would be trying to extract grammatical information from a meek-voiced Egyptian effendi.

In composition and translation he was absolutely indefatigable with the dictionary, looking up thousands

of words, and scoring, marking, amending, adding, from what he gathered from his teachers and other dictionaries, so that it became riddled from end to end with corrections and memoranda. Perhaps he was too elaborate here, and would have done better to spend more time in practising the use of the new words acquired. But he professed a weak memory for words, and said it was necessary to reinforce the aural with a distinct ocular impression.

In grammar he took unlimited pains, going through the subject *in Arabic* with a competent teacher, and *with Arabic* as the medium of teaching and discussing. This method is sound, but there should be added the caution (by neglecting which he perhaps wasted time) to aim at a comprehensive knowledge of the main thoroughfares of the subject-matter, and to leave the subtleties and niceties to the schoolmen of the language.

He also was a pioneer in the view that the colloquial language needs study just as much as the classical, and that this study is doubly necessary for those whose language has been acquired on classical lines, and who are therefore in danger of talking too classically for the remainder of their lives.

Here is his own summing up of this long preliminary stage to every missionary's career—

“ Nov. 27, 1901.

“ Upon looking back over my three years here, I feel that it has been a constant strain to mind and memory, and I shall feel glad of a short holiday in England next

summer, as now allowed by the Society to Missionaries in Egypt and Palestine, any time after three years' service. I have been practically at college over again all the time. Every week-day I have had from two to two and a half hours of lessons with teachers, and all this winter I shall need to go on having nearly as many, in spite of examinations being over. So that one has had quite as hard work as for any Tripas to do in the three years. It is astonishing how varied the study of a language is. There is the Bible to learn to use in the new tongue. There is the Koran to translate and recite and memorise in parts. There is the endless Arabic grammar with its thousands of rules to learn to apply. There are theological, historical, classical, and scientific books to read so as to get a wide vocabulary. There is the task of translating into colloquialisms all our English idioms. Then when you have spare moments you must learn to read the Arabic newspapers, to write letters in Arabic, to visit mission workers and teachers in their homes, and so learn their home conversation and salutations. And after all this you have to do the work you are expected by home friends to be doing, namely, preaching the gospel."

So passed the time away in very hard work, during which he undertook little that need be chronicled. Early evangelistic efforts in a foreign language are painful things; one is apt to feel that it is simply practising on the unfortunates whom one is addressing: and, to some extent, this is literally the case. Thornton took care to practise on all sorts and classes of people, so as to increase the range of his own vocabulary. At first it was a class of fellow-workers, when he just had enough Arabic to guide a discussion and contribute a simple thought; then came written

sermons in church, laboriously composed, and read from the manuscript, fluency being ensured by reading it through aloud several times beforehand. Then came the work of instructing inquirers, a most profitable work, for it is so intimate that mistakes do not matter, and by question and answer the vocabulary can be easily extended. He also took care very early to learn the language of prayer, and so very soon took frequent part in meetings for intercession. He had the great prerequisite, courage; he did not care if he broke down, or even if he was unintelligible. Long before he could address a meeting, he took the chair at the preachings to Moslems in Cairo, and always did something, reading the passage from the Bible, or sometimes from the Koran, or making some remarks which gradually increased in intelligibility. *Fiat experimentum*. . . . But what else can the novice do? It is the only way. Yet one is sorry for the *corpus*.

Whatever he did was done thoroughly and boldly, and with real evangelistic zeal at the back of it. This specially characterised his conduct of a very picturesque little meeting at the quay for the Nile boats from Upper Egypt. There he would suspend a sheet in the rigging, and have a lantern service. Very early did he speak some simple words to the boatmen as they squatted on the deck, or peered from the wherries lying alongside—dusky forms seen in the dim starlight, or in the light cast by a smoky lamp, with eyes and teeth gleaming white in the

murkiness around. Palms rose like ebony against the Milky Way; while the Nile slipped quietly by the line of wherries at their moorings, side by side along the river's eastern bank.

On Easter Eve 1901 he had the joy of baptizing two converts,—one an Egyptian, and the other a Syrian who had been trained by him for baptism. Here is his own description of the ceremony—

“As we have not yet attained to having a consecrated building for our church services, we had temporarily to construct a small baptistry for the occasion, which was placed in the room used as a church in the old Cairo Dispensary. It was nicely draped with red, and decorated in front with palm leaves, as was also the whole building, in readiness for Easter Day. Punctually at 5 p.m. the service began, the catechumens, between their respective godfathers, being seated on the right of the room, in front of where the men usually sit, and the officiating clergy opposite to them on the left, between the harmonium and the women's seats. After opening with ‘Prevent us, O Lord,’ and the ‘Prayer for Purity,’ we had the opening exhortation, prayers, gospel, and address, all joining in the thanksgiving. I followed with the exhortation to the candidates and the vows of renunciation, belief, and obedience, asking each severally the appointed questions; and as I asked them if they believed in each clause of the Christian Creed, and they answered, ‘All this I steadfastly believe,’ it sent a thrill through one to feel that Christ had really conquered each heart, and that He who was once only a prophet to them had become their Lord. It brought back to my mind many a lesson we have had together in the Creed, and many a Bible study over these precious truths. Thus by the time we were praying the four petitions all our hearts were stirred, and the ‘Amen’ at the end of each came like a shout of

triumph from every lip. It was doubly significant having chosen Easter Eve for the event, as the teaching of these petitions and the Consecration Prayer afterwards seemed to find a special echo in our hearts to-day. I do not wonder now that among the ancients Easter Eve was the favourite day for baptism.

“Now came the reception into the Church of Christ, that rite so peculiarly English, and yet so beautifully significant. The leading by the hand, the naming of each person individually before admission into covenant with God, trine immersion in the name of each Person in the Trinity, the sign of the Cross with all that it signifies, and the declaration of incorporation into the body of Christ’s Church. Then, while the newly baptized had retired to robe afresh, we sang two Arabic hymns, interspersed with silent prayer for them and other seekers of Christ. Then came the Collect for Easter Eve, and a short address. Finally, a word of welcome and encouragement to our two brethren in Christ. Then Mr. Adeney closed with the post-Baptismal Service and the Blessing, and the two shook hands with everyone at the door as they went out. All our workers, thank God, are encouraged, and we hope also some of the enquirers who were present.”

The last work which need be mentioned, before a short furlough in 1902, is the work he put into the bringing out of a new edition of the Arabic Prayer-Book. It was a most useful but absolutely unshowy piece of work, and it throws light on the character of a man who had the reputation for loving only great schemes, but who could, as he did then, sit down and for months pour his soul out over the little details of seeing an Arabic book of some 500 pages through the press. The purely mechanical practice was invaluable

to him; he became a very rapid and accurate reader of Arabic proof-sheets and books, and he obtained a knowledge of the organisation of Egyptian printing-presses that was most useful in the future. But his work was not exclusively mechanical. Many letters at this time show that he subjected every line and word to a rigid examination, sometimes involving most interesting and well-instructed discussions of Prayer-Book phraseology and doctrine; and several important emendations were due solely to him, though the book was supposed to have been completely revised when he took over the work. He says—

“I have found my good supply of authorities on the Prayer-Book, *e.g.* Blunt, Procter, Daniel, Barry, Dowden, etc., very useful. . . . The experience in dealing with printers, type, style, and grammatical and doctrinal analysis will be invaluable to me later on.”

It was entirely characteristic of the man that during the time when the Prayer-Book was passing through the press, and he was making frequent visits to the printers (too frequent they most probably thought!), he used the opportunity to interest the compositors and other Moslem workmen in the contents of the book and in the message of Christ, so that the Gospel became in a manner known, or known of, to all the hands in the press. It was ever so. Did such conduct do harm in the “fanatical” Moslem East? On the contrary! Such conduct is the one thing that makes the Moslem respect his Christian fellow-creature.

On the whole, in looking over the period from his

ordination at Jerusalem in 1899 (which closed the series of schemes and ideas that characterised the first six months) down to his furlough in 1902, one is struck by the way in which this fiery soul acquiesced in the comparative inaction, the total obscurity of apprenticeship. Always he had a sense that the work which he meant to do needed this long, and even a longer, preparation. The ideas and schemes of the first months are hardly mentioned. Had they been forgotten? The following chapters will answer the question. But there is something touching in the way they had been allowed to sink from notice and from mention, under the pressure of the arduous, irksome, initial task that had to be done. Once he writes (27th Nov. 1901): "It seems as if God were leading us out into a somewhat different path than the present. . . ."

But he does not go on to say a single word as to what it should be. Is this the Thornton of former—or of latter—years? He quietly adds: "We need special guidance from above just now." In the following June (1902) he writes—

"We are quite in the dark as yet as to what our future work is likely to be. I am perfectly certain that the first step ought to be to start a Y.M.C.A. for natives (Arabic speaking). But it is quite impossible for those of us *who have to give many more years to the study of Arabic* to do much in the way of organising such a work. . . . I think G. and I must keep ourselves free for personal work and for study, so as to be able to do literary work later on."

He closes a long letter on this subject by earnestly

appealing for the starting of a Young Men's Christian Association in Cairo for the hundreds of Syrian, Coptic and Protestant Christians. But he sees that this work is not for him. And the apprentice years are summed up by himself in the following words, in a letter to his friend Mr. J. R. Mott:—

“*Jan. 26, 1902.*”

“. . . It is an immense task this fight with unitarianism. Perhaps the fight is not over so wide a range as it is in dealing with ethnic religions, but it is more intense. And the mental equipment needed if it is to be coupled with deep spirituality, is a very great tax on the physical life. However, we only have one language to fight in here, and not the multitude that there are in India, so that, I suppose, we ought not to think our work is difficult. I have found the last three years have been a great blessing to my soul. It is a great privilege to have to study the Bible so as to put its meaning into another tongue, because it makes it all mean so much more in the original. And that tongue being so akin to Hebrew, and the customs being so very similar now to what they were then, have contributed to make Bible study grow more and more intense and useful every year. I have specialised upon fundamental doctrines, and have sought to gather studies upon all the fundamentals of the Creed, and my book studies have been Hebrews, Galatians, Exodus from the Passover to the end of Leviticus. In our evangelistic meetings we have been all through the Life of our Lord twice, and almost all His Parables and Miracles in the New Testament; and in the Old Testament the Patriarchs and Prophets afford the subjects that always interest these Easterns most. Sunday-school studies in Samuel, David and Daniel and the Acts, besides using the latter book with Moslem enquirers, perhaps may

indicate to you the variety of study and use of the Bible that one has had in Arabic already."

The same year he went on furlough for six months, stirring up a great deal of interest by his addresses, which were probably best remembered by his unconventional habit of "demonstrating" the intoning of the Koran in a sonorous voice at the various missionary meetings he attended! He came back in November, still quite undecided at what point to throw in his energies. When waiting was necessary, Thornton could wait in a remarkable way. The only thing he was clear upon was that two flats should be found in the same building for the two families (the present writer was by this time married), with premises beneath for meeting-room and interviews, etc. Scores of hours did he spend scouring the city for suitable premises, and a score more in interviews with the landlord of one house which seemed suitable. But it was vain. The negotiations fell through, and no other suitable premises could be found. What was there to show for all those hours? These are among the mysteries of a missionary's life. The project of living together was, therefore, not realised till the following autumn.

At Christmas the death of the Secretary of the Mission, the Rev. F. F. Adeney, determined the line of work in which he was led first to engage. And with this he passes out of his apprenticeship.

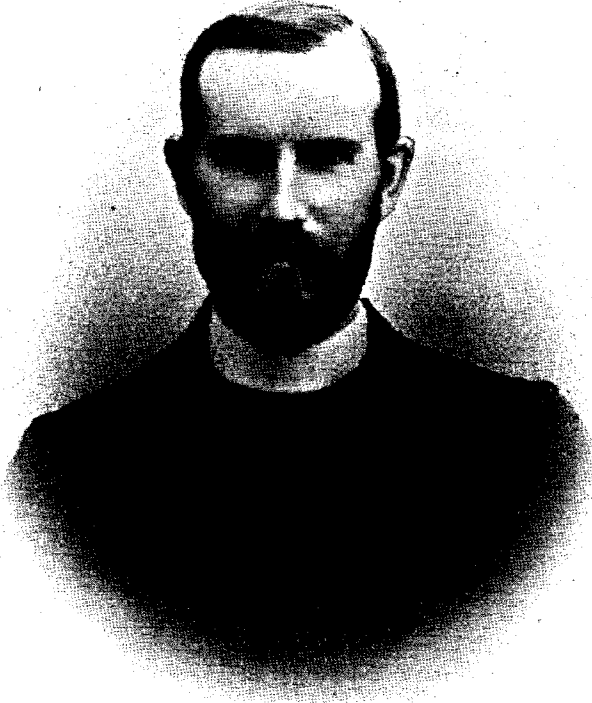
CHAPTER X

EXPERIMENTAL

NOTHING is more needed, in Moslem work, than a fertile brain, a mind always ready to adapt plans to changing circumstances. Thornton felt, on emerging from his apprenticeship, that he must do some experimental¹ work, with a view to seeing upon what he should first launch forth. We have already seen that the various *possibilities* had been from the outset quite clear to his mind. They were not less clear now in 1903 than they were in 1899; but the question with a man like this never is, *What* plan? but, *Which* plan?

Like a wise man, he turned to existing work, and sought to develop its possibilities in new directions. To his hand lay the Church Missionary Society's Book Depôt, situated in the very heart of the city, and already well known to Moslems, including several Azhar students. This place appealed to Thornton for two reasons: he saw in it a means of securing personal contact and work among individuals, and a means of circulating the message by means of literature.

¹"I made several experiments with a view to testing the feelings of the upper and middle classes, and finding out how best to influence them for Christ."—Letter, May 1904.



D. M. THORNTON

Cairo, 1903.

With characteristic energy he set to work, and soon had shifted all the furniture and shelves about, added new furniture,¹ and transformed the appearance of the place. Then he threw it open *at nights*, organising a succession of voluntary workers to be present on successive nights, in order to welcome men in from the street, seat them with all due courtesy, give them books to read, or discuss with them if discussion was preferred.

In April he could write to the Church Missionary Society—

“It cannot be said that until this year we have ever gauged the attitude of all classes of people in Cairo towards Christianity. But we have now, by a series of experiments, begun to test what that attitude really is, and the results we are gathering are most interesting.”

Here is a graphic sketch of this work, written at the time—

“I am writing here at my post in our *depôt*, which we have fitted up now as a sitting-room as well as a shop. There are two large ‘divans,’ or armed sofas, and two large bookcases containing Bibles and Testaments, and portions in all the languages spoken or read in these parts, *e.g.* Arabic, Turkish, Greek, Italian, French, English, German, Armenian, Abyssinian, Nubian, Hebrew, and Bible Greek. The inner room, where I have my Bible readings with our workers and my talks to catechumens and confirmandi, is surrounded

¹ Thornton was very great at arranging furniture. If he was tired, no greater joy and diversion could be found for him than to allow him entirely to rearrange the furniture of his drawing-room and study; if he was *very* tired, to rearrange his own and somebody else’s furniture too, if possible!

by bookcases for our stores of Bibles, prayer-books, hymn-books, tracts, and other religious books. This is a very precious spot, as it has seen interviews with all our enquirers. It is not a beautiful place, but good work is done there, and many a prayer has risen from Moslem hearts to God in Christ from that tiny place. We have two show windows outside, and a covered colonnade in front of one of them. Passers-by read the Scriptures chained here, and the texts of the 'Silent Comforter' that is suspended on the door for them to see.

"How shall I describe what goes on here? You must get out of your heads altogether the idea of a regular meeting. To-night, as no one was free to stand at the door and invite people in, I went myself. Meanwhile, Skander (the Moslem convert who was baptized in Easter 1901) was talking to one group, and Nicola (a Syrian Christian who has worked at the depôt for several years) to another group. Nobody of any importance came in at my invitation, but I gave tracts to three Egyptian soldiers who couldn't read, but said some of their mates could. Then I returned to find some young effendis (gentlemen), who were rather annoyed at so many simple folk coming in. So I offered them to come into the inner room instead. This led to a conversation, partly in English and partly in Arabic, with them. Their leader told me I ought to separate the gentry from the others, which gave me an excellent opportunity to show them that Christianity was for all, and the place was free to all comers. I added, however, that I was hoping to find a place for 'effendis' especially. Before they went I pointed out to them that the most important thing was not an abstruse discussion about the Trinity, but whether they knew Christ as a personal Saviour or not? and had their religion any Saviour to give them? This led to a most interesting talk, and they were willing to receive Gospels each, and promised to read them. It is such a step to get an educated Moslem to be willing to read the Bible, and not only to

talk about it from outside, that I think money spent in distributing Gospels will do great good, and it helps one to make friends at once. These young fellows have made an appointment for next Thursday evening, and I hope by then to have the inner room fitted up for them better. One of them stayed behind, and took an English New Testament and asked me to explain it to him. They seemed very astounded to hear I had studied St. John's Gospel for fifteen years and had not half fathomed it yet.

“I see clearly I must soon get a new residence suited for work amongst these ‘effendis.’ The door is wide open to the westernised Egyptian. Pray that it may also be open to the Azhar student. We are hoping to start a book shop up in the Azhar University quarter, with a view to reaching more of them there. I suppose only 100 out of a 10,000 have ever entered our depôt in the centre of the city. I see clearly now that the way to draw the ‘effendi’ will be by explaining the Bible in English and Arabic. In fact I think it will be well to hold Bible classes in both languages. Their own language is of so little educational value to them that I think we shall have to teach them by means of both. I should like, therefore, to get a supply of English Bibles, nicely printed, for such classes.

“Pray, then, for suitable premises, for openings, for funds, and that an extra worker may be sent to us.”

[The “suitable premises” were acquired that year; the “openings” were made; the “funds” were granted; but to the day of his death no “extra worker” was sent to the Cairo work!]

And a little later—

“It is now three months since we got ready the book depôt for the feast of Bairám el Futûr, after the end of Ramadhan. We made it more habitable

and comfortable by putting some simple divans round the room, so as to try whether that would attract more people by day to come in and read. I also began at that time opening the place every evening except Saturday. It soon became a success. There was no difficulty in filling the room every night, if someone invited people in at the door. And people were gathered in, some to read tracts and controversial books, some to hold discussions, and a few really to enquire about the truth.

“Everyone connected with our mission in Cairo was pleased. Several volunteered to come and help us night after night, and one young teacher (who wishes some day to be a catechist) has never failed to come, except once when he was ill. The result is that everyone is encouraged, and everyone is given an opportunity of personal conversations and giving help to their Moslem brethren. It has also proved a rallying place for all our enquirers, where they have met, and got to know one another, and even help one another.

“This has had an immediate effect upon our Sunday morning congregation. The number of men has increased month by month, and the enquirers have begun to attend regularly.

“Will you not praise the Lord with us, and ask Him to give us a living church of Moslem converts from every trade and rank, and every nationality to be found here in Cairo.

“I am now concerned as to how to reach a larger number of the ‘effendis’ (gentlemen). We have therefore opened up the inner room at the book depôt, and removed the greater part of our stock to the school premises. It now is fitted up and furnished, and only needs a second entrance from the court behind to draw these ‘effendis’ at night, I trust.

“But the place is not yet known to them. I hope soon, however, to be able to advertise it quietly. We

need much guidance now, and as the work grows we shall soon need more rooms and larger ones."

These two letters show how carefully he advanced from step to step. He felt his way to the "effendi" work, presently to be described, by inviting "effendis" into the depôt, and by attracting their attention, as we shall see, in special ways ("advertising it quietly" he calls it).

The idea of an international church of Moslem converts, alluded to above, now took strong possession of his mind. He felt that Moslem converts would be the strongest of all possible agencies for the revival and encouragement of eastern Christians—

"Give us a living church of Moslem converts here, and they will, I believe, lead the way to the Easterns to greater activity for Christ."

To the end he had the same faith, and worked according to that faith.

Then the "quiet advertisement." As to its quietness some had doubts; but there was no doubts as to its boldness. He had attractive handbills printed, rather like a publisher's circular, setting forth the desirable wares and advantages of the book depôt, and waited for a certain great day in the spring, when the entire world of native Cairo fashion and learning (but not its wife, for that stays at home) crosses the Nile Bridge to witness the Government Schools Sports. His theory was that when people are on holiday they are in a good humour, and when

they are in a good humour they will accept handbills. This psychological forecast was justified. Thousands of those handbills were distributed by volunteers at the two ends of the narrow Nile Bridge to the streams of men and youths returning from the sports. And commotion there was none. Nor were the handbills flung away.

On the same principle of assuming that the human animal is friendly when it is pleased, a party was organised on Easter Monday (a universal holiday) to go to the several chief places which are always thronged with tens of thousands of holiday-makers, and there to distribute pamphlets, not controversial ones, but tracts of general moral interest. Again there was success, and "quiet advertisement" also, for the pamphlets bore on them the address of the book depôt. He wrote—

"Last Monday being Easter Monday (among the Easterns), was another excellent opportunity. So we organised three bands of workers to go to the three popular holiday resorts, and to distribute 2000 copies of a Temperance tract called 'Drinks,' written by one of our native workers, and much liked. Those who seemed interested were also given notices of our depôt and reading-room. If we had had 10,000 instead of 2000 we could have used them well, but our Free Distribution Fund is very low just now.

"Now what is the result of our work. We have all come to see that a great change is coming over the people. Only one tract was seen to be torn up, and several said to me, 'This is a moral tract, but haven't you one about Christ also?' or words to that effect. The keenness with which the tracts were asked for or

taken betokens a widespread spirit of enquiry. The fact that numbers are now coming to our depôt and asking for more for their friends is a further indication of good that is being done. The notice being taken by some of the Press is also interesting. And I feel that in the next few years we shall have an immense opportunity before us, if only we can take it, of teaching the young men of this great city. But three missionaries in Cairo are not sufficient for the task of preaching, teaching, and raising up native agents and a native church!

“Our work, however, is not by any means confined to Cairo, or to Egypt. It has always been my hope and prayer that we might reach Al Azhar students from far and wide, and this is being realised. The year began with a sheikh enquirer from Aleppo. Since then we have quite a number of young Syrian and Palestinian sheikhs to our depôt, and to our Thursday evening lantern meeting there. Please remember us in your prayers.”

The last paragraph is all in keeping with the man as we already have seen him: the eye always on the object at hand, and yet, somehow, looking over it to vast horizons beyond.

Sometimes, specially at the week of the Moslem Feast, things at the depôt got decidedly lively. But no harm was done; never was there any approach to the revival of some trouble that had attended some open-air preaching, which had been held his first summer (contrary to his expressed opinion). That seemed to have passed away, and a better spirit to reign.

Personal work went on. He writes about this time—

“The fight has begun with the *sheikhs* here, and I am in the thick of the Mohammedan controversy.

Only last night I was talking for an hour with one of the ablest, but yet one of the most conceited sheikhs in Cairo. They do not seem so afraid of us now as they were. So they come into our depôt, more than they have done for long. Some of these men are most interesting. One is a deep thinker and a regular mystic, who accepts the Death and Resurrection of Christ, but stumbles over the nature of the Ascension, and finds just the same difficulties which an advanced Christian does in trying to reconcile the localisation of Christ's glorified humanity with His omnipresence. I have one or two very interesting young effendiya of the school of law and training college also.

"We have waited several months to find premises that will do for residences and our work. I hope that some found on Good Friday may prove to be the ones. If so, it will be interesting, as it used to be the house of Arabi Pasha, and so the hotbed of intrigue. May many souls be born again in those walls."

And nothing gave him greater pleasure, then as always, than something in the shape of a class for inquirers or workers, on the Bible, or the Creed, or the Prayer-Book. Very carefully were these classes prepared for, and they proved the most valuable method of improving his Arabic.

The allusion to the house "found on Good Friday" is the first mention of the building which ultimately proved to be his home till the end; and it marks the entering on a period for which this "experimental" work had been a preparation. It will have been noted that that work fell roughly under two heads—Literary, and Evangelistic. How each was developed will be told in the two following chapters.

CHAPTER XI

THE LITERATURE IDEA

IN his first half-year, as has been already seen, Thornton had emphasised the importance of evangelisation by means of literature, and it was only a question of time for him to take up this aspect of work very seriously. His superintendence of a book depôt, where the sale of religious books was constantly going on, and from which some small publications had already gone out, enabled him to develop this branch of work immediately. He was also the efficient secretary of a Publication Committee which was formed until a mission press should be actually started. Already, in 1903 ("the experimental period"), he had superintended the publication of a few important works; and he is already writing to the Bishop of Salisbury: "I hope to develop this work of publishing from our depôt Arabic works on all aspects of the Mohammedan question." And later on he wrote—

"I am writing thus to you as one who has taken some trouble to think out how literary work should be developed in Egypt. You know that I have for years been trying to prepare myself for such work. I do not feel I shall ever be able to write well in Arabic, but I am sure I can inspire others to write, and I have plenty

of ideas already in hand. If the C.M.S. at home say they cannot do as we ask them to do; if there are local difficulties in the way of enabling us to do such work under the direction of Egypt Conference; then I feel very like looking elsewhere for help, or asking the C.M.S. to lend me to some literature society for the purpose. But the method is secondary to the importance of the work itself, and I ask you to seek the Lord's clear guidance at this time on our behalf, that what is best for the Kingdom may be brought about. We have a glorious opportunity before us here of patiently and persistently preaching righteousness, and proclaiming the efficacy of the Death of our blessed Lord and the power of His Resurrection. We now know that we shall be listened to attentively. Is it not a call to go forward in our Master's name, and seek to use the liberty of the Press, and the demand for information from the West?"

First of all, then, he set to work with the material lying to hand. He went thoroughly over the English and Arabic stock at the book depôt, and took measures to add very largely to it. All the details of ordering, stocking, cataloguing, pricing and accounting, he saw to himself. He was particularly keen on developing the sale of English books, as he felt that it was a real service to the country to stimulate the sale of pure literature, and he believed also that this department would bring the best sort of educated Egyptian into touch with the work. Large orders of good English books, standard poetical and prose works, and books for boys and girls, were therefore made by him.

The circulation of literature in missionary work is a far more anxious task than its production. In Egypt

this was effected in two ways, by sales from the central depôt and by colportage in the provinces. Both of these works were under the entire superintendence of Thornton.

Finally, he initiated a publication department.

The labours involved in all this work were very great, and often did he appeal for someone to be sent out, with business training, especially in accounts, bookselling, and publishing; but although the Society sought to find such a man, he was not found. And if he was needed then, how much more now? The following passage gives a good idea of part of his work at this time:—

“ Such is the *status quo*, very weakly put, because I really cannot spend more time to strengthen the case. It does not succeed in conveying, I see, how bound up the whole work is both of periodical colportage, sales, and publication work. It fails to reveal the time spent upon correspondence, not twice a year for orders as four years ago, but almost weekly. It does not show the immense amount of secular labour involved in an Oriental city in conducting business from start to finish without any competent clerical or business aid. It does not show either the large amount of vernacular superintendance that is involved, and the close scrutiny of details, such as would be undreamt of as necessary in England.”

The mention of the initiation of a publishing scheme brings us to such an important point that the occasion must be taken to set forth his ideas on the subject, and trace their orderly development. It has already been seen that even during the first year of work in Bait Arabi Pasha, on the lines already described, he felt that this

method of work needed supplementing; and by the summer he was ready with a new scheme for so supplementing it. To many it seemed as if Thornton turned out schemes without rhyme or reason, and that he got tired of one and refreshed himself with starting another. This impression must have been due to something in his too sanguine manner of speech and style of writing, for the truth is the opposite. His schemes were of the nature of an evolution, the last one was ever closely connected with the one before, and so, far from superseding it, necessitated it, and was necessitated by it, being (to him) its logical outcome. He was like the general who *secures* the position he has taken to-day by taking yet another one farther in advance to-morrow. And he did not propose to do a new work until he was convinced the former work could be carried on without injury. Such was his rule, and if he very occasionally came near infringing it,—something must be conceded to the weakness of the flesh! Thornton generally did himself less than justice, and it is not until one studies the documents he has left—*littera scripta manet*—that one sees the soundness and consistency of the thinking to which he so often contrived to give the appearance of rash inconsecutiveness.

If anything were needed to urge him immediately to undertake this work, it would have been found in the publication of an Arabic tract about that time which was distributed broadcast in Cairo, even at the doors of the meetings, and which made a deep impression throughout the city. It will interest the reader

to see the sort of thing published by our Moslem friends (who quite understand "the literature idea").

"It has been circulated to nearly every shop in Cairo, Alexandria, Port Said, and Suez, and from Lord Cromer down to the humblest in the city. The back of the paper contains an advertisement of the author's bookshop and books specially written to withstand the preaching of the missionaries! Realise that this pamphlet has been issued by the hundred thousand, and is only one of many."

"A STRANGE QUESTION.

In answer to the people of the Cross . . .

O ye worshippers of Jesus, here is a wonderful question for you, and have you an answer?

If Jesus, as you suppose, was a mighty and powerful God to be feared, how is it you believe that the Jews made Him to taste bitter punishment by crucifixion?

And how can you believe that God died and was buried under the earth?

Or asks for a drink from his creatures to quench the fire of his heart?

So that one of them brought him myrrh and vinegar, the vilest of drinks, and then that he threw it on the ground in anger at him, and died with thirst, and broken-hearted!

(You say that) a crown of thorns was placed on his head to shame him, and it made his blood to flow upon his cheek till it became like dye upon his face; and that he rode an ass to save himself from the weariness of the road which he had traversed.

You claim that Phares was his ancestor, and that he sprang of fornication and of crime.

But the Lord does not bring to his people one sprung from fornication for their reward.

After this you reckon him as God, and are not ashamed of reproof.

What is he, save those like him, a servant to his Maker, and one of them that draw nigh (to God), as he has said of himself in a true text which came in the Book (*i.e.* the Koran)?

Had he been Lord, as you suppose, whom was he beseeching to disclose the nature of his punishment? Who was the one to whom he gave back his spirit when it left his body for its journey? And who after him preserved the order of the universe till the time of his coming again? Is there a Lord equal to him to be surety for his ordered (world), or did he leave it to destruction?

“Dilemmas of the Crucifixion.”

Was his crucifixion for a fault, or else why did he deserve to be punished?

Did the people do well to crucify him, in order to bring salvation to your old men and your youths, or otherwise, did they do harm by procuring salvation for you? Truly this is an astounding suggestion!

But and if you say they did well, and did nought save the right thing, I ask why do you (then) count them as enemies, though he that doeth good is given his reward?

But if you say they committed a crime by crucifying the Godhead—how evil the deed!—I answer, how, were it not for him (God), would you have been saved from the penalties of the judgment day?

Did he consent to be crucified, or was he under compulsion?

What is your decisive reply?

“Voluntary.”

For, if you say that his crucifixion was voluntary to cover *man's sin* of which he has repented (by which I refer to Adam the noble, who returned to his Maker and repented of what he had done wrong; whom God

forgave out of his goodness, and that after aiding him to find a place for repentance), then you have lied against *your* Lord, in respect of his actions as truly related in the Book (*i.e.* the Gospel); because he used to escape from his cross, and wept and wailed about himself, and cried—

‘Rescue me, thou God of heaven, by thy favour from these hard trials,’ and ‘Eloi, Eloi,’ he called aloud, ‘wherefore to-day dost thou abandon me to chastisement? If it be possible, O my creator, to save me, do so, thou best of Fathers.’

This is a proof that he was a servant to his Master without a doubt.

This is a proof that ye have lied, and in your saying have gone aside from the truth.

“*Involuntary.*”

But if ye say that the crucifixion was by force, how weak of an Almighty Lord! Surely curses have come to him from all sides by his being hung upon a wooden cross, even as the text of *your own* Gospels and Tourât tells you, nor is the blame to us.

“*Summary.*”

Answer ye my question, and do not forget, for silence will be to you a reproach. Behold I have given my exhortation, and I hope, because of my exhortation to you, for a good reward. May I die in the religion of the best of men (*i.e.* Mohammed), and may I not see the terrors of the day of judgment. That you may accept this religion is my purpose and desire. I am happy in it, and find it to be good—

‘But if not then you will remain in your religion, Although what is behind the veil has been made clear.’”

“Do not our hearts burn within us, as we read these words, to preach to these Moslem brethren the *glory of the Cross* and the *fellowship of His sufferings*? And can you wonder that we have asked the C.M.S. to make greater use of the printed page in Egypt, in order to preach Christ crucified aright?”

And thus it was that in 1904, at the end of the first “season” in Bait Arabi Pasha, he applied for leave to initiate a publishing scheme, the nucleus of which should be a weekly or monthly periodical, in connection with which there should be issued pamphlets and books on all subjects necessary for evangelistic work among Moslems, direct or indirect. And the best possible way of explaining this point is to set down here the memorandum he wrote to the Society on the subject, as it is a document of more than temporary interest—

“CHRISTIAN LITERATURE IN EGYPT.

“It would seem to be a peculiarly opportune time, just at present, to impress the Christian public in England, and more especially the more educated portion of the same, of the opportunities presented in many different mission fields for the spread of Christian literature upon a very much more extended scale than hitherto. And many are feeling that the time has come for all missionary agencies far more generally to recognise literature as the most important pioneer agency for reaching the educated classes in all semi-civilised lands.

“The effect of Bible circulation and portions of the same has recently been uniquely demonstrated all over the world in connection with the gatherings of the Bible Society centenary. This has coincided with an extra-

ordinary demand for literature, be it secular or religious, on the part of that great awakening nation of China, and I am much impressed with the way in which the Chinese Tract Society and Diffusion Society are seeking to meet the demand. So, too, the action of several English and American Missionary Societies in sending some of their best and most experienced workers to the literary capitals of various provinces to influence the *litterati* is a sign of the times. One notes also the immense advantage presented by China possessing in Mandarin such a literary and widely read language in which to convey the Christian message to such multitudes.

“But to turn from the hundreds of millions of the Far East to the tens of millions of Bible lands, I beg to point out how much more relatively important literature must be as a pioneer agency here. If literature is necessary to small young nations like Uganda as a medium of Christian instruction, or to great old nations like China, just emerging from her splendid isolation and self-sufficiency, how much more must it be so in lands, such as Turkey and Egypt, that lie upon the highway between east and west, and open to all the influences, political, social, and moral, of the west. If this be used as an argument for the wide spread of Christian literature in India, when only infidel books in English are widely read, how much more needy are these Bible lands, in which European literature of the most destructive kind is widely read in French and Italian as well. In days when popular education was of the narrowest and strictest kind, consisting almost entirely of subjects connected with the Koran, the evil influences of modern literature were comparatively non-existent, for however imperfect and narrowing it might be, popular education was at anyrate religious, and taught by religious leaders. But with the popularising of secular education and the visits of abler students to the capitals and universities of Europe, and the acquisition of French or English by all the educated classes, these countries have become exposed

to the greatest dangers from without. To these, in the case of Egypt, must be added all the mingled influences of an exceedingly active and comparatively free native press, which translates into Arabic all the leading works of infidels in Europe, especially those that are directed against Christianity, and circulates them at the cheapest possible prices broadcast throughout the land. So that the very vehicle which has secured for the Koran such a widespread religious influence is now being used to secure an equally widespread hatred and misunderstanding of true Christianity.

"In face of these facts, it is not to be wondered at that one who has been observing the life and studying the thoughts of the inhabitants of the metropolis of Egypt for over five years, and seeking to evangelize the young men of Cairo by individual conversations, enquiry meetings, evangelistic services, and lectures on moral subjects, should have come to the conclusion that the printed page, whether sold by the colporteur or given by the catechist after paying visits and holding meetings, is the best pioneer agency with which to reach the educated classes in this land for Christ.

"LIMITATIONS TO EVANGELISTIC WORK IN CAIRO.

"In order, however, to establish this point, and to remove the natural objection that is always raised to literature as an evangelistic agency, in some such terms as — 'What appeals to the mind does not necessarily touch the heart,' let me clear the ground by explaining what are the limitations and what the opportunities for doing evangelistic work among the educated classes in Egypt.

- "(1) The educated classes form only 5 per cent. in the towns, and much less in the villages.
- "(2) Street-preaching to such is inadvisable, and not permitted.
- "(3) The clerical missionary finds entrance into the houses of the middle-classes impossible, except

for rare exceptions. And even the doctor can only enter them in times of illness.

“(4) The visit of a clergyman to Moslems in their shops or factories, except for the purposes of buying, brings down upon the shopkeeper or artisan the suspicions of his neighbours at once.

“(5) Such street visitation at present is far better done by native agents *only*, both in the case of non-enquirers and enquirers.

“(6) Evangelistic meetings in the towns and villages amongst the middle and upper classes are much more satisfactory when preceded by personal invitations in the towns by catechists, and in the villages by the missionary.

“(7) The educational method of influencing the homes has these difficulties. In the case of boys, the missionary school has to compete with free religious education at the Azhar University and its preparatory schools on the one hand, and well-equipped, totally secular Government education with moderate fees on the other.

“(8) The only way, therefore, in which the clerical and evangelistic missionary can find scope for work in the pioneer stages of a mission to Moslems like that in Cairo is by largely remaining behind the scenes. He must be accessible to all, but not prominently before people's notice. And this (in conjunction with the above-mentioned limitations) practically confines the evangelistic worker in Cairo (which, be it noted, is the place of greatest opportunity and freedom in these lands) to those methods of work which are carried on upon mission premises, or seek to bring to his premises all sorts and conditions of men.

“It will be seen at once, therefore, how necessary it is to use as evangelistic agencies those means which will attract the educated classes to meetings, interviews, etc.,

and at same time quietly to leaven public opinion and prepare the way for wider opportunities for preaching the gospel later on. And there is obviously no such means at our disposal as the printed page. And so by a mere process of exclusion, as well as by consideration of the need, we are conclusively led to see that *the circulation of Christian literature is the most important pioneer agency in Egypt for leading the educated classes to Christ.*"

So important did he consider the step which he was taking, and so anxious was he that it should not be thought unmeditated or rash that he sent his secretary in London an interesting *Apologia pro vita sua* at this time. And the biographical importance of this memorandum is so great that it is worth while giving the substance of it here. If it at first seems a little egotistical in tone, that is a characteristic common to all *Apologiae*. To Thornton "the work" was a tremendously serious thing, and he took himself seriously in it. It was part of the man to do so, and one loved him for it. It may indeed be said that, for his own sake, a lighter touch would often have saved him trouble and brought about the result aimed at all the more quickly. But, the world over, men must be taken as they are. Here then is the memorandum, which is important, however, not only biographically, but also as a contribution to the science of missions.

"First of all, if you will pardon a few personal allusions, I would remind you of my connection with the Student Volunteer Missionary Union, during which

time I had the privilege of learning how to think and read and work with as much accuracy as possible by contact with very various minds, whose habit it was never to do things by halves, but to take every step after thorough deliberation and constant prayer. You will remember that this period gave me a unique opportunity of studying both the religious and the missionary operations in the world, and of getting into touch with every part of the mission field by personal contact with missionaries and the like. It enabled me also to have some little experience of literary work, with all the attendant advantages of contact with publishers, printers, and editors of several missionary magazines, not to mention the training of book-keeping and finance that went alongside of it.

“And then you remember, I daresay, the circumstances of my call to the mission field. How I was led to give myself to work among Mohammedans. How I weighed the relative claims of India and Hausaland with those of other centres of Islam. How I came to the conclusion that one who had been trained as I had been could do best work in Cairo as being the literary centre of Islam to-day, and the place also of greatest opportunity, perhaps, in the Moslem world to-day. Perhaps Mr. Fox has told you what effect that offer had upon him, combined with the offer of Gairdner independently for the same sort of work on the very same day. Am I not right in saying he saw God’s hand in it? This definite offer, coupled with the readiness, notwithstanding, to go anywhere, if so desired by the C.M.S., led to my appointment, six years ago, to the Egypt Mission, and to definite instructions as to the work in which I was to engage. It was to consist, I believe, of developing work among young men in Cairo, with more especial regard to the students of the Al Azhar. And I remember distinctly referring to the greatness of the task before me, and asked for several years in which

to study so difficult a language. Accordingly, in spite of my finding upon arrival here that I was expected to be rather a firebrand in the Mission, I settled to make as thorough a study of Arabic as limited powers of memory and linguistic ability permitted.

“Combined with this, I started on a course of Bible and doctrinal study in Arabic, which soon made me familiar with all the chief theological terms, systematised instruction for enquirers, and enabled the native workers to preach from a larger area of the Bible. So that now, with the additional aid of a very fairly complete set of lantern slides in the Mission, we have courses in the life and teachings of our Lord and the lives of the Patriarchs and the Prophets. Of course, this has entailed wide reading, both in the ethical and doctrinal teaching of the Bible, and I hope it will not prove to have been in vain.

“Again, I would point out that, in spite of my having been asked for a time to superintend boys’ schools, both in Old Cairo and Cairo, and having been put in charge of Cairo Christian and evangelistic work, and having been drawn by Mr. Adeney into the work of the depôt and the prayer-book revising, I made no proposal to Conference with regard to development of any branch of the work until I came home on short furlough, nor did my branch of the work, until then, cost the Society one penny extra for my doing it. But, in April 1902, a definite proposal was made to develop work among young Moslems in Cairo.

“That was two years ago. It was not till fifteen months after the grant was given that suitable premises were secured. In the meantime, I made several experiments with a view to testing the feelings of the upper and middle classes, and finding out how best to influence them for Christ. Feeling that our evangelistic work had formerly been rather spasmodic, and had not succeeded in always catching the ear of the hearers, we tried for a time the conversational method in the

depôt, and sought to find out what was the attitude of the various classes towards the gospel. I went further afield by organising tract distribution at picked centres upon feast days in holiday resorts. The result of all this was to show, as I have pointed out in my report, that it is moral and intellectual subjects, rather than religious, that interest the Government student class, whereas it is the reverse in the case of the students of Al Azhar.

“These points guide us as to how to work this winter, when we had settled into our premises. We continued our direct evangelistic preaching in the dépôt by lantern meetings; and have drawn to them, by means of catechist visiting, young men of the middle classes from all parts of the city. And it is for this work that we secure our most hopeful enquirers at present. Over and above this effort, we have attempted, with considerable success, to get into touch with the upper classes in our houses.

“Side by side with every evangelistic effort, we have been watching very carefully the effect of literary work. We have watched the extraordinary demand among this class for reading, and seen how totally unable both the Christian and Moslem press are to supply any moral literature of any kind. It is all either political, scientific, or literary. We have been encouraged by the reception of our few moral tracts, which I have been able to circulate owing to the generosity of some who see the value of this kind of work. And, therefore, I have come to the conclusion that the great need here in the future is a regular, continuous, and sustained effort to reach young men by means of Christian literature. And as the meetings for ‘effendis’ have given a stimulus to all other branches of our work, so I believe that a regular weekly religious journal will do so still more.

“I think from what I said in the opening clauses of my letter, you will see that I have been long in preparation for some such work, and it has been from

the first an ideal in my mind to attain. It is the only way in which I can see any possibility of influencing all the classes about whom I wrote to you five years ago, as needing to be reached."

Did this ideal fade from his mind, or narrow down in later years? On the contrary, it became more and more dominant and, instead of narrowing, widened more and more. Already, in the first six months, we saw him viewing the Moslem world, with its inner circle of Arabic-speaking peoples, as a single whole, and dreaming of the power of literature to reach that world. That ideal was with him in the intervening years, but he kept his peace about it. Now, from the microscopic ground of a little dépôt in Cairo, he sees the vision afresh, and, in working for it, in however small a way, finds it grow brighter and more definite than ever. The idea of "harnessing" the Arabic language, Christianising it, *i.e.* turning that own weapon of Islam against Islam's own bosom, recurs to him with enormously increased force. It possesses him; and, with it, the complementary idea of a society which should do for Arabic-speaking Moslem lands, what their Christian Literature Societies are doing for China and for India. His own efforts in Cairo, whether in the direction of publication or of circulation, he regarded only as a contribution to a much larger work. He did, indeed, correspond with missionaries in India, Arabia, and Syria, with this end—the end of co-ordination—in view. But he knew his limitations; without reinforcements he could do nothing. For them he called—and called in vain.

It is fitting, therefore, to close this chapter on "the Literature Idea" by yet another memorandum written by him the year before he was taken from us.¹ The missionary statesman is apparent in every line of it. It is part of a paper read at the Annual Meeting of the Christian Literature Society of India.

"The Oriental nations of the world, it seems to me, are presenting to the Churches of the Occident in these days such a challenge to faith and intellect as the past has never yet seen. The days of isolation are over. The fusion of races has begun in earnest. The conflict of moral and spiritual ideals grows yearly more acute. The intellectual weapons of the West are being placed into the hands of an ever-growing number of able Eastern minds. And nothing short of the ablest statesmanship, the clearest thinking, the noblest living, and the dedication of England's best to the sustained contest that lies before us will avail to bring Christ a triumphant victory over East as well as West.

"The Christian Literature Societies for India and China, and kindred Societies, have been seeking to grapple with the task of leavening India, China, and Japan, with Christian teaching. And until quite recently, these great and varied fields with their dominant and multifarious languages have absorbed most of the attention of the linguists whom England has sent forth to the East. Within the last generation it is true that a great advance has taken place among the tribes of Africa, and a very large number of languages and dialects have been reduced to writing, especially among the Bantu and the negro races. But it has to be confessed with regret that *the great language of Arabic, which binds together the continents of Asia and Africa*, have not till quite recently engaged the serious attention of any Protestants, save a few European professors and our German and American

¹ That is, 1906, two years after the *Apologia* just cited.

missionary brethren. All honour to the long roll of German and American missionaries who have worked so patiently and so long in laying the foundations of a Christian literature in Arabic; and may we derive inspiration from their fortitude and perseverance in girding themselves to the task of acquiring what is widely recognised as the hardest language in the world! But my object to-day is to summon you as English laymen more earnestly to this task in the light of the providential opportunities now afforded to us.

“The Sphere of Arabic.

“It is impossible to repeat too often, or to impress too deeply upon the hearts of Christians in England, the immense future that Arabic must have before it, and the enormous influence that this language will have upon tens of millions of mankind in the days to come. I do not hesitate to say, or fear to be contradicted, when I assert, that *next to the English language, Arabic is read and revered over the widest area of the earth's surface*, and as to the actual number of those that speak Arabic there are at least fifty millions of souls, and no non-Christian language is spreading at anything like the same rate.

“There are now over two hundred million Sunni Mohammedans, and, the more educated they become, the more they will seek to become acquainted with their religious language. So that it is safe to say that, so long as Islam exists and spreads (alongside of a corresponding growth in education), so long will Arabic increase in influence, and remain one of the dominant languages in the world.

“The Challenge of the Koran.

“I would further point out that the Christian Church is handicapped in seeking to Christianise the Arabic language, by the fact that she is not the first in the field. The standard classic in Arabic is not a Christian but a Mohammedan book, and this book has by far the

widest circulation and greatest influence over their minds. It is true that not much of it is understood even in Arabic-speaking lands by the illiterate classes, but year by year the percentage among the men of those who read and understand it becomes *greater*, and the demand for the editions of the Koran are to my knowledge increasing. Against this we can point to a great increase in the circulation of the Bible in Arabic, both by Protestants and by Roman Catholics, but I have never heard a Mohammedan that had been attracted by these Arabic versions *as literary productions*, such as our own English Bible can claim to be. And, as regards the New Testament versions, they need very serious revision in order to come into line with Nestle's Greek Text adopted by the B. and F.B.S.

“Future Ideals.

“The reception given to this paper in nearly five hundred Egyptian towns and villages already, combined with the lessons taught us by the recent Conference held in Cairo, has given me several ideals for the future, which I hope to see speedily realised. The first point brought home to us missionaries in Cairo has been the providential position of Cairo, and opening in Cairo, for developing *a great literary campaign* for Christ. This at once emphasises the need both of more missionaries from the West and more Orientals engaged in literary work in Arabic in Cairo. The second fact impressed upon us, with reiterated force from every part of the Moslem world, is the need of *more trained workers* (both Eastern and Western) to adequately grapple with Mohammedanism in the present generation. We need *an international training class* for promising Moslem converts, and other Oriental Christians who wish to receive a special training in the Koran, and how to preach effectively to Moslems as soon as we receive reinforcement. We have reason to believe that such converts will come

to Cairo, in time, from every part of the Sunni Moslem world. This should yield to us some Orientals with linguistic ability from each Moslem land, and it is my earnest hope and prayer that before long Cairo may become a Christian, educational, and literary centre, from which will radiate the true knowledge of Jesus Christ as Saviour into the whole Moslem world."

This paper has taken the reader a little beyond the point he has reached in the chronological account of Thornton's life (*i.e.* the summer of 1904), and it has therefore introduced one or two points which cannot be followed out till a little later in the narrative. But this chapter, on "the Literature Idea," could not be concluded without citing the memorandum which crowns the whole.

The immediate duty, however, the "nexte thyng," was to take an initial practical step, the publication of a periodical which should also be the fertile parent of literature of a permanent character. To this end he ran home for a few weeks in the summer of 1904, in order to make arrangements for the new publication; and here the work he did was prodigious. In Paternoster Row his foot was, as it were, on his native heath: nothing could weary him, and no detail was too small for him. Scores of letters testify to the fact that he had thought out all the main lines of the paper, and had worked out most of the details necessary for the conducting of it on those lines. His passion for the work of God burned on and on; it was burning him out. He was "burning out for God.'

CHAPTER XII

“BAIT ARABI PASHA”

HOUSE-FINDING in Cairo is a heart-breaking business. Most people employ for it a race of men, called in Arabic, *simsárs*—house-agents. But the greatest of *simsárs* was Thornton himself. He had already found his own house in Sharia Gamia Sherkess in 1899; he had ransacked the habitable quarters of Cairo at the beginning of this year, and his knowledge was unique. One glance at a house and he knew (and never forgot) its direction, the amount of “north air” it got, and all about its exterior. One walk through it, and he could draw a plan of its interior. In rides through the streets his conversation would be incessantly on the houses and the localities, and he would throw out ideas all along the way (because he could not help doing so, not because there was any chance of carrying them out), about the possibilities of work in those localities.

After following many false scents, on Good Friday, when things seemed to be getting desperate, he was on his way down to Old Cairo for the baptism of an excellent old peasant convert, when he chanced to ask

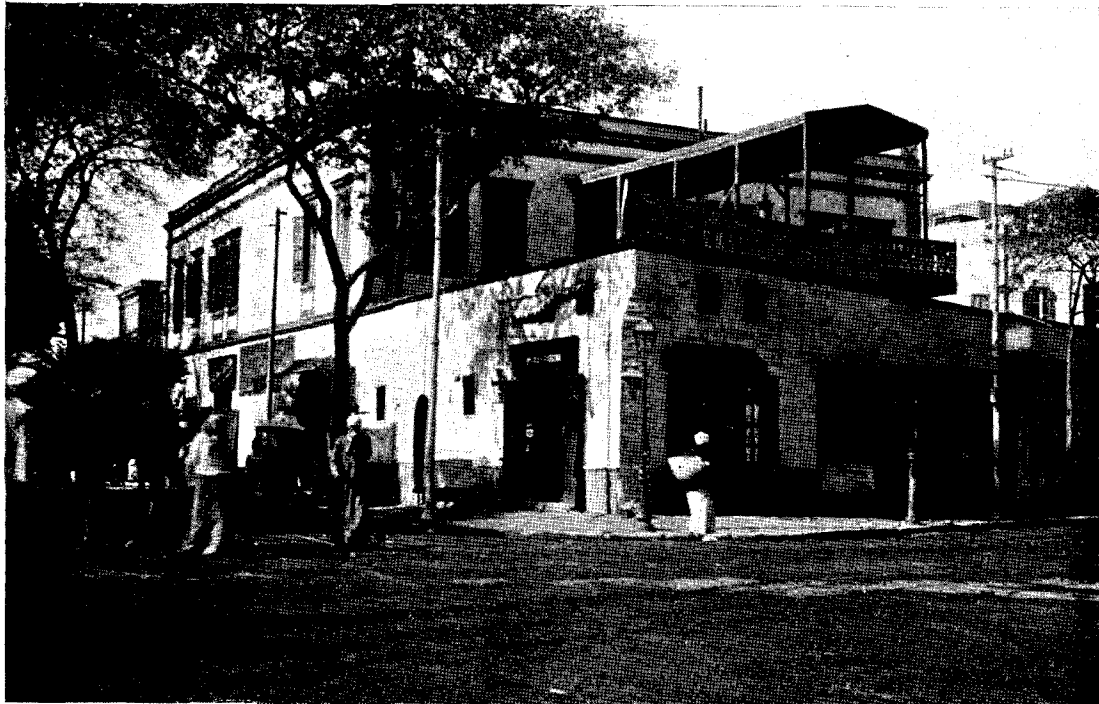
the doorkeeper of a house quite near his own if it was to let. It happened to have just fallen vacant! After prolonged negotiations with the Jewish landlords—some distinctly animated scenes resulting!—the house was taken, and Thornton spent most of his summer holiday in getting it into order for the two families, for as he and the writer of this book worked together, it was arranged that the two families should reside as near as possible to each other.

He wrote, just after the conclusion of the negotiations—

“ July 4th.

“It is exactly half way between us and the girls' school, at the place where the two trams diverge. This house lies between the two, so that notices put up on either side, and at the back, will be seen by every young man who goes to the Ministries, and every student as he goes over the Bridge. It used to be inhabited by Arabi Pasha before 1882, and it was there that he hatched many of his plots with Mahmoud Pasha, so that it is an historic place. Since then it was used as Victoria Hospital for the wounded, and lived in by a Jewish family for four years. Pray that it may be the birthplace of many souls. Several young fellows have told us that if we had a religious discussion society they would come. This might have meetings in Arabic, and others in English. In fact, I think this sort of work will have to be carried on in both languages. We shall still keep on the work at the depôt for the lower and middle classes, entirely in the vernacular.”

That the unusual arrangement of two families living in the same house (not in two flats) was possible, was



BAIT ARABI PASHA.

due to the fact that the house was built in the old Oriental style. It was walled off from the street, and you entered a gateway, passed through a porch and small garden or yard, and so into the ground floor of the house. The premises on this floor were to be reserved for the work; they consisted of three rooms, one a central hall, large, but not well ventilated, through which every visitor had to pass, even when a meeting was being held in it (or else, go up a dark and rickety back staircase). The central hall led to the common staircase, and from that you entered the apartments, which were so arranged that one suite could be taken by one family, and the other by the other. There were two front doors, and about four ways of passing from one suite to the other, so if proximity and facility of consultation were the object, the end was splendidly secured!

Such was the home, and place of work, of Douglas Thornton for the remainder of his earthly workdays. The prince of *simsárs* never had to find another earthly home.

Just one extract from a letter of this summer, which throws a white light upon the spirit in which he did this intensely trying work of interviewing landlords, and employing workmen. And he had an overwhelming amount of this to do that summer, for he was Acting-Secretary to the Mission, and in addition to finding “Bait Arabi Pasha,” he had three girls’ schools to find and get into order as well,—all in the heat of Cairo mid-summer.

“Now when I tell you that I have had six interviews with my future landlord, each lasting on an average two hours, and three with the landlord of the Girls’ Boarding School, about terms and plans for extension, of the same length, prolonged simply in order to make a hard bargain, and to save C.M.S. another £1 a month, or another £30 of outlay on repairs, you will get some idea of what wearing work it all is. You must remember, too, that it is all in a foreign language, and one’s great desire all the time is to come out of the bargain with a perfectly upright character, and to be able to win these landlords for Christ, be they Jew or Mohammedan. But I am thankful to say that I have succeeded in having spiritual talks with both, and since then their whole attitude towards me financially has changed. The Jew has bought a Bible for his office, to read at odd times, and a New Testament for his home.

“The Moslem Bey has told me he is quite open to impression, and has promised to come to our meetings for Beys and Effendis close by, and wishes me to come and see him again in his house and talk about Christ. I find he has an English prayer-book, which he got when in England years ago, and still reads the Psalms every day.

“I now must let you have a few amusing incidents in the task of moving house. We had had no waggons (only carriers) from house to house, the distance from door to door being about a hundred yards. The eldest, a toothless old fellow, had just gently set down the wardrobe with the mirror in our bedroom, which he called the Father of the Mirror, when I asked him his age. ‘Well,’ he said, ‘I was seventeen when Mahomed Ali Pasha died. That means fifty-four years ago.’ Here was an old man carrying on his back a piece of furniture down seventy steps and up thirty, and one hundred and fifty yards on the level, without feeling it. ‘How do you keep your strength?’ I said. ‘Oh,’ he said, ‘you eat beans (or pulse) and

you'll be as strong as me.' 'May be,' said I, 'but fish and meat would give you a few more brains,' as I passed my hand across the lines on his forehead, marked by the rope with which he supported the great wardrobe and the like. But he didn't seem quite convinced even then, but only pleased with himself and me. However, that's the way to influence these chaps.

"The painter was late the day after I returned here, and replied in answer to my rebuke, that 'his child had died and got well again,' a common excuse it seems, nearly as common as a servant's, who wants to leave you, and has an uncle or aunt to bury at once. The next day one of his best workmen was absent. Why? Because he had gone to get his daughter divorced from her husband, quite as a matter of course. Her marriage had been only a kind of experiment! The carpenter, an excellent and faithful workman, looked sad the while. On my query, he said he had never kept a wife more than three years, he had already divorced four in twelve years! It was quite a new idea to him to see my wife and me helping each other in the house, and he was most responsive to talks, and delighted when we cured his cold with Kay's Essence, which I always ask Elaine to give them, so that they may learn to respect a woman.

"In India, the barber is the matchmaker; in Egypt, it is the hobbling woman with her clattering 'Shib-Shibs.' So there is little difficulty in a divorced woman being remarried. How strange it all seems, and how corrupt the family life has become. The morals of the middle classes are simply in an appalling state.

"Workmen get higher wages than I thought. A good painter gets three francs a day, and a good carpenter four francs. Those who have no shops go to cafés, and then go out on hire when called for, just

like the labourers in the vineyard of old. But it is interesting to hear them all say they can never trust a Moslem, and the Christians make the best masters and sell the best paint and wood and the like. I have been trying to get them to understand why God gives them work to do, but few can rise above 'in order to eat bread.' One headman got as far as 'to get honour,' but no further."

It was very touching to us, the way he slaved equally at *our* part of the house, we having been prevented by work and other reasons from doing anything like our fair share of the whole tiresome task. One cannot refrain from quoting just one sentence showing the delicate unselfishness of the man—

"It has been, I may say, the heaviest responsibility I have had to bear this summer, during those long negotiations, the task of providing a resting-place (Psalm lxxxiv. 3). And it was a relief as great to me as to you when it was found. May you both have health and strength in your first home!"

Both families had settled in the new premises by October; but before beginning the autumn work Thornton wisely took the holiday he had failed to get in the summer, and went off for a short time to Athens and Constantinople. Lying off Piræus in quarantine, "in sight of Athens and Eleusis," he very characteristically writes—

"I hope to get a new insight into the Pauline Epistles, if we can manage what we have in view. It is an excellent opportunity for reflection on the

very threshold of new and untried work. And as for reading and correspondence I have never had such an opportunity for over two years. We are reading the whole history of Greece, ancient, mediæval, and modern together, to our great profit. And I feel that after this trip, if we can return *via* the Seven Churches, half the New Testament will be a new book to me.”

“The work” indeed was the thing entirely uppermost in his mind, and wove itself into the glories of Athens and Stamboul, which he appreciated to the full. He exclaims that he “never felt so in touch with the past,” as he did when he sat in the same marble seat, “with a most comfortable rounded marble back (by the way),” on which the Archon Basileus, whose name is carved on the back of the chair, had sat; or studied the acoustic properties of the Odeum; or stood on Demosthenes’ Bêma,—to have done which “was as if one had scored a point off Old D——, who kept me in at twelve, and brought me down to his house more than once in the Middle Fifth at Marlborough, in order to translate the Philippics!” Of the Acropolis he makes the characteristic remark that the view from it must have had a profound effect “in making Pericles and Demosthenes aspire to make and preserve Athens a power in the world. . . .”

But, of course, to a Bible student, to read Acts xvii. 22-34 on the hill of Ares was still more impressive.

“And as one cast one’s eye over the site of the ancient ‘agora,’ and round at the hills and isles beyond, away across the water and back at the citadel, with its

heathen shrines, and its worship of the woman 'Athene,' one could not but dwell on the greatness of Paul's mind, the marvellous penetration of his intellect, and the wonderful anticipatory power of his faith, as he unfolded to his audience the unity of the human race, the fatherhood of God, the dispensation of the Man Christ Jesus, and the fact of the resurrection from the dead. Could there have been a more ideal spot for such an address? And can anything after all vie in importance with that visit of Paul to Greece, leading him as it did to the intellectual centre of the West, whence he obtained half his education through Gamaliel. May it not have been here that he gained the vision of the conquest of the western world for Christ? Certainly he took immediate steps towards it by settling in commercial Corinth so soon afterwards for so long a time."

From Athens to Constantinople—

"These are the walls that kept at bay the Goths, the Huns, the Tartars, and the Turks for centuries. These marvellous monuments of Roman strength may be said to have saved the Byzantine Empire from destruction until Western and Northern Europe was ready to hand on the torch of learning to the world. Truly, one is profoundly impressed at their sight. Along the water's edge can be seen traces of the ancient seawalls, but it is the mosques that tower above which fascinate the eye and evoke a chorus of praise and wonder from the passengers. The windows round the domes have caught the light of the setting sun and are all ablaze. The muezzin is calling out 'God is great' from the parapet of the minaret. The two, four, and even six minarets to the various massive mosques pierce their arrow-like heads into the sky. Was there ever such a wondrous sight as this? The wealth of buildings, the richness of colour, the variety of scenery, as the Bosphorus opens out beyond, the ubiquity of the small craft, the majestic sweep of the Golden Horn

(*i.e.* the river round the corner on the northern side of Stamboul, separating it from Galata, the commercial harbour opposite on the European side), the mass of human beings on the bridge, the extraordinary cosmopolitan character of the inhabitants (coming as they do from Central Asia, Central Africa, and Central Europe), all these things make a riveting picture, which can never be forgotten in a lifetime.”

The “Salamlik,” the weekly progress of the Sultan to Friday prayers, made a prodigious impression on him, and he declared that that, and not the Concert of Europe, was the sort of thing that held Turkey together. The intoning of the leader at the midday prayer in San Sophia also astonished him greatly. The fact that it, like other of the great mosques in Stamboul, were originally Christian Churches of the Byzantine Empire, distressed him. Of course, he spoke for Christ—undeterred by environment. It was either there, or in the once Christian church, now Moslem mosque, at Damascus, that he actually preached Christ to his Moslem guide ^{on} the top of the minaret!—of course, with nothing but good results.

It is not possible to linger over his fascinating descriptions of Constantinople, the best he ever wrote. But two letters which he wrote from the Bay of Salamis must not be omitted, owing to their special importance. Not only are they important in themselves, but they show very vividly the way his mind worked, and how powerful would his voice still have been were he working in the home field.

First, a personal thought—

“ . . . We, all of us, need to learn the lessons of the Incarnation and the Cross deeper and deeper by contact with the poor and suffering, if our own life is to grow more like the Master's. For myself, I do thank God that He is leading me to see the motive power in the death of our Blessed Lord, and so to make His condescension and His utter humiliation the secret of one's life.”

Then he comes to the subject that was particularly on his mind—

[TO THE REV. G. T. MANLEY.]

“ Now for a few thoughts upon the battle—not of Salamis, but of Christ and His followers. I am feeling more than ever the need of picked men (hoplites, heavily armed) for the fray. I do think that we need a tremendously concentrated attack upon the ability of the United Kingdom. It is far more important to have highly educated men than women. Women of all kinds are needed, and in far greater numbers, but it is picked men only we need, both for pioneer and for established missions. But it is exactly the picked men who think they must stay at home. And they fill the religious magazines or the reviews with their superfluous energy and knowledge, instead of diffusing it and applying it throughout the world. Now the teaching profession, at anyrate, is not so well paid that it can hold back very many, if they saw the opportunity of using their talents to the full.

“ What I propose then for you, is to forego for a time your campaign among the clergy, and to concentrate upon personal interviews and talks with groups of picked students everywhere, both in the 'varsities, colleges, and sixth forms of public schools. Do not forget also the army classes at various schools either. Try and enlist each headmaster upon your side, by asking leave to stay with him and talk the matter over as a vocation for

boys. So, too, with dons and deans of colleges, impress them with the sort of men that the campaign now needs.

“In order to do this effectually, you will have to make a careful enquiry from C.M.S., S.P.G., and other educational societies, exactly what openings there are for educational and for linguistic work in the next five years, and then your appeals will be direct, pointed, personal. I am coming more and more to believe in such appeals for special work. Do think this matter over. Abandon the idea of the great Conference. It is on the wrong tack, I am sure. The work of winning one at a time will pay better in the end.

“I think that the C.M.S. should utilise its men before they go out, and on furlough, when they are specialists, for the special object of increasing the number of offers of like men much more than they do; e.g. a home clergyman who has worked C.M.S. successfully in his parish, and who is going out, should be enlisted to stir up other successful clergy as well. He can speak with so much more authority to his fellow-clergy. The secret of Canon Flynn’s appeals are because he knows where he can get the wedge into an overworked parson. How much greater would be his influence if he were on the way to the field! It is impossible for you or him to speak with such sympathy, isn’t it? But you can speak to scholars and others in the scholastic profession with quite peculiar force, sympathetic, authoritative, and final. That is my point. So can a doctor to doctors, etc. etc.

“I propose then to write an article to the C.M.S. from here, entitled ‘Wanted Specialists: A Word to Men,’ bearing on this point. It seems to be the unanimous opinion of senior missionaries that I have met that, as missions get more and more into a developed state, the demand comes for specialists on some line,—medical, industrial, educational, linguistic, or else for native agents *only*. The English woman of ordinary education is so far in advance of her Eastern sisters that

she can be of great use, simply by virtue of her innate superiority. Not so the man, for he meets with people more than his match everywhere, and, unless he have some title to respect, I hold he would much better be out in his proper calling, where he will earn for his Master a good name. Every year I get keener and keener on the desire to raise the whole missionary question above the plane of the limited operations of a missionary society, and to educate Christians at home to look upon their own calling as the one in which they are to glorify God. We had much better follow the line of Paul and Priscilla if we have not received special training for special work. I do wish our British Missionary Society secretaries would think this matter out."

These are really weighty words, and they deserve to be weighed and their force realised. He is full of the subject, for on the very next day he opens fire again to another friend, also in a post of great importance in the work at home—

"The plain facts are these, that every old-established mission must have 'specialists' for its work, *i.e.*, men must either be able to teach, heal, or preach. In order to do this they must be specially prepared, or else have special gifts. *A good native agent* is worth five times as much as a *mediocre missionary* at half or a third his salary. So, too, pioneer missions do need exceptional men, either men who can teach themselves a new language or initiate new work. Now, are we encouraging volunteers to become specialists ?

"I think it is impossible for you at home to see this question as we see it. I assure you with all the conviction that I possess, that *numbers* in the mission field counts for *very* little, character goes for everything, attainments come next, just because so many are requisite or called for. Nondescripts are *almost* a nuisance.

“I think my subject can be summed up under the title, ‘Wanted Specialists: A Word to Men.’ The same does not apply to women in the same way, because any English lady is more than a match for her Eastern sister.

“Of course this brings me round again to my other conviction that a ‘missionary’ is not a delegate of a society only, but any Christian in any occupation sent out to non-Christian lands. And I wish I saw my way to raising the whole missionary question out of the narrow lines of the society or board, and getting the vocation attached to every Christian emigrant. The full-blown missionary sent by a society will always remain the delegate of the home churches. But every Christian should be an emissary. But I suppose until we learn to see that every Christian occupation is consecrated and holy, and a sphere in which to glorify God, and a means by which to get at men, we shall never attain this end. And this needs to be taught to the home churches first.

“But a preliminary to teaching this ideal seems to me to be the emphasizing that the missionary call is a call to specialization, just as preparation for a tripos is a call to specialization. Then if X says he can only irrigate, or engineer, or build factories, or codify laws or administer finances, etc., the Church to which he belongs should dismiss him to some such work, as well as the firm which sends him. This will broaden the whole missionary question, will provide points of contact with every class of every community in every land, and will not only relieve the finances of societies at home, but will secure them more adequate support abroad. Cannot the S.V.M.U. take up the task? If not, some other body must be raised up to do the same. I am too growingly convinced of the necessity of the thing at this stage in missionary operations to let the matter drop.”

He felt that the Student Volunteer Missionary Union, if any, should do this work and he emphasised the advisability of its employing, as travelling secretaries, men who could reach these "specialists," that is, men who had had an experience of the field; very much as he had urged on the Church Missionary Society not to leave the task of actual recruiting to their home staff, but to use also the returned missionary who could say exactly who and what was wanted, and therefore could make the strongest appeal.

Such were the thoughts with which he returned to Cairo, in time for what he always called a "campaign," at the time of the Moslem and Christian feasts, and to work out one more of the methods which (it will be remembered) he had anticipated in his first five months in Egypt.

A double series of meetings were planned for the new premises; one of these was in English and Arabic, and was of a general character; this was especially to suit the young "effendis" or English-speaking Egyptians; and the second in Arabic only, evangelistic meetings specially for Azhar men. Both series were soon made "open," that is, the audience were invited to express their opinions on the various topics. In the case of the religious meetings, this could only lead to one result—controversy, sometimes of a particularly "animated" nature.

The general meetings were advertised regularly through the press, and were a success from the start. The subjects chosen were very various: purely ethical, such as—"The Basis and Possibilities of Character"; historical, such

as, “The Influence of East on West and West on East,” “The Messages of Egypt, Greece, Rome, England to the World”; scientific, such as, “The Theory of Evolution,” “Alcohol and Health”; or social (and these were the most popular of all), such as, “National Greatness,” “Education of Girls,” “National Unity,” and so forth.

On all of these subjects the young men, who came from the School of Law, and others of the best schools in Cairo, contributed to the debates in the most unreserved way. All of this was of incalculable importance in bringing about mutual contact, understanding and confidence. Like all young men when debating together, they said exactly what they meant, and thus Thornton was enabled to learn their thoughts in a perfectly new way: and all knowledge he had he invariably used.

Once he organised a series of meetings on purity and chastity. To these also large numbers came, and at the discussions afterwards great was the light obtained as to the individual and social moral difficulties of the nation.

Social subjects, of course, often approximate to political and national subjects, and somewhat free things were often said by young and ardent Egyptians from the Bait Arabi platform! But it was generally possible to keep things within bounds, and the very fact that such proceedings impressed the men with ideals of impartiality, and mutual respect, and freedom in discourse was itself a moral result.

Thornton was, in fact, in the best sense, a pro-

Egyptian and pro-Nationalist; that is to say, he, without meddling in the least with the politics or parties of the day, took up the broad line of sympathising with the aspirations of the nation to be one, and to be, in short, a nation. As this *end* is professed, not only by the "Nationalists," but also by the Occupation and the past and present British Consul-Generals, and moreover (as in India) commends itself to the sense of all the best men, he was perfectly safe in professing it himself. It is, of course, in *practical* politics, which are entirely taken up with the question of means and methods, times and occasions, that the rub comes, and with all this, of course, Thornton, like every wise missionary, had nothing to do. He stood quite clear of it, and devoted himself to the proper task of the Christian missionary, that of strengthening the moral fibre of the nation and working for *moral* freedom, independence, and self-government, without which their political counterparts, if attained, might prove more curse than blessing.

In fact, he was independently led to take up the same mental attitude of *sympathy*, which is more and more commending itself to the present generation of missionaries in India. And who can estimate the enormous value of this sympathy on the part of missionaries, or their influence, as factors of unity and reciprocal understanding, between the antithetic elements of the strange Anglo-Oriental world which the events of two centuries have, in the providence

of God, created? It is the missionary who, *par excellence*, knows the language, and so the heart of the nation. It may well be that, reversing the orthodox Foreign Office doctrine, he is the one element which really makes for not a sword, but peace.

As this subject has quite lately assumed such special importance,¹ a few extracts, showing Thornton's ideas on the subject when it was far less prominent, will assuredly be of interest.

“We have now begun a series on ‘*national questions*’ for January, which is bringing some of the ablest Moslem students into the city to us. Last night we had the highest flood of oratory and Arabic poetry that I have ever listened to, after an appeal to eighty men to study the ancient history of Egypt, an appeal written for us by Professor Sayce. Think of it. Is there any parallel elsewhere in the mission field to *two English clergy holding meetings in their own house* attended by non-Christians of high education and intelligence, at which *the spirit of true patriotism* is encouraged and developed? You expect Mrs. Besant to do this in Hindu audiences, but do you ever hear of animated meetings freely taking place in the vernacular in the house of foreigners, much less foreign clergy, and Christians to boot? I am amazed myself when I reflect upon it, but it is true. It actually happens week by week. We are making fast friendship with the future leaders of the land, both Copts and Moslems. Who can calculate the result?”

The late Mustafa Pasha Kâmel's organ, *El Lewa*, in a rare moment of acquiescence, once commented on these meetings, dwelling on their being held by

¹ See, for example, the late Bishop of Bombay's article in the January number of *East and West*, 1908.

Englishmen, and in Arabi's old house; and on the symbolic fact that that house was just half-way between the Khedive's palace and the British Agency, as though interpreting Egypt to England and *vice versa*.

[TO THE BISHOP OF DURHAM.]

"Feb. 2, 1906.

"... arrived here at about 7.45 this evening, just in the middle of our Friday evening meeting for effendis. We had a specially large number, and a most helpful and encouraging time. I had been speaking about the lessons which Egyptians can learn from the early history of England, what real progress England made even though subject to foreign rule—Dane, Norman, etc., both in education and religion, and in the end in freedom also—at Runnymede, when they were sufficiently united to be independent. Then I summed up the case and applied it to Egypt.

"The debate was most profitable. It drew from an enlightened Egyptian sheikh that the British Occupation had in no way injured the Moslem religion, but that their backwardness was their own fault. Educated Moslems and Christians took helpful parts in the debate (all in Arabic), and G. led the meeting well. All old-comers went away sobered and full of deep resolves, while new-comers had some of their hatred to England and Christianity removed. Truly this is the shortest cut in the end to the Egyptian's heart.

"As this reaches you, we shall probably be holding our continuation meeting next Friday evening, when I finish the subject by taking the lessons of the Reformation. It is so good for us to have to do the necessary reading for these papers and addresses, just as it is to have to write Bible talks every other week for the paper! We are just now engaged on the Life of our Blessed Lord from the Annunciation to the Call of the Disciples. Then we shall (D.V.) bind this up with the story of the Cross, Death and Resurrection, Ascension

and Pentecost, which we printed last Easter, so as to form an illustrated book of 50-60 pages.

“Do you not think that perhaps we missionaries have not done enough to throw our weight into all that is good in the native life of the races to which we are sent? At anyrate we have felt led this year to take the part that Anselm and Lanfranc did of old, though foreigners; and are we not following in Aidan’s steps as well? I see quite clearly that in proportion as we do side, where it is right and lawful to do so, with national aspirations, that we cultivate friendship, remove misunderstandings, and are resorted to as counsellors; and so it seems to me that it must be right to take this line.

“It is no new policy. It was adapted by foreigners like Lanfranc, and Anselm, and Aidan in England with great success. And it is certainly having great results here. I wonder why Anglo-Indian missionaries do not do more in this line. I think it would be the very best way to undermine Mrs. Besant’s influence, besides winning the young generation of Hindus. I commend it to you for your earnest thought, and pray that you may be enabled to usher in a new era into Indian Mission work. This new Native Missionary Society is splendid. Back it up for all you know.”

In these and other ways the beauty of the Christian *fruit* could be shown, without actual mention of the root. “In this way,” he wrote, “Moslems are unconsciously absorbing principles that are in reality Christian, and often most un-Moslem, the result of which must be made manifest sooner or later.”

More than once these meetings were the cause, direct or indirect, of promoting or encouraging enterprises on the part of the Egyptian young men themselves, such as the formation of societies or clubs.

Thornton always claimed that such effects should be reckoned as missionary *fruit* in a real and direct sense.

“A most interesting development of our Friday meetings has been the request by several Law students (who are the pick of the country) to allow them to start a Social Union and hold the meetings in our house. After the summer they hope to enlarge its scope, and include Medical and Polytechnic students as well—in fact all students who hold the Government Diploma (equivalent to the Oxford and Cambridge Public School Certificate). Will you pray for these young men? Will you ask that this may lead on to a Students’ Christian Association later on? And will you not put in your plea for reinforcements for this growing work?”

And this, again, led to visiting other societies of young Egyptians, and attending the meetings of those societies. The time was one of intellectual and social ferment among the youth of Cairo; and nothing showed the versatility of Thornton more than the way he was always finding out what was going on, the meetings that were being held, and the societies that were being formed; the way with which he boldly introduced himself into those societies, and the tact, born of real sympathy, by which he made himself acceptable at these meetings. He would counsel their executive committees, present books to their libraries, and address their assemblies. He used to say, “We are far too backward”; and so, assuming that he *would* be welcomed, he *was* welcomed. He used to consider the work done in

visiting such outside societies at least as valuable as the holding of meetings on his own premises. In this way he became a well-known character in Cairo, and greatly extended his influence amongst the rising generation. Thus he wrote, in 1905—

“It may be that we shall only hold the Friday evening meetings once a month this year, now that we have at least two other weekly meetings of students that we are asked occasionally to attend. I want to be freer to attend these native gatherings, both of Copts, Moslems, and both, because then one can invite other students who never come near us to our meetings by this means. It seems to me that we may be able to do a great deal of good in this way, by attending the meetings of the various societies of young men in Cairo, which aim at doing them good.”

He was especially keen in helping Coptic students, and he was able in various ways to be of service to them. Sometimes they would hold their emergency meetings at Bait Arabi Pasha, and on these occasions he would attend and give valuable advice, and help to still the effervescence of some of the excitable into calmness and reasonableness. Several of their best men became his greatest personal friends, and on those his character made an impression that has proved very deep indeed. He looked forward to the time when there would be a Christian Union among the Christian students of the Higher Colleges, just as in the similar colleges of Britain. Any manifestation of confidence and trust on the part of these

men caused him intense pleasure. After one such manifestation he writes—

“It demonstrates to me that they, too, recognise that we are their friends, and really have learnt their language in order to help them to put new life into their venerable, but sadly torn, Coptic Church. I see a real hope now of starting Bible Circles in each of the Government Schools before long, and in combining, or rather helping them to combine, the Coptic students into a Christian Union in Cairo. So that we shall then have a counterpart of the Union and the Christian Union, and all started on the initiative of the students themselves.”

This commingling with the Moslem and Coptic youth of Cairo naturally resulted in many personal interviews. For these he was ever ready, even at whatever the hour, and however much they wrecked the domestic programme of meals. Here is his account of one such interview—and of the events of one afternoon and evening that were somewhat typical of that period—

“I have just had another interview with one of the ablest intellects and noblest minds in this land for two and a half hours. With him and his friend, both young doctors trained by the Government School, I have had to spend eleven hours alone in three interviews,—work of the hardest and highest and most important kind. Here are two men who will either become reformers of Islam, as Rammohun Roy was of Hinduism by starting the Brahmo-Somaj, or they will end up in the fold of the Christian Church, becoming pillars of the faith. Such work here is open to as many as can be spared to do it, and for as much time and energy and ability as can be expended. They are minds who will influence tens of thousands later on. They are writers and teachers

of others already. And yet, with a hundred such ready for personal interviews, I have to spend ten hours doing what Mr. Hardman¹ can do in two, and much better than I can. However, God knows. He alone can give the strength and help that is needed.

“*March 10th, Saturday.*—Events here are moving faster and faster.

“The able young doctor came again yesterday at 3.30 p.m. to finish considering the evidence for the Crucifixion, and weigh it against the Koran and heretical books. Then, from 5 to 7 p.m., a vernacular conversation with young representatives of law, medical, and theological students, at which the principles of the new society, to be called ‘The Society of National Unity,’ were finally decided upon. Then came the Effendi meeting, from 7.15 to 9 p.m. (also in the vernacular), with a most stirring and exciting debate, in which a Coptic theological professor and a pervert from the Coptic Church to a sort of Puritan Islam took a leading part, at the end of which a Sheikh came up to the Moslem medical student in the chair and said, ‘You are a Christian!’ Do you wonder that I was not up to breakfast this morning?”

If the description of the young Moslem doctor seems rather too sanguine (a characteristic of his writing which may have struck the reader already), it is due to the intensely sanguine nature of the man, and his readiness to *see possibilities*. If this is a fault, it may be said emphatically that it is a fault on the right side. To overestimate possibilities is altogether a safer defect to possess, than not to be conscious of them at all, or even to be slow in recognising them. It is better to see the Vision through a magnifying glass—even though its

¹ The missionary business-man, who he hoped would join him about this time.

edges thus get rather distorted and out of focus,—than not to see it at all.

The religious meetings at Bait Arabi Pasha were often exciting times. Here is his description of one of the best of them—

“ We have just had a most interesting week. It is the feast of the ‘Slaying of the Victim’ with the Moslems, from Friday to Tuesday last. MacInnes gave an account of ‘Gordon and the Siege of Khartoum’ at our Friday meeting. As it was a popular subject, a feast-day (the sheep having been slain on the previous night all over Cairo), we had about one hundred and twenty there. Then we had a series of three lantern lectures, on the ‘True Sacrifice,’ on Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday, at sunset. We took the Burnt-Offering on Sunday, with Isaac as the type, and Christ’s self-surrender in Gethsemane. On Monday we took the Passover Feast as the type, and the Washing the Feet and the Lord’s Supper as the Peace-Offering. On Tuesday we took the Scapegoat as the type of Christ on the Cross, as the Sin-Offering. We had 100, 80, and 130 there on the several nights. The last night there were about forty religious sheikhs there, fifty effendis, and the rest Christians of sorts. I never heard such breathless silence in Egypt, and the story of the Cross really did go home, I am sure; because, when an effendi got up at the end of the third day (at my explanation of the word ‘I thirst,’ as Christ’s last offer to His enemies of doing Him a service and coming into sympathy with Him), and when he called out loud, ‘Wahhidûh’ (which means, say, ‘Proclaim God one’), not a soul except his friend got up and followed him out, though an exodus is the usual result of such a challenge. We have also had many sheikhs here to read and to enquire this week, and are opening a second room below for conversations and arguments.”

Later on, however, the Sheikhs insisted on holding discussions after the address. A more tiring and trying affair than such a discussion cannot be imagined; to conduct a difficult dispute, with masters in the art of disputing, in a difficult, imperfectly-known language, and in circumstances highly trying to the temper, is perhaps the severest task to which any missionary can be called, especially when he knows that his failure will be the signal for hilarious triumph on the part of his opponents, and perhaps secret dismay on the part of the Christians present. Nothing, however, ever deterred Thornton; he had some of the spirit that enjoys a fight, and a good deal of the obstinacy that refuses to budge in a discussion. He knew, moreover, that what ultimately tells on these occasions is *not* the arguments, but the spirit shown; and he was careful to keep his temper, and to show a higher standard of courteousness than any to which the Moslem aspires. Often, however, the meeting would break up in disorder. Yet he was not greatly discouraged. In private conversations with Sheikhs he would hit hard, and things often became, to say the least, lively; yet he never parted in anger, and nothing but good was done. And these methods and these aspirations were justified when a young Sheikh from the Azhar, who had been foremost in opposing, and, in fact, had more than once led the disorderly exodus, which is the Moslem way of “erecting the trophy” on a field which he considers he has won, became converted to Jesus Christ, Whom he had blasphemed, and took his stand as a humble

follower of the Son of God. Of him Thornton writes—

“He was the one to make half the audience leave last spring when we preached the Cross. He is now a humble follower of Christ. It was our tracts that he first read after coming here. Then he came to our Sunday evening devotional meeting. He insisted on seeing me afterwards, when I was tired out. I would not argue about the Trinity with him—I never will,—but I told him I would give him a New Testament if he would read the Gospels first, and then come and discuss them. One day he read the Gospels for twelve hours on end! . . .”

This youth—once Mahmoud, now Paul (Boulus)—was baptized, confessed Christ before his father, one of the best-known notables in Jerusalem, and came home with Thornton in 1906 for a few months. His visit to England was a source of real help to himself, and to the missionary cause at home. The death of his friend and spiritual father was a shattering blow to the poor fellow, but, thank God, he stood, and is now a most promising under-master in the Church Missionary Society’s Boys’ School.

He was confirmed by the Bishop of London, who thus wrote—

“LONDON HOUSE,
“32 S. JAMES’S SQUARE, S.W.,
“Nov. 11, 1906.

“DEAR THORNTON,—Thank you for your long and interesting letter. It was an honour and privilege to seal ‘the Firstfruits of Egypt.’

“May God bless you, and bring to fruition in His good time all your schemes for the advance of the Kingdom.
—Yours in true sympathy, “A. F. LONDON.”

When he was in England, he told his story, by interpretation, in the following way:—

“I was born at Jerusalem, and my father is one of the teachers in the Haram—that sacred temple-area close by the spot where Abraham offered up his son Isaac, and not far from where the Saviour offered Himself a better sacrifice for the salvation of the world. My father is also one of the editors of the official newspaper of the Moslem authorities at Jerusalem. At the age of seven I began my studies in the Haram. But they consisted in the study of the Koran instead of the Bible, and the laws of Mohammed instead of the laws of Moses. One day, when still a boy, I found accidentally on a shelf in our house a Christian book, called *Sweet Firstfruits*.¹ Where and how my father became possessed of this book I cannot say, for it is a book forbidden throughout the Turkish Empire. This book I read and re-read from beginning to end, and by it I became acquainted with the principles of Christianity. In this book I found the passages of the Koran examined, which speak of the Old and New Testament and of Jesus Christ, and I saw how our commentators had perverted their meaning. In the Koran it is said, ‘We have sent down upon men the books of the New and Old Testaments.’ It follows that these Books must contain true words, and were meant as our inspired guide; but the commentators say that the Jews have so altered the text that it cannot be trusted. The Koran says of Jesus Christ that ‘God sent Him into the world as His Word and His Spirit,’ and the plain meaning is that Jesus is the Word, and that God, the Word, and the Spirit are One, as in the teaching of St. John; but our commentators say that by Word and Spirit only expression and breath are meant, and that Jesus was created as well as born, and is not the only begotten Son of the Father.

¹ Published by the Religious Tract Society in Arabic.

The study of this book caused me to ask my father many questions, but instead of answering them he used to beat me, to prevent me from talking on such subjects.

“After ten years’ study in the Haram, I was sent to the El Azhar University at Cairo, the most important school of Moslem theology in the world. Five times a day I heard the call to prayer, ‘There is no God but the One God. Come to prayer.’ One day, as I was walking in the direction of the great bridge, I saw a notice which attracted my attention: ‘This is the house of the English clergy, for the discussion of religious and moral questions.’ So I said to myself, ‘This is just what I want.’ So I entered the reception room, and began to talk with the catechist about the missionaries. Soon Mr. Thornton came in. After the usual salutations, he began to talk to me, and asked me to attend the meeting in the evening. This I did. The subject that evening was: ‘Which was the true sacrifice, that of Isaac (as in the Bible), or that of Ishmael (as is implied in the Koran)?’ I got up and told Mr. Thornton that he did not know what he was talking about, as I was sure it was Ishmael, not Isaac, who was offered by Abraham. After the close of the meeting, tracts were given to me, but I was so angry that I tore them up, as being the words of unbelievers. One evening I even brought twenty students with me from El Azhar on purpose to break up the meeting. I remember the subject that evening was ‘The Crucifixion of Christ.’ Now, the Moslems do not believe that Jesus was ever really crucified, so I stopped the speaker, and called out to all true believers to rise up and protest.

“Still, one thing seemed strange to me. I was treating the missionaries with hatred and insult, but the missionaries never ceased to treat me with courtesy, and even love. So I saw that whereas Islam teaches

us to return hate with hate, Christianity, on the contrary, teaches men to love their enemies, and to treat them courteously.

“ So then I began to change my conduct. I came to the meetings week by week, but no longer to oppose, but to listen. I took the tracts and read them diligently, and fixed my attention upon three principal points,—the origin of Islam, the meaning of the mission of Mohammed, and the nature of the inspiration of the Koran. As I read the Christian tracts, and especially the monthly magazine, called the *Orient and Occident*, published by the missionaries in Cairo, the beams of Christian light began to reach my soul.

“ Then Mr. Thornton, as if he understood my malady and the medicine required for it, put the Bible into my hands. God gave me a right understanding of the gospel. I saw revealed the love of God towards man, our need of reconciliation with God, the need of the sufferings of Christ to redeem mankind, and the truth of the Christian teaching in the New Testament, and I asked Mr. Thornton for regular Bible instruction.

“ After two weeks’ instruction I was entirely convinced of the truth of Christianity. But I had now been four years at El Azhar, and my father wished me to go to Constantinople in order to study law with a view to ultimately becoming a Moslem judge. I did not wish to go, because I knew I should not be able to show that I was a Christian, yet if I did not go all my worldly prospects for the future would be ruined, and my father would be made angry, and I should have to live as an exile in foreign lands. After a long struggle within me, as I pondered these things upon my bed, I fell asleep, and while asleep a Voice came to me saying: ‘ Rise up. Light is on thy path. Be not afraid, for I am with thee.’ This happened three times.

“ In the morning I went at once to Mr. Thornton to tell him what had happened. When he was convinced that all I said was true, he received me into the mission

compound, and the doctors gave me a room under their house. The same afternoon I wrote to my father to tell him where I was, and on 7th October 1905 I applied to the proper quarters to have my name legally inscribed as a Christian. The following day Mr. Thornton publicly received me as a catechumen in the old Cairo Church, and after a few months of instruction and trial he baptized me by the name of Boulus (Paul) instead of my former name of Mahmoud. But before I was baptized my father wrote frequently from Jerusalem to dissuade me from being a Christian, and ultimately came himself to Cairo to bring me back. He had several interviews with me in Mr. Thornton's house, and offered me half his fortune if I would renounce Christianity and return home with him. When his entreaties were in vain, my father appealed to Lord Cromer. I had to appear before his Lordship, who told me that my father was very angry with me, but that I was old enough to profess what religion I preferred, as Egypt was now a free country. I told Lord Cromer that I did not wish to go to Syria until it was a free country, and thereupon he made me sign a document to that effect in his presence and that of other witnesses to my signature. The Prime Minister of Egypt and the Minister of Foreign Affairs were present during the interview, and witnessed my confession. I thank God for giving me strength to remain firm. He has given me another father in Mr. Thornton, in place of my own father whom I have lost, and He has promised me treasure in Heaven in place of the earthly possessions which would have been mine; and now I feel and know that God is near me, in a way I never knew before. Pray for me. Peace be with you."

To this account, with which this chapter must close, only one sentence need be added. Commenting on one of the sentences above quoted, Thornton says in a letter—

“One of the things that attracted him most in spite of himself was my invitation to him to come every week after he had made a disturbance. This seems to have had much more effect than our addresses. How important the manner seems to be in evangelistic work!”

Truly so; and it may further be said that had not Thornton possessed that sanguine faith and hope in *possibilities*, which had its counterpart, as we have seen, in his occasionally too grandiose style, Mahmoud would not to-day be Paul. How often would he say, *before* Mahmoud's conversion, alluding to some hopelessly disorderly young Azharis, “You see, I never can get it out of mind, that some of them may be future Sauls of Tarsus.” *Verbum sapienti.*

No wonder he wrote exuberantly of this work, but with that continual refrain of “Reinforcement!” (which *never* came), and, also, with an ominous note which from this time begins to recur again and again—

“The work is full of joy and thrills of delight, as well as toil and disappointments. But we need some helpers to be ready to take our place in case we faint by the way. Five years of drudgery must lie before whoever wishes to gather in these ripening sheaves. O that the Church at home but realised one half the opportunity of to-day. We need someone to train Coptic evangelists and Moslem converts to be Apostles to their Moslem brethren for work all over the Valley and Delta of the Nile. Will no one hear the call?”

CHAPTER XIII

“ORIENT AND OCCIDENT”

THE idea of issuing a periodical in connection with evangelistic work among educated people was not a new one when Thornton took it up in 1904. He was already acquainted with two such papers, published in India, *The Epiphany* and *The Inquirer*, and had a great admiration for each of them. But the paper which he conceived and initiated had some unique features. It was a regular magazine, designed to reach more than the student class only, with articles for young and old, Sheikh and Effendi, on religious and on general subjects, in two languages, and illustrated. And most important of all, it was to be the nucleus of a publication scheme, for its articles were to be of permanent enough interest to be reprinted in permanent form.

The scope of the magazine is best explained by Thornton himself. Writing during its first half-year he says—

“The scope of the magazine as we wish it to be, and as it has already in some degree proved to be, is somewhat as follows: First and foremost, the promotion of the knowledge of the Word of God by means of short,

self-contained extracts, such as an Old Testament story or New Testament parable or miracle, or act of Christ, together with a short and simple study of the passage, adapted in thought and language to all readers.

“These articles are illustrated by the kind permission of the R.T.S., and the actual Bible words are vowelled to show their sacred character, and to enable them to be read by the illiterate.

“The whole Bible extracts, pictures, and exposition are then reprinted from time to time, so that the magazine is the direct instrument of publishing a series of Old Testament and New Testament tracts for circulation in Egypt and other Mahomedan lands.

“Secondly, articles of a definitely religious stamp, such as meditations on fundamental truths of the Christian faith; dialogues, apologetic of the faith, which lead men into belief in God, Christ, the Bible, etc., and answer the objections and attacks of Islam; articles showing the fruits of Christianity in Christian biography, and the spread of the gospel throughout the world, these also being generally illustrated; lastly may be mentioned a new series of translations of Christian hymns, including ones suitable for festivals and special occasions, for which very few evangelical hymns are to be found. Thirdly, articles of a more general moral interest, such as short accounts of men who, anywhere and at any time, have benefited their generation and stood for righteousness. Fourthly, articles of social interest, as the conditions of time, national progress, the education of and reverence for women, the true use of power and influence, and national evils such as intemperance, opium smoking, etc. This section includes reports of addresses and debates held weekly at our house.”

The preparations for such a new work were attended by very great difficulties. Those experiences are past now, and will never recur again; but in looking back

on them one does *not* hold it truth with him who sang *meminisse juvabit!* Those nightmare times, when it was found that the quantity of paper had been miscalculated—the agitated cables to London for more—the gnawing anxiety when waiting for the bales—the continuous anxiety of the financial aspect—the troubled consultations till long after midnight, unfit preludes to meeting the strain of the next day, the weary hours of which, perhaps, would have to be spent almost entirely at the printer's office, very likely from before breakfast, struggling with inexperience in such novel work! God knows how there was no breakdown in those days.

For the planning and writing of the paper was the least part of it. It was the business side that *cost*, in expenditure of brain and nerve energy; and the fact that during the whole time the former evangelistic work was carried on without change or interruption. "I foresaw from the first," Thornton said one day, "that the rub would come in the *circulation*." And it did.

His versatility and organising powers were seen at their strongest. Everything, from staff and premises down to the smallest detail, had to be organised—often extemporised, but for everything Thornton had an expedient. But it was a tax and a strain. "I've got so many things in my brain to keep in mind all together, that I almost feel it will burst!" he cried one day.

The names of the subscribers of four Arabic daily papers were copied down by the clerks, and then,

when the first (presentation) number, an issue of seven thousand, was produced, the reader may imagine the scene at the folding, wrapping, wafering, addressing, stamping, and despatching of such an abnormal number of copies, each several one of which involved no less than eight operations before it was ready for the post. A small army of voluntary workers, English and Egyptian, boys and girls from the schools, missionaries, and even tourist-visitors, was organised by Thornton, and the tables, chairs, and divans of the public premises below and the two residences above overflowed for a few days with the thousands of copies of *Orient and Occident*. This sort of thing went on for some weeks, in fact the pressure at first increased, because the returned copies involved additional work in the making and remaking and correcting of the lists of names, securing that the “returneds” were crossed off, and that no name had two copies sent to it. At last, however, this initial maelstrom subsided, and Thornton was able to evolve a sound working system, instead of the (inevitably) feverish organisation that had to be improvised at first.

These, however, are technical details, which are only given here because of the vivid light they throw on the man and his work. More important is the ideal of circulation which underlay and conditioned all these operations.

This ideal was the circulation of the paper, not in Cairo only, but all through Egypt also; in the Soudan, and as far as possible in other Arabic-speaking

countries. No doubt the idea that had originally suggested the paper was to reach educated men in Cairo itself, not only students, but older men who did not care to come to meetings. And the analogy of *The Epiphany* and *The Inquirer* would go to strengthen that ideal. But very soon, months before the appearance of the first number, Thornton's ideas had widened on the subject. He probably saw—and very reasonably and entirely rightly saw—that it was impossible to *limit* a periodical to a circulation in one city, and that the postal system made it as easy to touch distant towns, provinces, and even countries, as to reach the next *Sharia* in Cairo. There is a letter, as early as the September before the appearance of the magazine, written just after his return to Egypt from England, in which, with admirable precision, he forecasts the results of the paper, and the course which events as a matter of fact did gradually take from its commencement down to the last months of his life, two years and a half later. He wrote—

“Sept. 25, 1904.

“The C.M.S. have agreed to a *great forward move* in our Cairo work, which will keep G. and me in Egypt, I expect, for some time to come. But it is a move of a kind to benefit all missions in Bible lands, and so I hope it will prepare the way for a visit to the Soudan later on when freedom is given me to come with magic-lantern and all my slides, and preach in Khartoum and Omdurman the blessed gospel of Jesus Christ. I quite hope this paper will find its way into the hands of leading men all over Egypt and the Soudan, and even

in Syria and Palestine and farther afield. I am catering for English civilians, Egyptian students and editors, sheikhs, and clerks, and government officials. And my one hope and prayer is that it will lead to invitations to hold meetings in all the leading towns in Egypt before long. I have had such encouragement at Suez and Belbeis that it seems to me to be a call of God to go farther afield, and, as soon as we get this literature department in working order, to hold missions all over the land.”

Thornton is continually giving surprises. He unfolds some scheme; it seems chimerical—and in the years to come it is brought to pass. Or conversely, one looks into some early archives and finds that some work, which has now been started and is accepted as a matter of course, was then accurately forecast, and its main lines, and even its details, explained. Justice was never done him in this respect; but this was to some extent because he did not do *himself* justice, for undoubtedly no one succeeded in conveying the *impression* of rashness more than he did.

Enumerate, however, the items mentioned in the above extract, and it will be found that every one of them was fulfilled *except one*, and the carrying out of that one was fully planned, and the arrangements were all made, when the sudden call came to leave all these things and depart hence.

It is true that he did not foresee that the success of the paper in the capital would not be as striking as its immediate spread into the provinces, from Assouan to Alexandria. But, as soon as this situa-

tion became clear, he felt strongly that it should be regarded in the light of a leading to follow up such promising opportunities for publishing the message of Christ, especially as the forward step would not involve the abandonment of any work already commenced. As the citations below will show, he recognised the glaring limitations in the forces that were disposable for such operations; and through all his letters the cry for reinforcements rises with ever a more poignant note. Still, with this tribute to his soundness and consistency, it may be allowed that, to those responsible for the conduct of the work as a whole, whether work existing or work contemplated, it was a serious thing to sanction a new scheme of Thornton's however logically it followed from the last one; for there was always the strong probability of yet another one following a year afterwards, the logical rightness and necessity of which would be as obvious and as unanswerable.

Here, then, is his account of the first four months of *Orient and Occident*, and how they confirmed him in the idea of extension, through the paper, which idea had been clearly explained by him in the previous September—

[TO HIS NORFOLK SUPPORTERS.]

“April 30, 1905.

“Besides subscribers I have endeavoured to secure sales of the paper in the leading towns in Egypt. But after two attempts, both of which seemed likely at first to be successful, I have had to admit that the time has not yet come for this in Egypt, for the paper-boys have too often been banged about, even at times by so-called

gentlemen, for daring to help the Christians by selling the paper for them. On the other hand, the vilely illustrated rags in French, and Italian, and Arabic, with obscenities such as would never be tolerated in any English city by public opinion, are sold everywhere, in the trains, on the bookstalls, and in the streets. One newspaper-agent (himself a Moslem) told me that he is perfectly sickened with the taste of the men of Cairo.

“It is a sad confession to make that so far my attempt to provide pure illustrations has failed to secure the ordinary educated man, and the paper is rejected by the bigoted. Letters of thanks and gratitude have been received from as remote places as Fashoda, Kassala, and Wady Halfa, from young government officials, etc. But others have written in this sort of strain: ‘Whatever you may write I shall remain in my religion,’ and ‘You are all wrong, and Islam is the only true religion.’ Much fewer questions have been asked than I expected, and it seems that hardly any Moslem dare sign his name to his own question. The results of the effort, however, should encourage everyone. Over eighty towns in Egypt, and twenty in the Sudan, receive a weekly gospel message, and several Moslem readers are to be found in them all. This opens up the way for evangelistic work over all the country, if only we had sufficient workers to follow up the openings everywhere. My great longing is for G. and myself alternately to get out into the provinces, and hold evangelistic services in all these places where Moslem subscribers are to be found, and so to get into touch with them all. But we cannot do this without reinforcements. First of all we need a Christian English business-man, who is also a missionary, and knows Arabic, to relieve me of the business details of the work. I have never made an appeal before to those who are already doing so much to help the cause, but I feel it only right to do so now, or else I fear you will soon have an overworked ‘Your Own Missionary’ home again.”

To Thornton it was a proposition so obvious as not to require demonstration, that a subscriber to his paper became thereby a sort of parishioner; that the next step, therefore, was to visit that subscriber's town in order to "shake hands with him"; and the next, to take advantage of that visit to preach Christ's gospel in that town. And if that subscriber had happened to be a Russian Moslem, living, let us say, in Turkestan, he would have had just the same feeling about him. And though his suggested contemplation of a call on the Turkestan subscriber laid him open to amicable derision, who will say that the impulse was not noble and essentially right? It is such impulses that inspire deeds of daring; and without deeds of daring the gospel might not yet have spread even as far as Macedonia—or even Antioch in Pisidia!

Thus he wrote (in a more official way than in the former letter to his supporters in Norfolk)—

"May 1905.

"So much for the appeal for *safeguarding* such work, as is being actually accomplished. But another missionary is further needed if that work is to be effectively carried on, and at all developed. The problem that is before us must be looked at as a whole. First of all, 'Is the work among educated Moslems limited to Cairo?' Here is a question of primary importance. There are several considerations which show that an evangelistic work is not, as a matter of fact, nor should be, so limited. This magazine is opening doors to Moslems—educated Moslems in every city and township in Egypt; in other words, the work

has spontaneously gone beyond the boundaries of the city. Are, then, the openings that the magazine has been successful in making, not to be followed up at all? Again the men we influence by our evangelistic meetings go into the provinces, nay more, to every corner of the Turkish Empire, and even to far off lands in Russia. Is there to be no means of following such as these? Do not these scattered sheep need a shepherd after they have left the city?

“From no point of view does it seem advisable that we should definitely limit ourselves to the one area of Cairo, any more than the medical mission has limited itself to the place of its own headquarters.

“If, then, we may venture to regard the field as a unity, and Cairo as the base, and, of course, far the most important place on which to concentrate effort, we beg to make a very earnest appeal for immediate reinforcement, on the ground also of the great openings around us, and the entire inadequacy of the present evangelistic staff to cope with them. We have pointed out two great openings: social work among students and young men in the city of Cairo, similar to that which is being done in other great student centres of the Orient; and evangelistic work among educated Moslems in the provinces, especially where the need is greatest, and where opportunities are given by the magazine. Of these two branches of work, we cannot keep the first permanently going, and the second we cannot even attempt to do, owing to the impossibility of either of us, if unrelieved, leaving Cairo.

“Our appeal will be for two new lay missionaries. The former is needed to develop the whole business side of the literature department of the work. He should be a Christian business-man if possible, with some knowledge of the book and publishing trade.

“The latter should be a university man, or at least one that has mixed freely with them. If possible, he should also be a scholar and an experienced Bible

teacher. It is, of course, essential that both be personal workers, with a real love for souls."

He goes on to say that he conceives that the work of this university man would shape in the direction of a hostel, or some such institution, such as those so successful in India. It was, and continued to be, his policy that the rather sporadic "effendi" work should be, one day, thus consolidated; an idea which, like all of his, should be carefully borne in mind in the future.

And quite similiarly in a letter to Mr. Eugene Stock from Cyprus, whither he went in June of that year: in which he says—

"The plan I put forward for opening the doors of Moslem hearts all over the valley of the Nile by means of *Orient and Occident*, has now had sufficient testing to see what the result is likely to be, and how it all works out. But I fear that with our growing evangelistic work in Cairo, G. and I find ourselves unable to cope with the work, much less to follow it up. Everything in Cairo has to be first class, if it is to succeed at all. And so the scale of this literary effort has proved to be more exacting than we at first imagined or anticipated.

"There is no doubt that *O. and O.* has become an assured success from a human standpoint, and is making its mark, but from a missionary standpoint, all depends upon whether we are sufficiently backed up to enable one of us to get out of town every week-end or so, to follow up the work by gathering subscribers together in every town, and preaching Christ to them."

But the "backing up" was not done.

During the time it must not be thought that any of the other various branches of work were being allowed to drop. All that autumn and winter most successful “effendi” meetings were being held,¹ and he was preaching regularly in Arabic on Sundays and week-nights. Here is a very vivid account of one such preaching, showing as it does the economy of space and time practised by D. M. Thornton—

“I think it will give you a better idea of the cramped way in which most of us missionaries have to work, if I describe to you to what uses these little premises have been put to to-day. When I arrived there this morning to take stock of the second half of our order of English books which had just arrived, I found three (of the six) packing cases of new stock to be opened; about three hundred books had to be sorted and priced and stocked at one table, while at another, two thousand copies of *Orient and Occident* were being folded, wrapped up, and despatched by post. The agent of the periodical, and his boy clerk and the servant, were hard at work at this all day, and our Arabic translator was writing the English addresses till I came. It took the latter and myself and our salesman nearly four hours to register the contents of two boxes, the sixth had to be left till to-morrow; three were finished yesterday. But no sooner was the work over, than this place, which had been the scene of stock-taking and newspaper-wrapping, had to be thoroughly swept and cleared, and instead of cases, chairs had to be brought out from a stowaway in the wall (behind the telephone), and under our book-shelf of tracts—to seat forty or fifty people for an evening lantern meeting. And the same servant who had been working all day at folding, and then at

¹ See pages 191-199.

cleaning, had to stay to manage the lantern in the evening. It was quite a miracle to see the transformation in so short a time. But think of the stuffiness of such a place after not less than six persons had been in it all day, and all the dust of the parcels and cases had been flying about. And yet no other preaching place than this belongs to the C.M.S., right in the centre of the city,¹ and so we have to do the best we can. I wish someone would give us enough money to buy up the native theatre round the corner.

"I have just returned from a crowded, odorous meeting. We are taking the life of Moses, and to-day we reached Mount Sinai, and the giving of the law. Straight talks on swearing, Sabbath-breaking, honouring parents, anger, impurity, stealing, and the like to the artisans of Cairo. How they listened! and then some Turkish sheikhs came in, and paid great attention. Finally, nearly all stood to pray at the end, showing how deeply they had been touched. A hearty handshake with them all as they left, coupled with a cheering word, pressing upon them decision, trust in Christ, etc., closed the day.

"And to-morrow evening another gathering of fifty of Egypt's picked students will be meeting in the hall below our house, to discuss how we can put down the impurity which is so rife in Egypt, and Cairo especially, and then on Sunday evening (below), we shall tell the story of David's fall and repentance. Last Sunday the subject was, 'Christ's dealings with the adulteress.'

"Such is a brief picture of our day, and a glimpse at our programme of work. Add to this all the correspondence and interviews, the account-keeping, and the preparation for addresses, and you will see that even a strong man is insufficient for these things. I keep

¹ And in 1906 *this one also* had to be given up; and up to the present (1908) no central Book Depôt has been held by the Society, rents being such that it is felt that what must be appealed for and obtained is *central freehold premises and buildings*. Who will help?

going by taking my exercise three days a week before 8 a.m. But the C.M.S. doctors here give me five or six more years to live, if I have to go on like this, and yet we have not been sent an increase to either our native or European staff of evangelists in Cairo for six years, though the work has doubled. Is there not some kind friend at home who would provide me with a clerk? How can I be editor, translator, proof-reader, publisher, bookseller, and stock-taker, writer, correspondent, accountant, and commercial traveller, as well as preacher, evangelist, and teacher? But all these things form part of my work. You remember that two years ago I had to be other things besides, and if the secretary were to break down or takes a holiday, I have immediately to be those things again.”

And again—

“Oct. 9, 1905.

“Your letter of 3rd October was very welcome, and there is no time like the present for answering it, or else it will get into the unanswered pile! It arrived by the same post as a most interesting epistle from Godfrey Dale, Canon of Zanzibar, who seems to be a most interesting man. It was a useful antidote to yours, as he asked for one missing number to be sent him, and you asked for *O. and O.* to be discontinued! I will look to-morrow to see if you are on the weekly or monthly list; if on the former I will put you on the latter. About every month we try to have more English than usual, and send this number to friends to secure interest far and wide. By this same mail I also received a note from the Bishop of Manchester, thanking me for sending him the programme of our autumn meetings, and for congratulating him on the Blackpool mission. I told him it did us missionaries abroad good to hear of a home Bishop preaching on the sands. Perhaps it came as a new motive for his renewing the experience.”

Nothing did he like better than a visit to El Azhar, generally to escort some visitor over the place. He was never too busy for that. The contact with so many nationalities bringing him the vision of distant lands, exactly suited the Thornton of *Africa Waiting*. On one such occasion he ferreted out a round-faced, almond-eyed individual in one of the courts, and prognosed him as a Mongolian Moslem from Asia. Great was his glee when the prognosis turned out to be correct, and he knew he had actually shaken hands with a Mohammedan from Omsk, in Central Asia, in the farther regions of the Russian Empire!

Notice the change in the Azhar students to-day—

“Last Thursday I took a party round the place. For the first time I was allowed to go *without a guide or guard*. Everywhere I was welcomed :—here by a sheikh from Nablus, who seemed genuinely glad that M. (a distant relative of his), had become a Christian, and led the way; there by a young sheikh from Jerusalem, whom M. has already led to enquire about the way of salvation. And so on from corner to corner and court to court. No longer any suspicion remains. They know me, they have heard our message in our house, they welcome me and greet me before their fellows and professors. Surely these are not far from the kingdom of God.”

Needless to say, the incident was worked into a scheme for enlarging the scope of the effendi meetings and lectures to converts and others, of which something more must be said in the next chapter—

“The advantage of such a scheme would be that, by arranging the lectures at hours which do not clash with the curriculum of Government schools and the Azhar,

we should get a number of students from both to our open lectures, just as we do already. And when I tell you that I discovered a Russian Moslem from Omsk, in Siberia, in the Azhar the other day, besides others from Hausaland, Sierra Leone, and the oasis of Kharga, you will see that such a plan might reach Moslems over a vast area.”

And, finally, he was working as hard as ever at the *Literature Idea*. This very summer, quite on his own initiative, he published the first of a series which has since proved the most successful of the reprints to which *Orient and Occident* gave birth, an illustrated *Life of Abraham*, written by himself during his colleague's holiday, and reprinted from the same types. He had discovered that the small tracts with which we started, and which had been reprinting since January, were not saleable, and with his usual elasticity he changed his tactics, and took the responsibility of publishing a larger work. This *Life* was the prelude to a series of saleable books, the publication of which is still continuing.

The stock of the depôt was being enlarged, and so keen was Thornton on increasing the whole business, and on making it self-supporting, that he was fain to be allowed to capitalise it himself! He held strong views on the use to which private capital should be put. Even when he went away that autumn (1905) for a short holiday to Jerusalem it was, as he briskly and cheerfully remarked, to “do business.” His eagle eye there caught sight of a quantity of Arabic theological literature, the publications of a mission press which

had been long given up, the stock of which had been almost forgotten. Thornton, of course, caught on to its importance immediately, and in a trice had made an agreement by which a large consignment should be shipped to Cairo, where it was stocked and put on sale, with the happiest results.

It was on the way to Jerusalem that his passing through Port Said gave rise to the following characteristic effusion, which, like all of his ideas, compel us seriously to ask ourselves whether there is not a great deal in it, and whether it *ought not to be done* :—

“ While at Port Said I visited the head of the Egyptian P.O., a most earnest Copt. He has promised to help our work and to facilitate the circulation of *O. and O.* among the employés under him. I also spoke to him of my growing desire to open a Christian bookshop in Port Said in conjunction with the Bible Society if possible, and he was very warm in commending the idea. The Bible Society agent tells me that over and over again chaplains and other travellers come to him for books of a Christian tone, for prayer-books, hymn-books, etc., for services on board the steamers, and he has to say No. I have investigated the English stock of books in bookshops in Port Said and could improve on them (with my small knowledge) ten times over. All I want is a capital fund of £250 given me to start with, and a share in the rent granted by C.M.S. or private friends, and £50 a year for a colporteur for a year or two, and I am sure I can make it a paying concern. I have found out that some of the Port Said booksellers sell £1400 a year (with colportage) and gain £700 to £800 a year net profit. So it must be possible to gain half that amount by fair means. If so, I could then open a third one at Alexandria.

Of course each will contain all our Arabic publications, and become a centre of mission work.

“Think for one moment of the influence that such a shop would exert. It will influence a very much wider number of Englishmen going to the East than the Bible Society alone can do. Think of the thousands of British sailors and soldiers that would benefit thereby, not to mention civilians as well. And then think of the effect on all the other shops in Port Said. It will raise the whole tone of these as well. So that £250 thus spent or invested would bring indeed a moral and spiritual harvest. I would put my own money into such an effort at once if I did not think that some of the enemy might think I was trying to make money by the scheme.

“Such shops will also enable us to secure money for the publishing of much needed Christian books and tracts in Arabic, without any future cost to C.M.S. or to other societies. I put the matter before you all, and ask you to make it an earnest matter of prayer.”

But the absence of reinforcements that autumn lay like a dead-weight on his mind. He writes to a friend about the continued success and expansion of the work, and says—

“But where are the reinforcements to save us from a breakdown very soon. I was on the verge of knocking up in May. My wife’s illness was the last straw on the top of the C.M.S. resolution not to give us any more assistance. . . . My faith is very sorely tried. One is tempted to say, of what use is this waste, for waste of life and energy it is as far as human eye can see.”

And similarly, though in a calmer tone—

“The temporary absence of one of us, say for a week-end, is at once felt, while any longer absence, such as for a summer holiday, would make the strain very great indeed, unless such work is altogether to cease for a

while. The breakdown of any one of us on the Cairo staff of the Mission would have results which we cannot contemplate without dismay. While this is doubtless true in any part of the mission field, it is tenfold more so where the evangelistic work can be carried on all the year round, where it is undergoing rapid development and expansion, and where at the same time the gap between the two evangelistic missionaries and the next recruit is becoming so wide. Already that gap is close on six years, the wider it gets the greater are the risks of serious collapse if one of the two were called away."

The last words, solemn enough as they stand, become almost tragic when one thinks of the fatal September two years later; when, before that reinforcement had even yet come, one was "called away," and that "gap" had become not six, but *eight years*. When it is reflected how difficult and highly specialised work such as that is which is being described, and that it is from four to six years before a new recruit can take much serious part in it, it will be felt how serious, how very serious, should be the resolve that what has happened this time should never be allowed to happen again; and the Church of Christ should see to it that the development of a great work once begun shall be continuous, not spasmodic, and that the second and third lines of reserves shall never again be so far behind the first attack, still less be totally non-existent.

And therefore, though one has no desire to work up sensation or use false pathos, yet, because this matter is of more solid importance than feelings or even the overworking of any individual, we may close this chapter with a picture familiar

enough to us in Cairo during those last two years: Thornton—with his tired, worn expression, and face so palpably thinned and looking ten years older than his age,—writing in his study, unable to do anything but think of the work and its needs, and too tired even to stop thinking. At the end of a five-sheet letter to his lifelong friend, Mr. Eugene Stock, he writes (and the words are touching just because Thornton did not write for effect)—

“But I am weary. I have only written because I am too weary to be working now and too tired yet to sleep. . . . I am getting prematurely old they tell me, and doctors do not give me long to live, unless the strain is eased a bit. I must come home this summer anyhow. My wife is wearier than I am. She needs complete rest awhile. The family need me once again for counsel and for help. . . . Oh that the Church at home but realised one-half the opportunity of to-day! Will no one hear the call? Please do your best to help us. The fields are white.”

Is it utterly culpable, this self-overwork? Truly it is not a thing to be praised or recommended; and yet, towards Thornton, one does not dare to pose as censor; rather does one turn away, recollecting, like certain others of old, the Scripture that saith, “The zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up.”

CHAPTER XIV

THE LAST FURLOUGH

BEFORE leaving Egypt for his, so-called, furlough in the spring of 1906, Thornton attended a conference at Cairo, which, if possible, gave a new stimulus to his faculty for dreaming dreams, and conceiving far-reaching plans for their conversion to reality. The visionary inspiration which, from the earliest days, had led him to look on the world of Islam as one, and Cairo, its most notable centre, was now raised to its highest power. It is difficult to see how he could have further gone in this direction; and it is significant that after this period we find him concentrating finally upon a work which, though great, was but one aspect of the whole, and that when death's hand was laid on him, his whole energies for many years were bespoken for an object which, in comparison with the scope of his dreams, might almost be described as local, though in fact it embraced all Egypt. It was as though he was to prove that he was as capable of the practical prosecution of a definite piece of work, as of designing great enterprises which only time could realise—as though to fulfil the last and most

testing demand made on the Christian seer, to "doe ye nexte thyng."

A general conference of missionaries to Moslems was, of course, an event entirely relished by D. M. Thornton. He thus expresses his aspirations in view of it to his friend Mr. John Mott—

"The thing I am now most anxious about is the securing of adequate delegations from the secretariat of English Missionary Societies, especially from those boards that do little or no work among Moslems, such as the English, Scotch, and Irish Presbyterians. It seems to me that this Moslem work does need such highly trained men. I believe that such work (being, as it is, done among Unitarians and destructive critics of the Bible) is most necessary work for those parts of the Church to undertake which are most affected by tendencies in both these directions, as an *antidote*. The whole of North Africa needs occupying for Christ still. The work of the North Africa Mission is not touching the fringe of the problem. The call comes from India for far more special missions to Moslem centres there, and the openings in Persia seem wonderful.

"We want some special training given (*e.g.* by Dr. Tisdall) to would-be missionaries to Moslem lands, either in Cairo or England. They ought all to learn enough Arabic to read the Koran in the original. They ought to learn it where they can see aggressive work among all classes of Mohammedans as is done here in Cairo, so as to learn all possible methods.

"I hope, also, to see more combination in future in the production of literature for Moslems. I am glad to say that our work is already being translated into Swahili. But we want more interchange of work done promoted by correspondence. It may be that both those results will accrue from this gathering."

The two ideas mentioned here were, of course, not new, as the reader now knows well. Co-operation in the special training of missionaries for Moslem lands, and combination in special literature for Mohammedans, had long been his ideals.¹ But the following passage reveals yet another plan which at this time was occupying his mind to a very large extent:—

“Visions have lately begun to dawn upon me as to how this conference may be utilised to prepare the way for the more speedy conquest of Islam. And I hope with G. to have by the conference some practical and digested proposals to make, on the line of the two ways in which I anticipate we shall find co-operation possible between different missions. Briefly put, they consist in the starting of a Christian counterpart to the Azhar, viz. a kind of non-residential university of international influence, but with a Christian hostel attached, for able Moslem converts from different lands. This university would especially take up the task of stating the Christian faith in the Arabic language, and teaching to a growing band of students of the East. Like the Madras Christian College, it should be open to students of all religions, but with a Christian staff of professors, both in English and Arabic. I doubt not that as our meetings were already attended by so many Coptic and Syrian Christian students, and by Moslems from many lands, so such lectures would be also attended by Azhar students in numbers, so long as the hours of lectures be adapted to the need.”

The proposal is sufficiently startling. Personally the writer thought, and still thinks, that Thornton's vision had here for once become, in the less favourable sense of the term, visionary, and that his practical sense was

¹ *i.e.* from the first six months! See pp. 115, 120.

at fault. Moreover, one felt, and still feels, that the subject was, for once, crudely thought out and thoroughly undigested. Several ideas, with only a rather superficial connection between them, were fermenting in Thornton's mind: combination in the training of English-speaking missionaries to Islam; combination in the training of Arabic-speaking (or even non-Arabic-speaking) converts *from* Islam, and other non-English workers; hostels for the same; *general* classes, resembling University Extension lectures; and, finally, a complete Arts College, like that at Beyroot or Madras,—and he felt all of them so important that, with that tendency to synthetise on the strength of an incomplete analysis which is the besetting temptation of enthusiastic souls, he lumped them together in a rather premature manner, and sought to work them out in his mind as though they were one thing. The earliest attempt at practical realisation would have at once involved the making of profound modifications of this rough draft; and as a matter of fact, the more portentous parts of it, in spite of heroic efforts on Thornton's part during his furlough, had to be allowed to fall to the ground. One grudged, and to-day, of course, grudges still more, the amount of time and precious strength poured forth by him on a quest which one could not but feel visionary; and yet, even so, we have too often had occasion to respect Thornton's long-sightedness to allow us to say categorically even in this case that there was nothing in what he saw. It may be that in this,

too, he will one day prove to have been before his times.

This preoccupation with matters educational was based upon two things—first, as is to be gathered from the above passages, the quiet success of the meetings for effendis held in Bait Arabi Pasha, and secondly, the fact that the religious question in Egyptian schools was at that time occupying a good deal of attention. Efforts were being made by Coptic leaders to remove the great grievance which then existed, namely, that the teaching of Islam was endowed in all provided schools, to the exclusion of any form of Christianity, and that Christian boys actually had to attend (though not take part in) the lesson in the Mohammedan religion. Thornton was deeply gratified at being permitted to associate himself with these leaders in their efforts, which, as we shall see, were successful. But at the time success was not in sight, and his mind was exercised by the unsatisfactory state of Egyptian education from a Christian, and even from a generally religious, standpoint, and so naturally turned to any plan which tended towards remedying that defect. And to one who had assimilated the lessons taught by a Duff, a Miller of Madras, a Bliss of Beyroot, the creation of a Christian College in Cairo did not seem an unheard of proposal.

The following words reveal his ideas at that time :—

“I don't think I can possibly convey you the importance of this step [*i.e.* Christian teaching for Christians in provided schools] to the cause of Christianity in Egypt. Only on these conditions can one natural system

of education in Egypt be permanently built up. The present tendencies are all in favour of increasing the number of private schools, both Moslem and Christian (in spite of Lord Cromer's expressed disapproval in his last report), which are less efficient and more bigoted, besides being the means of keeping the elements of the nation apart, thus preventing the growth of patriotism, national spirit, etc., while allowing the cause of Pan-Islamism to be strengthened, which saps the very life out of Egypt, just as Rome did out of England long ago. We were glad to be able to go as champions of the cause of a national education, which would deal fair play to all parties as desirous to give moral support to the Government, but only on condition of equal treatment to all denominations. We now await the result. It will vitally affect our future mission to this land."

This is all that need be said about the proposals which were elaborated by Thornton at this period. The following passages from his letters show how they evolved in his own mind:—

"It would seem obvious, therefore, that what is now needed is an extension of our present method of giving extra-mural lectures by sending out at least two able university men, so as to make possible the forming a nucleus of what may in God's providence lead some day to an Anglo-Oriental university in Cairo, which will be staffed by English-speaking and Arabic-speaking professors, and run on purely Christian principles. Such is the ideal to aim at. How can it be realised, without too heavy a burden being laid upon the Society?

"You may, perhaps, ask why are we now proposing to have such a varied programme in Cairo, and what bearing has it upon the evangelisation of Moslem lands. To this we would reply that we feel the great need now in this Moslem centre to have regular courses of lectures, where up-to-date constructive Christianity can be taught.

“If we do not step in and help the nation and the students from other nations who study here to feel their way to Christ, the only outlook is that of an educated class of agnostics on the one hand, and a recrudescence of Islam in its more fanatical form on the other. May God help us to rise to our opportunities in time.

“How can a scheme be devised that will succeed without going in for prohibitive expenses in buildings, etc.?”

“My proposal is to appeal to the senior members of Oxford and Cambridge, who are in sympathy with C.M.S. work, to send out two able university men with first-rate degrees, to work alongside of us in Cairo, and in connection with the C.M.S., just as the Delhi men are with the S.P.G. Given the brains, the rest will follow. Our idea is to increase these extra-mural lectures of ours to at least seven or eight a week, instead of two, as at present. If they would be recognised by the two universities as ‘extension lectures’ to Cairo, it would be admirable, but, I daresay, not practical. If not, let the scheme be taken up by the senior and junior C.M.U. members in both universities. If so, I should like, while I am home, to have the opportunity of addressing both, either in May or June. You will know what is feasible at once.”

“As doubtless you will have seen from my letters to Mr. Fox, we as a mission are being led to feel the need from a purely national point of view to develop this effendi work by affording higher education on Christian lines, which cannot be obtained elsewhere in the land. So that there are several reasons at work compelling me to take up the task of leading the way in the realisation of the first proposal above; but, of course, we cannot dream of doing so without specially selected reinforcements. The idea the Conference has in mind is to set on foot what may some day develop into a counter-University to the Azhar, where Arabic, the tenets of both Islam and Christianity and Christian ethics, evi-

dences, sociology, etc., can be taught as well as anywhere else in the East. The proposal is to start at first with one hostel for Moslem converts on a small scale. We understand that a dozen suitable ones would be at once forthcoming. The ablest of these might be retained after his course to improve the staff, until at length we have a thoroughly international staff, and, consequently, draw pupils from many lands. As soon as such a school is set on foot, it will immediately appear that no better place could be found for would-be missionaries to be trained in Arabic and the Koran; or to pick up helpful fellow-workers for the field to which they will subsequently be going.

“So, too, the existence of such a school, if some of the more general lectures were open to Cairo students, would be an immense draw to Azhar students and Government and Coptic students. One hostel would soon not be sufficient. And by degrees each mission in Egypt would need its hostel, and in this way a university would automatically spring up, as it did of old. The Nile Press would then turn into a University Press, and Cairo the generating centre of a constructive Arabic literature for the Moslem world.”

The Cairo Conference itself, when it took place, very naturally found it difficult to make any pronouncement on such a scheme as this. But resolutions were passed favouring co-operation in missionary literature and in the training of European missionaries, and approving of the inauguration of a class for the training of converts and other workers from different parts of the Mohammedan mission field. With these resolutions, and others from his own Egypt Mission Conference, Thornton went home armed, taking with him Sheikh Boulus, whose conversion has been already narrated. But even thus impeded, he added to his

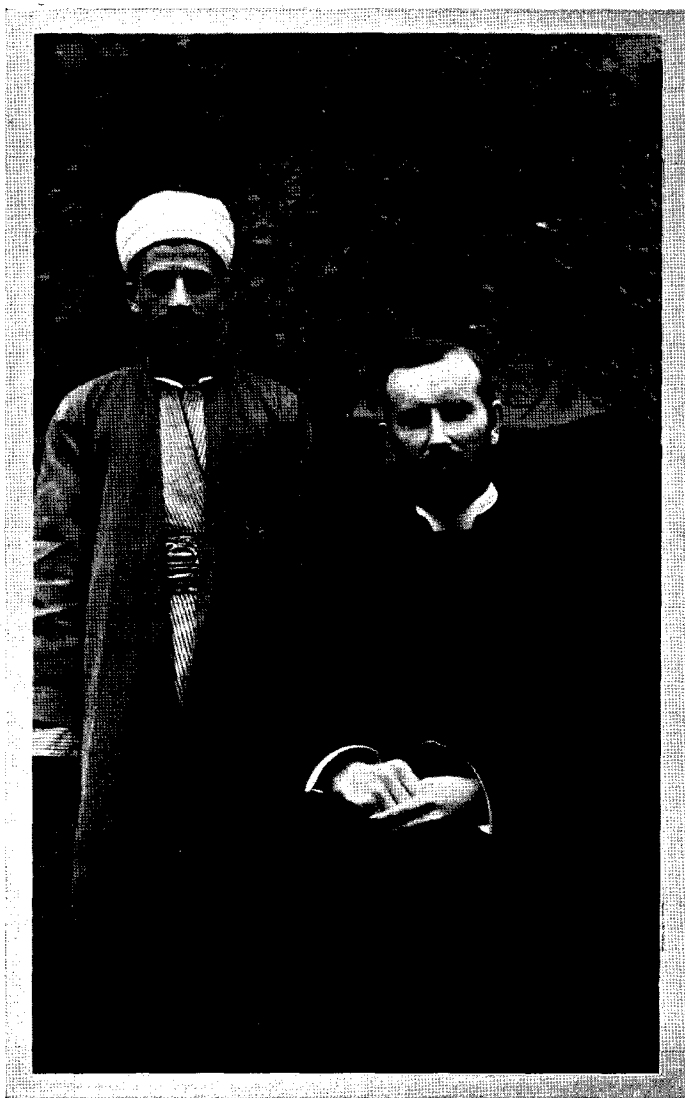
own burden, and determined, on his own account, to try what could be done to realise his dream of a Christian College in Cairo.

Thus began his last furlough, on which he embarked with the following enthusiastic words:—

“I need say no more to show you that God is visibly working and moving the minds of leading men at this time. It is a time of unparalleled opportunity for this country. I shall indeed have a message to deliver when I get home to the people of England. I do trust that Hardman will be able to join us *very* soon, so that I may be able to get much needed rest and sleep and exercise at home, to set me up for the great work that lies so clearly before us in this land.”

But “the holiday” proved six months, alas! of over-work, too strenuous thinking, too strenuous endeavour. One hundred and eighty-five pages of business letters, besides memoranda, written sermons and addresses, involving innumerable journeys, testify to his idea of taking rest. He was wholly occupied and preoccupied with the work. It had become a passion, from which there was literally no release but the grave.

But it is impossible to follow these labours in detail. Mention has already been made of the chief, though not all the objects for which he worked. And as though these were not enough, he threw himself whole-heartedly and with the freshest enthusiasm into aspects of Christian work at home, with which he had of old identified himself. Thus he attended a Public Schools’ boys’ camp; he went to the Students’ Summer Conference at Conishead; he



D. M. THORNTON AND SHEIKH BÛLUS FAWZI.

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went down and spoke to the undergraduates of Oxford and Cambridge; he wrote strongly upon the necessity of capturing the interest and support of business men in the great cause of world evangelisation; and, in almost the last few days, we find him endeavouring, by letter and interview, to work up what he calls "a rally" of younger evangelical clergy and laymen to discuss how the evangelical school of thought, to which he was traditionally and by sympathy most deeply attached and loyal, might become more effective and better serve the present generation. "The work" pursues him to the departure platform in London; letters mark the stages of the last journey back to Egypt,—*"Paris to Marseilles, 10 p.m.," "Marseilles"* (four long letters), *"s.s. Schleswig," "Nearing Alexandria"*; and, on "the very day after my safe arrival with the family and Sheikh Boulus," he begins a seven-page letter, which he continues of "either in the early morning or in the intervals between inaugurating work" for the coming autumn, reverting in it to some of the home problems, which he had been working at till the end.

Many of these letters are of considerable interest, but the following extract, perhaps, is most of all worth quoting and pondering. It concerns an old favourite subject of his, the enlisting of "business men" in the great employ:—

"I hear from — that you have practically decided on Liverpool for the S.V.M.U. Conference in Jan. 1908. There is certainly plenty of interest to arouse

there. — tells me that hardly any leading church laymen there believe in the supremacy of Christianity, or in the universality of the gospel. I hope that a strong effort will be made to enlist the interest of this kind of laity. It is the heads of shipping firms and cotton merchants that need winning for the cause, men who could endow whole missions if they wished to do so."

And the following may be taken as his last word on the problems of home organisation and home support:—

"My chief concerns with regard to the Conference are twofold—(1) How to present the missionary appeal to the non-missionary outgoing section of students, or to the civilians who are going abroad; (2) How to capture the Liverpool laity for the cause. I know you will probably urge that these two objects are outside the scope of the gathering. But I assure you that it is not so. I remember well Rutter Williamson slaving at nights in the Mitre Hotel over correspondence with ministers about deputations to the churches, and I recollect his saying afterwards that he did not think it was worth the effort it cost. But I have since visited Liverpool (after ten years' absence), and find that the leading merchants are unconvinced, even now, about the utility or necessity of missions. I say that an objective should be to convince them and their younger student friends in college who are going to step into their shoes, for without their financial aid in the land with which they trade, we cannot cope with the task of world-wide evangelisation in this generation.

"In order to draw them, why not have an address on *Commerce and Missions*, by the ablest layworker in London? Suggest that shipping merchants give free passages for missionaries, as French lines do for priests and nuns, also free carriage of freight to missionary seaports. Your programme, now that the number of volunteers is so largely increasing, should contain a section on 'how to obtain and maintain local support

for all outgoing missionaries.' This will be a very pressing problem to the C.M.S. candidate next year, as well as those of other societies. Could not a great extension of the O.O.M.¹ plan be taken up by the societies, if only it were put forward strongly at Liverpool as a need? But you must *have your Watchword ready* to send you round the churches, influencing laymen to give individual support, as well as the usual society machinery for influencing parishes, associations, etc.

"Another great longing I have in mind, for which your recent teachers' conference at Hampstead has been preparing the way, is that this next conference should sound the note of '*Specialists for Special Work*.'

"We must have educational work in future. We must have linguists and scholars for literary work. R. Maconachie has struck a good note in the Indian Notes in the *C.M.S. Review* lately, in pointing out the growing complexity of the work in India and similar lands. Thus for half the now Christian world we now need specialists, and only from the colleges can we get them."

One quotation has purposely been kept to the last, with which to close this chapter. It is the paper he read at a special meeting of senior members of the university at Oxford early in his furlough, at the time when his mind was most full of the project for a Christian college. It is selected because it carries us back in a very striking way to many of the ideas and expressions of the first half year at Cairo; and because it is also the final and the completest manifestation of Thornton as visionary. Visionary it is, and yet let us take heed as we read it. This Chapter is the chapter of his last visions. And last visions sometimes come true.

¹ "Our Own Missionary."

“CAIRO AS A KEY TO THE MOSLEM WORLD.

“THE VARIATION OF WORLD CENTRES.

“Nothing to the student of history is a more remarkable phenomenon than to observe how in ancient and modern times the centres of commerce, education, and religious zeal have been constantly variable. And, we have only to go back twenty years of time and recollect what parts of the earth's surface have been most prominently before men's minds, to conclude that God has a providential purpose in bringing so many countries in the world one by one before the notice of civilised nations. It is only twenty years ago that Stanley's trans-African tour led to the partition of Africa among the Powers, and a greatly increased impetus to the evangelisation of Central Africa being given. It is only ten years since the war between China and Japan, which has had such momentous consequences in the Far East. It is less than ten years since the reconquest of the Soudan and the war with the Boers in South Africa, both of which have focussed the attention of the Church of England on the needs of Northern and Southern Africa. While India, with her constant droughts, famine, and pestilence, has been silently appealing to us all.

“RECENT CONCENTRATION ON WORLD CENTRES.

“It is extremely interesting to trace, in the light of the providential calls that have been given during the last fifty years to the Church of Christ, the extent and the way in which she has responded to those calls. Each of our four nationalities within the British Isles have answered special as well as general appeals. Witness, for instance, the calls to English, Scottish, and Irish universities, which have come from time to time, beginning with that statesmanlike appeal by Duff to Great Britain, to provide adequate higher education for India on Christian lines. Did this not lead to many Christian higher schools and colleges in India being started, which still exert their leavening influence to-day? Have we not also witnessed in Oxford and Cambridge a noble response to the calls of Livingstone in the founding of the Universities' Mission

to Central Africa? And have not the more recent efforts of Cambridge at Delhi, and Oxford at Calcutta, brought home to both universities the needs of India, and the complexity of Hinduism?

“Of more recent years the Y.M.C.A.’s of England, Scotland, and Ireland, but to a much larger and strenuous degree those of the North American continent, have been sending forth student workers to one after another of the centres of the Orient (in India, Malaysia, China, and Japan), to seek to reach the educated classes of the East, and rally the Christian forces in the student world to unite and go forward for the evangelisation of Asia. And nothing awakens throughout the East more enthusiasm than to read of the recent aspirations of the students in India, China, and Japan.

“THE DOMINANT LANGUAGES OF THE WORLD.

“There is, however, another important way of approaching the study of world-problems in the light of the kingdom of God. For Almighty God not only changes world-centres but He also changes the world’s dominant languages. We are all familiar with the argument that the Greek language was a divinely prepared instrument for enshrining the perfect revelation of God in Jesus Christ. We all remember the large part that Latin has played in the mediæval history of Europe, as the medium of instruction to the nations. And, as Anglo-Saxons, we are constantly emphasising the wonderful sphere of the English language. But this line of argument will bear considerable extension. And it ought to appeal with more force to the classical scholar and the linguist than it has hitherto done.

“It is a comparatively easy thing to discover what are the dominant languages of the world to-day, and hence to predict what will be the most influential *media* of evangelisation in the coming generation and century. Next to the English language Mandarin Chinese is undoubtedly spoken by the greatest number of human beings, and French, Spanish, and German stand, I believe, next on the list. But when areas are considered, I do not fear to be contradicted when I assert that *next to the English language, Arabic is read and revered over the widest area of the earth’s surface.*

“THE SPHERE OF ARABIC AND ITS CHALLENGE.

“The actual number of those who at present *speak Arabic* as their native language is *about fifty millions* of souls, but is there any non-Christian language spreading at anything like the same rate? Look at its phenomenal progress in West Africa and the Soudan! Now there are over *two hundred million Sunni Mohammedans* in the world, and, the more educated they become, the more they will seek acquaintance with their religious language. So that it is safe to say, so long as Islam exists and spreads (alongside of a corresponding growth in education) so long will Arabic increase in influence and remain one of the dominant languages of the world.

“This fact has been appreciated by the noble roll of German and American Protestants and French Roman Catholic missionaries, who have worked hard over a space of two generations, to lay the foundation of a Christian literature in Arabic. They have girded themselves to the task of acquiring what many recognise as being *the hardest language* in the world. They have given us two noble versions of the Bible, and our prayer-book in Arabic. They have published many theological, educational, and religious works, and we may derive inspiration from them as well as admire their fortitude and perseverance. But is it not time that England’s interest were more than academic? Is there not *a Divine call to England’s best*, to master the language which binds together the continents of Asia and Africa, holds the key to the hearts of Moslem, Jew, and Christian in Bible lands, and will undoubtedly spread its influence every year.

“THE APPEAL OF MOSLEM LANDS.

“It appears to me that the hour has struck for the educational centres (of Europe, and more especially those) of the British Isles, to hear the call that comes from Mohammedan lands for a great evangelistic and educational campaign. Up till twenty-five years ago there was no Moslem country near the centre of Moslem pilgrimage, and speaking the Arabic language, where religious toleration was to be found. But the British occupation has now been at work in Egypt for more than half a generation, British protection over Egypt has at length been recognised by the Sultan of Turkey, and Egypt

holds to-day the unique position of being the haven of refuge for persecuted Christians, and outcast Mohammedans, as well as many wealthy Jews. And occupying, as it does, a position almost central in the Moslem world, though small in itself, and possessed of less than ten millions of souls, Egypt is undoubtedly the key to the Moslem problem at the present day.

“THE RECENT CONFERENCE.

“This fact was most emphatically borne witness to at the recent international Conference of missionaries. These all testified to the enormous prestige which education in Cairo, and knowledge of the Arabic language and the Koran in the original, would be to both Christian workers among Moslems from the West and from the East. Dr. Grey, from Lahore, wrote specially to the Conference to suggest that facilities be provided in Cairo for the training of missionaries in Arabic, Koran, and Christian Apologetics for Mohammedan work. An experienced native worker from the Dutch Reformed Mission to Arabia, working in the Persian Gulf, wrote to the Chairman, urging the establishment in Cairo of some special course of training for Oriental Christians in the Turkish Empire and elsewhere, who desired to give their lives to work among Mohammedans. While Mr. Gairdner and myself quite independently proposed to the conference the starting in Cairo of a training-class for promising Moslem converts, from various Moslem lands, so as to form the nucleus of a counter-university to the Azhar, from which Moslem students return to all parts of the Mohammedan world.

“It was decided at the conference that an international *committee on literature* should be formed, with Dr. Weitbrecht, of Lahore, as its convener, and that this committee should collect and collate all the Christian publications formerly or now in circulation among Moslems, in all languages and in all lands. This literature is to be subsequently stored in the centre where it will be of most use, and where the work of publishing for Moslem lands is most actively carried on.

“Furthermore, an international committee was formed to deal with the need for *industrial missions* for Moslem converts. The first effort that is likely to take shape will be the establishment of such an institution in Egypt, where refugee

converts, especially those from the Turkish Empire, can be satisfactorily employed.

“With regard to the *international training class*, the C.M.S. missionaries, who put forward the suggestion, were advised by representatives from many missionary societies to start the work, and promised students for training from many different lands. Accordingly the C.M.S. missionaries have requested the Society in London to allow them to open such a class by the New Year of 1907, if a university man of sufficient ability is forthcoming as a reinforcement to the work in Cairo this autumn. It only therefore remains to find the man who will feel it to be a call from God to devote his life to the evangelising of the students of Cairo, and later on the training of such as are found suitable for direct work for Christ in Egypt and other Moslem lands.

“THE EDUCATED CLASSES IN CAIRO.

“But a few words are needed at this juncture about the educational outlook in Cairo, to present in its fullest force the appeal that comes from this the greatest metropolis of Islam to the Church at home. Cairo not only has a unique prestige in the Moslem world to-day, but is also a remarkable centre in which to evangelise educated Mohammedans, and from which to spread the knowledge of the truth throughout the Moslem world.

“In proportion as Egypt becomes, as it is fast becoming under British influence, the most enlightened, progressive, and educated part of the nearer East, so will Cairo increasingly become a centrifugal and a centripetal force. It is of paramount importance, therefore, that the highest intellects and the ablest Moslems of the coming generation be reached for Christ; and it is vital to the welfare of the Christian Church in Egypt that Oriental Christians as well as converts from Islam, be able to hold their own among their Moslem compatriots. This has been nobly done for Syria by the efforts of the American educational missionaries. But no Christian institution of higher learning as yet exists in Egypt, and the Christian population is compelled to fall back upon the Government schools of law, medicine, and engineering, where the non-observance of Sunday as a sacred day, and the absence

of any Christian instruction or rights of entrance to the Churches, is leading to the de-Christianising of the most promising Christians of the rising generation. It is proposed, therefore, that Churchmen in Oxford and Cambridge should form a *Universities Mission to Cairo*, whose object would be to supplement the higher education of the Egyptian Government, by the establishing of a Christian College with an Arts course, no such course being included as yet in the Government programme. It is proposed that such a mission should be conducted *in connection with the C.M.S.*, much as the Delhi mission in India is in connection with the S.P.G.

“AN ANGLICAN COLLEGE IN CAIRO.

“What would be the field from which such a Christian institution would draw its students? Our best guide will be the Syrian Protestant College of Beirout, which now draws over a hundred Moslem students from Syria and Egypt, while its six hundred alumni come from as far north as the Greek Islands, and as far south as Upper Egypt, and as far east as the Persian Gulf. May we not confidently expect that a still greater future would be in store for an Anglican College, to which Oriental Christians would far more readily send their sons, and which Mohammedan parents would recognise as being thoroughly English? Moreover, such a college would be supplementary to existing Coptic, Roman Catholic, and Protestant educational institutions, none of which supply higher than secondary education. And, if ever the time were ripe for such an institution, it is now, for both Moslem and Coptic Egyptians are at present very dissatisfied with the Government system of education, secular as it is to the Christian, and only mildly Moslem to the Mohammedan. The lay-leaders of the Coptic Church have lately taken alarm, and are just now levelling up their primary and secondary schools, and longing for the time when they will be able to provide higher education as well. They have also appealed to us to use our influence with the British authorities in Egypt, to secure the right of entrance to primary provided schools, but I am sorry to have to say that the Government educational authorities have answered us with a regretful *non-possumus*.¹

¹ But see p. 251.

"APPEAL TO OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE.

"I am now home in England to see what can be done. For this purpose I have come to Oxford to-day, and am to address some senior members of Cambridge on Friday. I see before me two alternative pictures—the one a growingly prosperous realm under British protection in the heart of the Moslem world, with Cairo her capital, sending forth thousands of teachers of Islam to every land, and hundreds of secularised administrators in days to come, into the surrounding countries. I see her Christian population handicapped in the race with Islam, and many of her choicest sons—as some are already doing—becoming Mohammedans. I see the principles of such Moslem reformers as Syed Ameer Ali, combined with the fanaticism of a growing Pan-Islamism, dominating the land, sooner later to produce another revolution, and possibly a world-movement under the banner of Islam, which will put back the cause of evangelisation of Moslem lands for centuries.

"But there is a brighter and a perfectly possible picture—with Cairo as a centre of Christian light and learning, a metropolis to which all Oriental Christians and many Mohammedans will strive to send their sons for their highest education, a workshop whence divinely hewn tools can be sent as instruments of blessing throughout the Orient, a press which turns out Christian literature in many a Mohammedan language, and not least, a home where Christ is known and loved, and followed and adored.

"Which shall it be? It rests with Oxford and Cambridge to decide."

CHAPTER XV

THE LAST YEAR

IT is a curious fact that Thornton could hardly be dragged from home at the end of this last furlough, so great did he feel the call to stay some time longer and work for the cause in England. The loss of the central depôt that the Society had made its headquarters for many years, and the total absence of freehold headquarters, made him feel that he could perhaps better serve the cause by working at home for the purchase of a central site, and the erection of premises in Cairo, as well as enlisting the enthusiasm of Christian people in the cause of Moslem missions. But his wishes in this direction were overruled, and with a strange and unwonted reluctance he returned to Cairo, to face the prospect of working out a "literature idea" in utterly unsuitable premises, with the possibility of losing Bait Arabi Pasha as well! Such are some of the paralysing difficulties attending work in a city where rents seem to be always rising, and where landlords can hardly be induced to sign leases of more than one year's duration.

There were other disappointments. In spite of all

his efforts, no reinforcements were forthcoming. This one fact settled the fate of each and every one of the schemes for advance and expansion described in the last chapter. They must still continue to be dreams.

And, when he set to work in Cairo, just before the Christmas season began, the atmosphere of discouragement seemed to become intensified. He had hardly got to work when he was entirely incapacitated by a prostrating attack of dengy fever, which was then epidemic in Cairo. This spoiled the effort he was preparing to make to advertise the new Book Dépôt, now, for the time being, most unsuitably housed in the ground-floor of Bait Arabi Pasha.

And after recovering from this, he almost immediately had a bad accident, a fall from his bicycle when going at a high speed, by which he broke his arm and suffered a very severe shock. It was the last of a mysterious series of blows, which seemed to restrain him from doing any effective work in Cairo the whole winter. And to lose the winter in Cairo is almost to lose the year.

Thus darkly did his last year dawn. His face became drawn and aged. His physical energy seemed to have suffered a shock. More than once he said, "I feel an old man . . ." It was saddening to watch.

But the blocking of the avenues in Cairo could have no other effect on a Thornton than to set him looking for new ones. The limitations besetting the

direct work of the Society forced his restless energy to go farther afield and seek for methods of indirect influence. And, as soon as he was partially healed of his arm, we find him paying a round of visits to all the Coptic societies, with their young laymen leaders, and the Coptic churches, with their prelates and priests, trying to help, encourage, and suggest.

“But there is also quite a movement going on among the younger Copts in Cairo. It is a regular thing now to have sermons on Friday and Sunday afternoons in the church at Faggala. These are attended by fifty to sixty young men. There are five young preachers, and several more who are desirous of learning how to preach. I try to attend their service every now and then, to back them up. And they have now opened a reading-room and club of their own. The other day I brought Sheikh Boulus and a Jewish convert to the service. Boulus urged their leader afterwards to open the meetings to Moslems, and their Committee has since decided to do so. This is a new thing altogether.

“This ‘Society of Faith’ was not countenanced at all at first by the clergy, with the exception of the Patriarch, but now I see a new desire in the clergy to help, and we hope soon to see branches in at least four Cairo churches. There are several in the provinces. A few days ago a new society, called ‘The Christian Bond,’ has been formed by one of the staff of the Coptic Theological College, for students of the Higher Schools. They have their own monthly paper. All these students used to attend our weekly meetings. It is interesting, therefore, to see that they have so soon borne fruit in such initiative.

“A second teacher of the Theological College has got a third society, with several branches, more closely denominational than the former. He has also proved to have real literary ability, and edits quite alone

the best monthly religious magazine of the Copts. I heard him preach on Coptic Christmas evening at the Cathedral."

To this short period, then is owed some of the most valuable work he ever did, some of the most fruitful friendships he ever formed. The influence of his self-abandonment to God, and his ceaseless thought for the Kingdom, on some of the younger Coptic leaders will be, under God, one of the things that abide.

And now seemed the God-given opportunity for doing what for long he had been watching his chance to do. In the chapter on *Orient and Occident* we saw how very early and clearly Thornton had foreseen that evangelistic visits to the provinces were involved and necessitated by this work of the magazine. And now nothing seemed to stand in the way, nay, a hand seemed to have pointed to this open door, by closing the others. Thornton entered it, and he found it led to spacious fields of opportunity. In them he remained, and to them, as we shall see, he resolved to dedicate his efforts for several years to come. The missionary statesman, dealing (as we saw) in continents, in lands near and far, has played his part. For the moment that part is over, and, in almost imperceptible transition, the statesman becomes the man of action, ready to throw his entire energies into realising a part of the scheme he himself had planned.

A part, but a great part. That work can hardly

be called a "local" one, or narrow in its outlook, which involved, as its objective, the evangelisation of the Moslems of Egypt and, if the way were opened, of the Soudan; and which carried with it the encouraging and the assisting of the National Coptic Church to awaken again, and arise to do its part in the great cause!

For those were the two main lines of work that extended before him, and from this point on to the end the two merged into one.

In the preliminary sketch of Egypt as a mission field, the position and possibilities of this ancient Church, which proudly claims the succession of the Patriarchate of Alexandria, the episcopal chair of Saint Mark, have been sufficiently sketched. And in the intervening chapters numerous allusions have been made to the way in which Thornton from time to time made his goodwill and his influence felt in that Church. Many things had combined to encourage him. At the beginning of *Orient and Occident* he had written—

"The Coptic press is ready to write or insert what we like in the same. The leading Coptic laity in Egypt are delighted with the line we are taking. The Coptic Patriarch tells us 'that he sees nothing that is not for the building up of the Church' in our paper, which he regularly reads. The Coptic bishops are all asking now to read our Arabic theological works, those which I have brought back from Jerusalem, the labours of these gallant German missionaries in Palestine. The Coptic priests and monks are inviting us everywhere to go and preach to them, and the ministry of our few Moslem

converts and Christian catechists are very acceptable in their churches. The picked young Coptic students in Cairo have begun to gather round us this winter as their advisers, and the younger members of the staff of the Coptic theological college have become our friends.

“All this has been so spontaneous and so uncalled for, save that it is due to the casting of our bread upon the waters, that we are almost overwhelmed, and can only say, ‘Is not the Lord gone out before us? Behold I work a work in your days, saith the Lord; a work which ye shall in no wise believe if one declare it unto you.’ How true these words are to-day!”

And the thought of these things leads him to write enthusiastically—

“Hitherto I have always felt that I had my fingers in all the threads of the problem of evangelisation of Egypt, and that progress would be upon slow and painful lines. But so many unaccountable things have been happening lately in so many different quarters that one can only trace the hand of God in it all, and hear the sound of abundance of rain.”

He did not indeed exaggerate the reality of the friendly relations which various causes had contributed to set up between the missionaries and the different sections of the Coptic Church mentioned above. Thornton took the greatest pains to keep *au courant* with Coptic affairs, and well was he rewarded.

“The second most important event has been the forming of a *Coptic representative lay council*, which is composed of four sub-committees—(1) on Education; (2) Churches and Alms; (3) on Property; (4) on Legal

matters. I find on investigation that nearly one-half of these laymen are subscribers to *O. and O.* The rest are being sent copies of the paper also. Now the committee on education has taken in hand the whole question, and brought out a comprehensive programme, including general religious education for all their sixty (or more) primary schools. They are hoping also entirely to reform the standard of candidates for the priesthood, and no priest is in future to be ordained who has not passed satisfactorily through the Cairo Theological College, the curriculum of which is to be widened and improved. They have resolved, also, to develop existing provincial schools into secondary schools, and to have in Cairo a higher school, which will be able to compete with those of the Government in due course. If these measures are really able to be carried out, it seems to me to be wholly futile for us to try to develop either primary or secondary education ourselves. And we shall be much wiser in seeking to give our moral support to the thorough carrying out of these resolutions."

He was also able to give most valuable aid in their appeal to the Government to allow the teaching of the Christian religion to Christian boys in the Government schools. The appeal was successful, and now the Bible is taught in the last hour of school by Coptic deacons at the expense of the Church. Such is the present solution of the "Education Question," which exists, it thus appears, in Egypt as much as England. It will still be a perfectly legitimate thing to aim at getting the expenses of this religious education shifted on to the Government, as the Copts, who pay their full share of the taxes of the country, are at present in this way contributing to the teaching of Islam to

the Moslem boys, without any advantage to themselves.

This success, needless to say, not only delighted Thornton, but at once to him suggested new operations. He began to read all the existing text-books for religious instruction, with a view to making a memorandum to advise the Coptic Committee in the supremely important opportunity that now lay to its hand. And he writes (very characteristically)—

“It has become important, however, at once to visit all the leading Coptic and Government schools in Upper and Lower Egypt, to study their needs and to see whether suitable teachers are to be found in each place for giving proper Christian instruction. The next thing, of course, will be to provide for the training of teachers. In this, I hope, we shall be able to help.”

This, then, was yet another of the converging lines of guidance that pointed him to the regions south of Cairo.

His aim in making these itinerations in the provinces of Egypt was, first, to follow up the work of *Orient and Occident* by meeting its subscribers face to face; secondly, to hold evangelistic meetings; thirdly, to help the Copts in the various centres in every way possible.

Through all, and over all, was the desire to preach Christ. He already dreamed of forming a sort of evangelistic committee, composed of earnest men from *all* the Christian communities, which should arrange for conventions and missions in different parts of

Egypt. He longed for a revival over the whole land.

“I see a real awakening beginning in the Coptic Church, and before long I hope to see a united mission, such as the Tokyo Mission, made possible between the Churches. A year ago it seemed impossible.”

And in the middle of his work in Upper Egypt the same idea recurs—

“I think by trying to help all the Churches herein cited I have got a better entrance than if I had rigidly decided only to help one. My plan of following an evangelistic council still seems to be the best plan.”

And his final objective was, as the final objective of his Society was and is, the evangelisation of Moslems. This direct aim was never lost sight of or relaxed for a moment. The indirect methods were only made possible *through and by keeping on* working at the direct object. Thornton knew that the whole of the unique influence of the Church Missionary Society upon the other Christian bodies in Egypt was entirely due to their knowledge that that direct aim was its only aim. No prejudice therefore existed against its combining indirect with direct methods—influencing Christians as well as influencing Moslems. Thornton kept his eye fixed steadily upon both aspects of the question. Thus, in a letter to the Bishop of Salisbury, he says—

“The difficulty with which our C.M.S. Mission in Cairo had to face has not been one of principle, but due to deliberate limitations in our work hitherto

to evangelising the Moslems. All our methods of work have so far been adopted, whether direct or indirect, with the Mohammedan population as our objective, and it has been on this ground that we have been tolerated by the Presbyterians and increasingly respected by the Copts. We have been able honestly to say that it is not our object to start another eclectic church in Egypt. We are anxious to win Moslems, and are ready to minister to our Moslem converts and our workers, whether Coptic, Orthodox, Catholic, or Protestant, who are engaged with us in working for this object, either educationally or in medical, literary, and evangelistic work. But we do not, unless we are urged to do so, perform any ecclesiastical function which intentionally deprives them of any future ministrations in their own churches.

“There is no doubt that we English clergy can do a very great deal to encourage and quicken the Copts, not only in their own Christian life, but in witnessing to Moslems. I quite feel that in the provinces, especially in Upper Egypt, this must be our method of reaching the Moslems.”

Such was the situation that prevailed, such the aspirations and hopes which filled Thornton's mind when he left Cairo in the spring of 1907 for Kenh in Upper Egypt. Pain, disappointment, and weariness were shaken off. In this tour—the Indian summer of his short life—he renewed his youth. He went off full of purpose, forgetting the friend who was seeing him off in his eagerness to start his “fishing” in a carriage-full of officers before the train had even started. He worked like a giant during his itinerations, and he came back from the first and second bronzed, refreshed, full of life and hope, new

horizons opening, new visions of usefulness, new ways suggested to accomplishment of old ideas. At last some years of work without friction, because within the limits of the strength and means at his disposal, seemed to lie before him. Yet it was just *then* that the Hand of God quietly closed the volume of his earthly life, and called him hence.

The biographer has nothing to do, in connection with this last tour, but give the vivid accounts which he himself wrote. After the first two itinerations he returned and laid certain conclusions before the Committee, and formulated certain plans. A word or two on these will be said in their place, and then his own account of the last journey will be given, from which he only returned to lie down and die.

TWO VISITS TO UPPER EGYPT.

By D. M. THORNTON.

“Of the tens of thousands of tourists who year by year visit Luxor and Assouan and other famous sites in Upper Egypt, it is to be feared that as yet few have had time to study the needs of the present-day Egyptians from a spiritual point of view, though all visitors are entranced by what they learn about the ancient Egyptians. But it seems to the writer that they will, at any rate, welcome what he has to tell, after eight years in Egypt, about the descendants of those wonderful giants of old, and of their longings after a more abundant life.

“We of the C.M.S. in Egypt have so long been absorbed with the problem of evangelising the great Moslem city of Cairo with our little band of workers, that we have not till recently known or realised the need of the peoples in Upper Egypt. We have been struck with the immense needs of the six million souls of the Delta, of whom over ninety per cent. are

Moslems, but we have hitherto assumed that the five million souls of Upper Egypt were being reached, and have not even so much as visited the larger towns in each province, except when on a holiday some of us have been tourists of the tourists, and have become immersed in the attractions of Egyptology.

“However, the launching of *Orient and Occident* upon the educated world of Egypt two years ago has led to a point of contact being established between ourselves and Coptic Christians and Moslem brethren in more than fifty towns between Cairo and Assouan, and so it was obvious that, sooner or later, our readers must be visited, and the handshake follow our weekly message. Last summer we sent out one of our oldest and most trusted Egyptian workers to visit all the places where there are subscribers throughout the land. He spent three months in Upper Egypt, finding friends wherever he went, and preparing the way for the missionary to follow. Everywhere he circulated publications of our Mission for Moslems, and of the Palestine Mission for Christians, and, while calling on subscribers for their annual subscriptions, found many opportunities for preaching the gospel, exhorting to righteousness of life, holding conversations with Moslem readers, and acquainting Coptic priests and bishops with our desire to evangelise the Moslems.

“The distance by rail from Cairo to Assouan is about 560 miles. It is roughly divided into three portions—Cairo to Assiut (240), Assiut to Luxor (200), and Luxor to Assouan (120). This paper will only deal with Assiut to Assouan, a distance of 320 miles. A subsequent report later on in the year will, I hope, cover the remainder of this great distance, which in itself, I suppose, is about as great as from London to Darlington, while my tours already accomplished beyond equal from London to Carlisle.

“It must, however, be remembered that the average breadth of the Nile valley is not more than ten miles, and between Luxor and Assouan it becomes in places very narrow indeed. Still, it may safely be said that at least one town or large village (of a size which we should call a town in England) is to be found for every few miles of the railway and the river, either close to the one or the other, or hugging the desert and the rocky cliffs on either side; the average population working

out at 1000 per square mile and about 10,000 per linear mile, *i.e.* per mile of the Nile valley.

“I. FIRST VISIT.—I determined as far as possible to work with the support of the leaders of the Coptic Church. I commenced by visiting the city of Kena, the provincial capital of the province, of which Luxor is the best-known town, which contains 30,000 people, and is about twelve hours by rail from Cairo. The population of this province alone numbers three-quarters of a million. It has two married American missionaries and two lady educational missionaries, all residing in Luxor (two hours distant by train from Kena). It contains three Presbyterian native pastors, who have about 500 communicants connected with their congregations, gathered out from the Copts, out of a population of about 150,000 Copts and 600,000 Moslems in the province.

“I was attracted thither by the invitation of the Coptic Metran (Metropolitan Bishop), who asked me when I visited Upper Egypt to be sure and come to Kena. And no words can describe the kindness which I received, or the readiness with which he went out of his way to prepare me a suitable place for large evangelistic meetings to which all were invited, from the Moslem Mudir (the governor) down to the school children. And the three nights upon which I preached to the people for more than an hour on the story of the patriarchs, and the life and death and resurrection of our Blessed Lord, will ever be memorable to me; for they were the first at which I have seen men weeping at the gospel message in Egypt, and they were attended by hundreds of men, women, and children alike. Our colporteur-evangelist, who visited the place again for a few days on his return journey, writes that all the people are longing for me to go back to them again; that those who were absent from the town at the time have openly expressed their regrets at having been away; and that even the Moslems, who were present in numbers, are saying, ‘We have never seen and never heard greater news than this.’ In short, the whole town is stirred to inquire into the truth of Christianity. But more than this, the noble Metran himself, with whom I had extempore prayer before the meeting, is stirred up to renewed energy, and has got a real blessing in his own soul. Lastly, by means of *Orient and Occident*, we are able to keep in touch with nearly all the Government employees in the

Mudiriye, with all the masters of the Coptic, Protestant, and Government schools, until I am again able to visit this warm-hearted town, which has so many noble Moslem families in it that it is known as 'the threshold of the Prophet.' It is from places such as this, and after meetings like those, that I hope to be able to secure young men who will be worth training to be Christian evangelists in the days to come. And, please God, they will work in harmony with Coptic religious leaders for the cause.

"The only other place in this province visited by me was Luxor, where I was able to rest on my tour up the river, and prepare the way for meetings on my return. I was surprised at the growth of the place in eight years, for it has more than doubled in size during that time, and now contains 15,000 souls, and is fast increasing. It has also been laid out nicely, and is quite fit for Europeans to live in during ten months in the year.

"In Luxor the American lady missionaries have captured the hearts of the women by their magnificent girls' day-school with 250 pupils, and new boarding-school attached, with 60 girls in it already from up and down the land. Meanwhile, Dr. and Mrs. Pollock are winning the hearts of the whole place by their noble and self-denying work. Dr. Pollock visits other outlying towns more than an hour in each direction, and ought soon to have a well-equipped hospital in the place. The Coptic and Protestant boys' schools contain a little over 100 boys each; the Americans, as in most other places, using as a schoolroom on week-days what is a churchroom on Sundays. This room holds over 300 people, whereas the Coptic church would only contain about 150, and had hardly any forms and was exceedingly dirty. So I held my meetings in the American churchroom, and all the Coptic boys were marched down from their school, where they had assembled, to the Presbyterian church by the riverside. I found it necessary to hold first a short lantern meeting for the boys of both schools, at which I catechised them on their Bible knowledge, and found them very well instructed. Then we had a second meeting for the adults, the schoolgirls being admitted with their mothers on the women's side of the curtain. In this way about 800 listened to the gospel each night. As usual, I visited the leading Egyptian

Government officials in the place, and spent considerable time in getting to know subscribers ; but my stay in Luxor was chiefly remarkable for the fact that while I was there an Englishman, who had come there to buy antiquities, went to the magistrate and declared himself a Moslem—Mahmoud Abdallah ! The result was that the Moslems who came the first night to my meetings stayed away afterwards. I went my last morning and spent over three hours with the pervert afore mentioned, and found that he knew no Arabic, and was a materialistic pantheist, and had nothing in common at all with the Sunni deists of Egypt. But his dragoman had led him to believe that there was no difference between them, and the leading Sheikhs of the town came to salute him as a brother while I was there !

“Our colporteur-evangelist, who visited Luxor after I had left, found the Christians much comforted that I had been there at the time and seen Mahmoud Abdallah, and tried to point out to him the misunderstanding which his action would produce. But if we Englishmen are represented by a Moslem convert in Luxor, is it not sad that we have no Christian Englishman in the place who is trying to win these Moslems for Christ? Instead of this, all our English tourists get their ideas about Islam and Christianity in Egypt from Moslem dragomen, who are proverbial liars, and the fictions which they tell get spread all over Europe and America.

“It is something to know that I shall be welcomed by all the people a second time, and that Copts and Protestants will vie with one another to make any future mission I may hold a still greater success.

“My next campaign was held in Assouan. The season was over, and all the people were at leisure to listen, and, except for the great heat, the time was very opportune. I was the guest of the German pioneer missionaries to the Nubians, who have made a very good impression on the people in a short time, and are preparing to commence work among the Berber race as soon as possible. These Nubian Berbers extend down to a large town called Daraw, some distance north of Assouan. The German missionaries have with them a converted Berber as evangelist and interpreter, who has a very interesting history, had I time to tell it.

“With German thoroughness, written invitations had been

sent to all the leading people of Assouan, and these were followed up by personal visits to the Mudir, who is very English in his ways, and most of the leading Egyptians in the place. The meetings were held in the missionary's garden, and were crowded, so that here, too, I had to show the pictures to the boys first, and then later on to the adults. This involved about two hours of speaking in Arabic every night, which in the heat is very heavy work.

"The chief interest of Assouan is its international character. I had no less than eleven nationalities represented in my meetings, namely, Soudanese, Berber, Egyptians, Syrians, Jews, Turks, German and Swiss, Italian and Austrian, while the speaker was English! The leading sheikhs, lawyers, and other Government officials were present, listening without a word of opposition to the story of the Crucifixion. In all, about 500 adults and 300 boys attended the meetings, and for days afterwards the talk in the cafés was of nothing but the way of Salvation. The Coptic priests, and the Coptic headmaster of the excellent school there of 250 boys, are now our friends. Islam . . . has been openly challenged by the Cross of Christ, and has listened silently to the gospel message. Oh, the immense opportunities that these crowded towns of Egypt present for faithful permanent work! But no one else can be spared from Cairo to go to these places again, unless we be immediately reinforced. Think of it!—10,000 to the linear mile in Upper Egypt (8000 Moslems); and yet we have had no reinforcements for four years and a half in Egypt, and still wait patiently till England awakes from slumber and ignorance of the need. Try, too, to realise that this, my first itineration tour, only cost the C.M.S. £4, 10s., and enabled me to preach the gospel in three towns containing over 60,000 people, of whom 1200 children and 1500 adults have heard the whole story of Redemption. Whereas, if I had stayed in Cairo, I could not have reached (in all our schools) over 500 boys and girls, nor addressed on our tiny premises over 300 adults all told; most of whom have heard the gospel many times before.

"But more than this, the Coptic Metran of Esna—now, sad to say, the southernmost ancient Christian bishopric in the valley of the Nile—wants me to visit his town of 20,000. A leading layman of Edfu is prepared to give us his large garden

there for gospel meetings. The Coptic priest of Kous (one of the oldest towns in Egypt) wants me to hold a mission there, while the people of Kena and Luxor have urged me to visit them again. So that in the two southernmost provinces and dioceses of Egypt there are six towns with an average of 20,000 people which I ought to visit with fellow-workers within another year, to hold a week's mission in each, and have time to interview inquirers and to follow up the work.

"II. SECOND VISIT.—My second short tour consisted in a visit to a few centres in the provinces of Girga and Assiut, or to the dioceses of Akhmîm and Aboutig. Though late in the season I determined to face the heat and do my best; and in the middle of May I met our colporteur-evangelist at Sohâg, the provincial capital of Girga province, and had a four days' campaign among its 20,000 people. The way here was prepared by a large Christian school having been started under Coptic lay patronage, which now contains 460 boys and thirteen masters. So after one lantern meeting for the boys, advertising my meetings throughout the place, the mission was held, and we had about 500 adults besides boys each night. The masters all attended, and helped to place the people and keep order. In consequence, we had breathless stillness throughout. The meetings were held in the large court outside the school, and the sheet was suspended from a mud wall. The leading people of the place were able to listen from the headmaster's balcony. And after three nights the Coptic women sent a special request that they might have a meeting of their own in their church, to which I, of course, acceded; but I found four nights running very hard work, and was obliged to rest on Sunday. I attended, however, the Coptic service on Sunday morning, and taught the choirboys some hymns afterwards.

"On the Monday we went to Tahta, the centre of the Coptic Catholic Mission in Upper Egypt, and found the Coptic Orthodox priest ready to give us his church for a meeting. The first night the church was packed, and at least 600 got inside, and many more listened from the court. There was no ventilation, and the temperature at night was over 90 degs. Fahr., and I nearly succumbed. But the next day a Coptic gentleman lent us the use of his garden, and hundreds of Copts and Moslems gathered around two stately palm trees on the

grass, while we suspended two winding-sheets from the trees and threw the pictures on the sheet. I was able, when we came to the betrayal of Jesus Christ by Judas, to quiet the Moslem sheikhs present by shaking hands with one of them. After that they listened quietly through the whole story of the Crucifixion, and were evidently much impressed by what they saw and heard. How I wish now that I had stayed there longer to follow up the work! But I was tired out, and could not face another day of burning heat with hardly anything palatable to eat. So I returned to Assiut direct, in order to rest awhile. But all the Moslems in the place want me to go back there again. When can it be? I have since had a letter from —, the son of the Coptic priest, telling me that quite a stir has been created among the Moslems of the place; that the leading Sheikh, who took two tracts from me that night, has asked for a New Testament, and that — Effendi has given him his own to read. He also adds that a company of Moslem sheikhs in that town are meeting together to read the Scriptures, and that one of them appears to be already convinced of the truth of Christianity. May we not pray that he, and many more like him, may during these meetings find their way to the Saviour?

“At Assiut, which is the capital of Upper Egypt, I went to one of the break-up functions at the college for boys, which I enjoyed very much, and visited several of the leading people of Assiut and had talks with the American missionaries about their work. But as the Coptic Metran had not yet returned from his pilgrimage, I felt the time was not ripe yet for any meetings in the capital of Upper Egypt. But some day I hope to hold a convention there (D.V.).

“I have since heard from the Metran of Assiut that, if I will give him ten days' notice of my coming, he will return from the visitation of his diocese, and will prepare me a large place in which to hold meetings for the people of Assiut; and so I hope to go there again some time this autumn, if God wills.

“One afternoon I returned southwards to Aboutig, the centre of another bishopric and about half an hour by train from Assiut, in order that I might visit the Metran and study the revival which has broken out in a large village called Nikhaila (containing about 13,000 souls), from which comes our senior Cairo catechist. The good bishop reminded me very much of

the late Bishop Creighton in looks, and was perfectly agreeable to my coming and holding as many meetings as I liked, either in his church or in the market-place or outside the town (19,000). When I told him that I was very anxious to see the work in Nikhaila, he at once offered me his stalwart donkey, and accordingly I covered the distance of three miles in very good time.

“All the corn crops in Upper Egypt above Assiut had been gathered in, as they begin the harvest there at the end of April; so the fields looked very bare and stubbly on one’s right, while the river below was full of sandbanks and islands on the left, as I rode on the raised road between the two. When I got to Nikhaila it was nearing sunset, and all the people were out among the heaps of corn, threshing by means of bullocks and a sort of wooden sledge, and winnowing the chaff by throwing the grain up into the air with a shovel in the evening breeze. I at once made for the Coptic priest’s house—a simple, pious man. He led me to the house of the young Presbyterian pastor, and thence I went on to Girgis Beshai’s people. While there, the elder of the Presbyterian church and the young Coptic preacher of the place both came to call, and we fairly filled the only reception-room, which was not more than nine feet square. The elder is a fine godly merchant—one of the best that Upper Egypt can produce,—not carried away by undue emotion, but a strong, reliable Christian with reputation for goodness far and wide.

“We decided that I should go the round of the various services, first to the Copts, then the Presbyterians, and lastly the Holiness Mission. The Coptic evening service was a very poor affair, though the few ignorant folk who came did sing very heartily, and that out of a book published by Plymouth Brethren! About eighteen men and boys were there, several of whom came away with me when I left. The priest escorted me to the Presbyterian churchroom, leaving the preacher to finish the meeting with a short address. There were, to my astonishment, on a week-night in harvest, about 150 men in the churchroom, most of them middle-aged, and all of them respectable and clean. They were holding a ‘conference,’ at which anyone was free to say a word. The pastor spoke a little above the heads of the people, and two others took part besides. They sang the doggerel version of the Psalms with a

true Scotch swing, and one might have imagined one was in a 'hieland kirk' for all the world.

"From thence I was conducted to the Holiness Mission. Here I found about sixty young men squatting in rows along the floor of a room about 30 by 20 feet, with Mr. Trotter, the Canadian missionary, seated, and a shoeless and beardless fellah holding forth from the raised dais to be found in every native house. The women were behind the thatched partition, which rustled every now and then. On being called up to the dais I listened for over half an hour to a most interesting address from this fellah—the lowest of the low, but I declare that he reminded me more of what I have imagined the prophet Amos to have been than anyone I have seen. I could have listened to this man—who only learned to read, I am told, last year—for hours, for he had a message to deliver, and was full of the Spirit. And this is why the young men all come together to hear him. It is true that he ran about the dais towards the end, and thereby stirred up the feelings of his audience rather too much; but his words were with power. He was speaking about the people to whom Jeremiah alluded as false prophets, who spake 'peace, peace, when there was no peace to the wicked.' He pointed out that he had to deliver a message, whether his audience would hear or whether they would forbear, and that he would be untrue to God if he did not.

"After he had got everyone to rise simultaneously and say that they were willing to go anywhere for Christ—which was splendid to witness once, but doubtless becomes rather insincere if often repeated—all fell upon their knees in a moment and prostrated themselves this way and that way all over the room. And now an extraordinary scene was witnessed of everyone praying at the same time, some prostrate on the ground, others holding out one or two arms to claim blessings from God, while more swayed backwards and forwards as if mesmerised. And then gradually the whole body seemed to become calmer, and there came a quiet over them all, whereat someone struck up a hymn in Arabic with which all were familiar. As soon as they rose to sing again I had to leave to catch the last train back to Assiut. My friends there provided me with a fine donkey, and one of them accompanied me. What was our astonishment, when half-way to Aboutig, to see the train come along beside us! Only when we reached the station did we

find that since 1st May they had altered this train to half an hour earlier. What was to be done? I sent back my friend, after refusing his kind offer of hospitality, and tried to get into the only hotel at Aboutig, about 10.30 p.m. As the one available room had another man in it, and the vacant bed looked far from clean, I returned to the station and lay on some sacks of corn in the breeze until the goods train arrived at 1 a.m. About 3 a.m. we reached Assiut, having travelled in the shakiest guard's van I have ever seen. Fortunately my room was on the top storey of the Agricultural Bank, and able to be reached by an outside staircase without disturbing those below.

"I am profoundly grateful for all I saw of the religious devotion of those simple souls, and I am encouraged now to believe that God can and will raise up from among this people men after His own heart, who will be witnesses to Christ even unto death.

"And only the same day when visiting Mr. Hunt, of the American Mission in Assiut, he told me of a blind girl trained in their school who had received real blessing, owing to the influence of the Holiness people, and was now conducting a daily service attended by 300 people, men and women, in a large village not far away on the east bank of the river; while the Omdeh (headman) of the place and many of the leading people have testified that they owe to her ministry real spiritual benefit. So it would seem that God has given us these encouragements to strengthen our faith to believe in His Almighty power to raise up both men and women to do Him service in this land.

"It is only fair also to add in closing that none of the workers of this mission receive any salary whatever from the Canadian Missions."

Thornton came back from these first two journeys in huge spirits and excellent health, and full of new ideas. His experience had convinced him of several things: first, that it was possible to evangelise Moslems on a large scale in Upper Egypt; secondly, that it was possible to work through Orthodox Copts, and in so doing

raise *their* standard of Christian life; thirdly, that the only way of covering the ground was by means of the river, and that the only feasible way of keeping alive was on a boat on that river, as inns were either non-existent or bad. One other thing had impressed him greatly: the existence of young Copts, often sons of priests, educated but vocationless, waiting "in the market-place." Immediately his rapid mind had made the usual synthesis,—why not evangelise by means of a boat on the river, and take a number of young men on board, for training in theology and practical work? Thus would be *combined* an evangelising scheme and the plan for the training of catechists, which had so long been before the mission. The more he thought of this, the more feasible and attractive it appeared. It seemed "Galilean," and appealed to him as such,—the free, open-air life; the companionship of these few pupils; their training, now in theology, as the boat travelled between town and town, or village and village, and now in practical work, as it is moored at some riverside quay, and the little party goes up the bank and into the town, and learns, by example and by practice, how to distribute literature, how to work up a meeting, how to visit high and low, how to preach, how to win souls. . . .

And he convinced. The scheme was drawn up and discussed; the recommendations were made and were accepted; the leave was granted—with the usual proviso that a reinforcement should first have come.

He was delighted. He seemed a new man. Gaily he

announced his intention of spending his holiday, as soon as his colleague arrived from home in September, of visiting the Sudan, organising the collection of "*Orient and Occident*" subscriptions there, and "prospecting" (*mutatis mutandis*) as he had done in Upper Egypt. It seemed a wild enough idea, but nothing could turn him from it. The whole itinerary was sketched out with the utmost nicety. All was ready against the return of his colleague. . . .

Alas! when that colleague returned, it was but to be told by telegram at Port Said that Douglas Thornton was down with typhoid fever, the fever from which he never recovered. *Deo aliter visum.*

It was after the sitting of the Mission Conference when those things were decided that he had set out, in the height of the burning summer heat, on his third tour in the provinces of Upper Egypt. Here is his record of the same, the last report that ever came from his pen—

A THIRD VISIT TO UPPER EGYPT.

"My third visit to Upper Egypt had to be fitted in between our summer conference, which had to be prolonged more than usual, in order to devise means by which to reduce estimates without curtailing our work, and the summer holidays; so that I could only spare the inside of a week in June, between the 25th and 30th, to pay preliminary visits to Minieh and Beni Suef (four hours and a half and two hours respectively by train from Cairo). But it is astonishing how much can be done in a few days when the Lord is with you.

"I found the town of Minieh (30,000), which is the provincial capital of a province of the same name, and the seat

of both an Egyptian Coptic Orthodox and Coptic Catholic bishopric, besides a Greek Orthodox bishopric, was in the middle of a sad dispute which involved all the Christian leaders. And there was the humiliating spectacle of the Moslem governor of the province, a kindly and religious-minded man, trying to keep the peace between the contending factions. This is, I fear, only a sample of what is going on all over Moslem lands to-day, and has brought Christianity into such disrepute among the followers of Islam.

“It was no light task to attempt to do any open evangelistic work in such a place, and I was assured by the Coptic Orthodox bishop that the time was not ripe for such an effort, that the Moslems of the place were noted for their opposition to Christianity, and that neither he nor his clergy could help us, though he would be only too glad if we (as an English Episcopal Society) would begin and carry on such work in his town and province. At the same time he kept me for over two hours and a half one evening engaged in animated and interested discussion on the principles of the English Church, both wherein they agreed and wherein they differed from those of the Coptic National Church of Egypt. It is a wonderful privilege to be able at last to hold full and free intercourse with Coptic leaders of light and education in their own colloquial language of Arabic, and to be able to explain the spiritual meaning of truths which we hold to be Scriptural in our Church order and discipline, I trust that I faithfully interpreted the tenets of the Church of England in its length and breadth and height. What impressed him most was the fundamental principle of liberty which we allow to conscience in ordinances, such as marriage of clergy, confession, fasting, etc. By this I mean that whereas the Church of England insists on Baptism and Communion as generally necessary to salvation, it makes no rules for those minor ordinances as binding on either clergy or laity. Now these Oriental churches, like that of Rome, are still bound by a terrible number of rules and safeguards, such as compulsory celibacy of higher ecclesiastics, compulsory confession before Communion, compulsory fasting and abstinence from certain foods on certain days, though any number of cigarettes seem to be permitted in their place!

“This interview followed immediately upon an hour and a half spent with the Moslem judge of the Moslem Ecclesiastical

Court of the province, in a beautiful garden by the riverside. Hither our colporteur-evangelist and I wended our way to see a leading Copt by appointment, and here the Lord opened the door for me to witness to this dear old man out of the Old Testament Scriptures that the Christ must suffer and die for our sins and rise again for our justification.

“As is so often the case, I found that leading Moslems were at first more anxious to know our message than the timorous Christians, and I am glad to report that the Moslem governor not only accepted a bound volume of *Orient and Occident* graciously, as every other Mudir (governor) of provinces farther south has done, but wished to become a paying subscriber as well, and welcomed us to his province.

“When, therefore, the leading Copt aforementioned was able to arrange that the town theatre (which holds about 700) should be freely placed at my disposal for evangelistic meetings, I felt that we had sufficient support to decide to hold a mission to Moslems in the place, and before I left (within forty-eight hours of arrival) it was arranged that I should return again in a fortnight for a five days' campaign, by which time the theatre would be free. I visited, therefore, the Coptic and Protestant schools, and told their masters that I hoped soon to return, and asked them to allow their boys (over 900 in number) to come the first night for the opening meeting with their Moslem boys and Moslem sheikhs as well.

“On July 10 (a Wednesday), I returned to Minieh from Cairo, and with the aid of the schoolmasters and Mr. Gergis Hanna we got ready the theatre for the lantern meeting. The boys came in crowds, long before the time, and eventually a large number of lads from the Moslem and Government schools found their way in, as well as 600 from the Christian schools. Later on the Coptic Catholic bishop informed me that numbers of their boys had come as well.

“Those who have had the management of large numbers of disciplined English boys will sympathise with me in having had that hot night to keep the attention of about 1000 Egyptian boys, several hundreds of whom were unaccustomed to discipline, and none of whom had ever seen a magic-lantern before. It was really marvellous how well they attended as I catechised them on the Old Testament pictures, and told them

the outline of the story of Jesus, illustrated by leading pictures. I did once have to make a sally to some of the boxes at the side, into which some rowdy young Moslems had got, but after that they were as quiet as lambs, and the chief impression left on the masters seems to have been my docility !

“Of course this meeting advertised the series all over the town, but we thought it best to pay several calls and give personal invitations. So, after again visiting the governor, we went into every room of the Governorate, as I had done at Kena, and invited every employé, whether Moslem or Christian, Copt, Protestant, or Catholic, to the meetings. All were exceedingly polite and interested at the idea of holding meetings ‘to explain the lives of the prophets’ in a theatre. On subsequent days we visited the Police and the Law Courts, and every night Coptic helpers invited all the young men in the cafés, which were close by the place where the gatherings were held, in a very central place.

“As soon as the Metran and the leading Coptic priest heard what the meetings were like, the former allowed the latter to be present, and to lead in prayer, with the result that I had representatives of the two leading Christian bodies praying together on the same platform.

“In the hotel with me was staying a nice young Moslem, who had been appointed during holiday time to take someone else’s place in Minieh in the Civil Tribunals. He had attended several of our meetings in Cairo for students, though not the evangelistic ones. He called on me, so I returned the call and found that he had attended one of my meetings in the theatre. He was curious to know what I was driving at, and at once plunged into a long religious conversation, quite frankly revealing the general attitude of such young Moslems to Christianity by saying that he might become a materialist, but a Christian, never—that was unthinkable. However, he was sufficiently impressed to ask me to go with him to call on the Moslem judge of the ‘Tribunal Sommaire’ (the civil court) on Sunday afternoon, about which more anon.

“At the theatre I took a series of three addresses—(1) on the comparison and contrasts between Moses and Christ; (2) on the Creation, Fall, and Flood, followed by the story of the Passion and Death of Jesus Christ; (3) on the story of Abraham, the sacrifice of Isaac, the Passover, the Scapegoat, the Serpent

in the Wilderness, and the Death and Resurrection of Christ. Each night we had the theatre crowded as full as it could be (Wednesday to Saturday), with over 100 standing as well all the time. A large part of the audiences were fresh each night, so that I reckon in all that about 1500 boys and lads, and over 1000 men, heard the gospel story in that place. Of these, about 500 men and 500 boys were Moslems. Besides these, in the churches on Sunday, at least another 250 men, 500 women, and 300 girls heard the gospel as well.

“On Friday the Metran invited me to a fasting lunch, and very satisfying it was, with plenty of fruit and vegetables, and without the oil and butter in the food, which I detest. We had previously had another tremendous talk with him and some of the leading laity in the place about the duty of Christians to witness to Moslems, and the need for more unity and brotherhood among Christians. It was then that the Bishop asked me to preach on Sunday morning in the Coptic Cathedral Church.

“On Sunday at 7.15 a.m. (after being up late with several young men on Saturday night), I was conducted to the Coptic Church, which I found packed with about 300 men squeezed on forms, and another 200 seated on mats on the floor, not to mention crowds of women behind the trellis-work in the balconies. I brought my clericals with me, as I thought that it would be well to show the people what we wear, and I robed in the sanctuary behind the usual screen, after having removed my boots outside in the choir.

“I was asked to read the epistles and gospel, but as the book was an old translation with which I am not familiar, I suggested that one of the two epistles would be sufficient. These were read from a small reading-desk on the steps just outside the sanctuary. The choirboys chanted the Coptic anthems and responses below, facing N. and S., and the Bishop's chair ended the choir, but there were no proper stalls.

“About 8 a.m. I was called upon to preach from the steps, and took as my subject, ‘The knowledge of Christ’ (St. John xvii. 3 and Phil. iii. 10), and divided the subject as Walpole does in his *Vital Religion*. The stillness was intense, and I was, I believe, much helped to be clear and simple as I urged on all the vital importance of personal knowledge, and

not mere superficial, traditional, second-hand knowledge of Christ. It was worth coming to Egypt if only for that one opportunity—the first, I trust, of many more—of using Coptic churches for preaching Christ, in Arabic, to Moslems and Christians of many denominations.

“The Metran, to my surprise, backed up what I had said with a long *discursus* about his interview with me. He explained that what had attracted him to the Episcopalians was that they wished to help and not to destroy the Coptic Church. He declared that on all fundamentals the two Churches were in agreement, and thanked God for having brought me to Minieh. After the service, which was read mostly in Arabic, not Coptic (both to my benefit and to that of the congregation), the Bishop took me back to his house and asked me to tell him frankly what I thought of the service, and what changes I would like to see in it. I had been either sitting¹ or standing during the Communion service within the sanctuary, and so had the best opportunity I have yet had of observing the ritual and the manual acts, which are most interesting, but I cannot dwell on them now. I urged very strongly the speedy translation of all the Coptic liturgy into Arabic, and its regular use in a language understood of the people. I suggested a shortening of non-vital parts at the same time, and gave the experience of our reformers in the matter. Then I spoke very strongly on the need for making the confessional voluntary, and applying the test of congregational confession to take the place of auricular confession. I pointed out that the way for a father to retain the confidence of his children when grown-up is to treat them gradually more and more as brethren, and not always as babes. Their fear is that it would lead to the priesthood losing its leadership, but, of course, this would not necessarily be the case. Then we discussed in general how to bring back Romanists and Protestants to the fold of the National Church, and I could not help thinking how valuable our Church History should be to the Copts to-day as they set about reform. After an ordinary lunch I parted from this learned ecclesiast and returned to the hotel.

“At 5 p.m. I went off to the judge’s house, some little way north of the town. After spending half an hour on educational matters the Governor came to call, and I thought that

¹ At the direction of the Metran.

my chance of a straight talk had now vanished; but to my surprise my two legal friends at once plunged into religious controversy as the one subject of interest to us all. Before taking up their challenge, I of course took care to secure the goodwill of the Governor, in order to avoid seeming to force on him or them the claims of Christ, and then we had nearly two hours' honest talk together on the things of God. Such an opportunity has never yet occurred to me in Cairo, but there in the provinces, away from the eyes of the vigilant press and religious leaders of Islam, men are freer to inquire and speak freely. The upshot of it is that I may send anything to the judge to read, and know that he will carefully examine the same. *Orient and Occident* and Christian literature must be the visible link between us until my next visit.

"At 7.30 p.m. I had to hurry back for the special meeting for women in the Protestant church of Minieh. These souls had been unable to attend the meetings in the theatre, and so I promised to give them and their daughters a chance to see some of the Bible pictures. However, the presence of over a hundred babes in arms completely baffled both my patience and my vocal powers, so that I soon gave way to the Protestant pastors (of whom there are two in Minieh), who were very pleased to have the task of explaining the Bible stories, and certainly in simpler language than I could command. As we came out hundreds of blessings were poured on our heads, and I felt, as I left the place early next day, that my visit had been a help to Protestants as well as to Copts, to priests and pastors, to Moslems of all classes, to Christians of all denominations, and it is little wonder that I now feel called upon to do more of this needed and encouraging work all up and down the valley of the Nile.

"But perhaps some may doubt whether such a visit could ever be repeated. My only reply is that after I left, our evangelist was repeatedly asked both by Moslems and Copts when I would be able to return. And several young men, besides one of the Coptic priests, were there at the station at 6 a.m. to bid me farewell, and to pray that I would come again very soon.

"Will not some brother and sister who reads of this open door, dedicate themselves to itinerating mission work in the valley of the Nile?"

CHAPTER XVI

THE LAST DAWN—AND THE FIRST

THORNTON came back from his last mission in Upper Egypt tired, but not more than tired. *Orient and Occident* was suspended for the holidays, so there was very little to do; he could afford to take a rest. The weariness must indeed have been great, to judge by the one fact that the flow of correspondence soon ceases. In ordinary times it would have overflowed after such experiences as those in Upper Egypt. Again, he set apart a day for sorting and putting away the papers, letters, communications, and other stratified accumulations of years, for he never destroyed a paper, however totally unimportant. But at the very outset of the day he threw himself back in a chair, complaining of utter slackness, and the task was never done.

It was clear that something serious underlay this unwonted prostration, and it was soon manifested what that was. His temperature rose, and the doctor pronounced that he was suffering from an attack of enteric fever. It was a great blow to him, for he saw at once that it meant the end of his proposed

tour in the Soudan; but he bore it well, and soon talked cheerfully of a trip to Palestine instead. It was holiday-time; no sense of work being left undone worried him; he had leisure to be ill. Thus he was never unhappy, for at first the attack was pronounced a slight one, and when the fatal complication supervened, he was too ill even to know he was ill. A sense of peace and contentment, therefore, reigned till the end.

The pneumonia which proved fatal supervened when he had no longer any strength to throw it off. For three days his constitution battled with it, but on the Saturday morning, 7th September, it was manifest that the battle was against him, and that the hour had come for our leader to go from us.

In that remarkable letter—that self-revelation—which he wrote to his Betrothed at the outset of his missionary career, he had told her of his will and resolution to be “a preacher-prophet all the time.” The reader now knows how that resolution had been kept, and how in those last months especially it was vouchsafed to him to be a “preacher-prophet” to the last. But in this last night of his earthly life he gave another—an unconscious—self-revelation, and in this we see him a “preacher-prophet” finally, even to the very end. Wondrously, therefore, was the desire that animated his whole life fulfilled.

And this is the only reason that warrants a biographer in dwelling on the sacred details of the passing of a soul. This warrant is not to be granted to

sentimental demand, or even to that of mere dramatic completeness. But when the last hours are so entirely of a piece with the whole of the life that has gone before, pointing its message, completing its inspiration, and perfecting its glorifying of God, then it becomes so essentially part of the life, that the writer of the life cannot choose but set it down.

The self-manifestation was all unconscious; that is what gave it its tremendous reality. Thornton, like all highly strung, imaginative persons, was not devoid of self-consciousness; and had he been aware of his situation during those hours, this might have embarrassed, or it might have marred, the perfect simplicity of what he revealed to us. But, in fact, he was unaware that he was dying, or even that he was ill. His mind, therefore, because delirious, was all the more normal—paradoxical though it may seem, yet it is true; for his delirium was not the distressing, almost maniacal, type that makes a man utterly *not* himself; rather it was a gentle cloud thrown over the present, under which the mind of the man, in the freedom of its proper nature, moved through its accustomed haunts, without the little falsenesses of subjectivity, engaged in its accustomed work. At such times a man is most truly *himself*; inmost thought and outward action equally are transformed into the common expression of word, and the text is fulfilled which saith, "*By thy words shalt thou be justified, and by thy words shalt thou be condemned.*" What, then, were the words which, throughout that livelong night, were poured forth before that tribunal? Not one

syllable that was unworthy of his high calling and his sacred profession; nay, not a syllable—if we except a few thoughtful inquiries for his wife, his child, his family at home, his nurses—that was not about that one grand passion of his life—The Work. That passion held him even to the last moments. And so, the lesson of the hour of death drove home the lesson of his life, with all the impressiveness, the mysterious pathos, with which God has invested the sunsets of this world.

Perfect calm reigned in the chamber of death; the long hours of the night were passed in the singing of many hymns, the reading and re-reading of many of the supreme passages of Scriptures, the offering of manifold prayers, crowned by a last Eucharist. It was the peace of God which passeth understanding. For the opposite of joy is not sorrow, but sin; and because sin seemed, for once, to have been totally excluded from the earthly scene, joy and sorrow reigned there together, pure sorrow and pure joy, making, with love, one perfect common chord.

Thus the night was one long watch-night of divine service; and the preacher of the sermon was the unconscious centre of it all. Sometimes he would speak of his "colleagues," as he always called them: "*I never saw such love as Mrs. Lasbrey's*"—the witness of the dying to the dead. Sometimes he imagined himself expounding some plan, *more suo*: "*One or two points I wish you to notice . . .*" (and emphatically): "*I know no more than what I wrote.*" Once he was preparing for a sermon: "*I want more than anything else to say*

a few words on Christian duty. . . .” Then, thinking evidently of the proposed class for converts and workers: “*I may be able to do two hours a week*” (in lectures, he meant); and again, speaking humbly, as he often did, of his own limitations: “*I’m afraid I’m not enough of a scholar for that.*” Still thinking of some great plan for the extension of the work, he said: “*But I’m sure I shall never be given money enough for that!*” . . . “*Wonderful opportunities!*” he once said. And once was overheard a word, most true of him: “*Joy in service!*”

Once—let us say, a *symbolic* word: “*Cecil, darling*” (his little son), “*come along, we must be on the way.*”

He was offered brandy, but put it from him, as *the work* again rose up before him: “*It would do the greatest harm to my work, and I want to have it straight with the Lord and my colleagues from the start*” (this very emphatic and distinct).

He enjoyed the hymns, but did not join in, save once, when he beat time vigorously to “*Safe in the arms of Jesus,*” and once when he suddenly broke into the hymn, “*And now, beloved Lord, Thy soul resigning,*” at the words, “*Sweet Saviour, in mine hour of mortal anguish.*” Loudly he sang, though the poor dying voice refused to form a musical note.

The two sole texts of Scripture overheard from him during the night were strangely appropriate. One was, “*Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit*”; the other, “*Let patience have her perfect work.*”

Strange text for a Thornton, a Boanerges! Yet how little we know of the lives even of our nearest! Who would have guessed what were the words found in his pocket-book, carried about like an amulet, written on a soiled, worn scrap of paper, as if frequently and continuously referred to by him? They were these—

“Drop Thy still dews of quietness,
Till all our strivings cease;
Take from our souls the strain and stress,
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of Thy peace.

Breathe through the heats of our desire
Thy coolness and Thy balm;
Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
Speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,
O still small voice of calm!”

And the conjunction of these peace-breathing lines with this man, whose nature was so strenuous and impatient, whose attitude so militant and uncompromising, has something in it that touches very nearly to the quick.

More than once he folded his hands in prayer, holding them high up; twice the words of the Lord's Prayer were on his lips. Often the prayer was inarticulate, but “*Yes, Lord!*” was distinctly caught. Once he said, though it needed no verbal expression, “*Let them know that I am strong in the faith.*”

A sense of completion, of the transferring of responsibility, seemed to have been given to this worker who always was striving after a new horizon, and

who never could bear to be without his share in every enterprise. "*I'll leave all that to you fellows to organise,*" he said; a last unconscious charge. Yet in the ultimate words that were distinguishable, in those early hours of the morning, he imagined himself back at the great enterprise: "*I must have Friday for the Moslem meeting,*" he said. And then, two words, "*The work.*"

Later on he was evidently preaching, though the words could not be distinguished. The mortal illness had made his voice, even from the beginning of the evening, hoarse and strange, and, as this strangeness increased, it seemed to intensify the almost terrible earnestness with which he pled for God. He would throw up his right hand, and, at some pause in his preaching, push back the hair from his flushed brow, those two old "imperial gestures" so well known to many a crowd of listeners on Llandudno or Scarborough beach, or in tent, or hall, or church. His earnestness was terrible to watch. He seemed to be the incarnation of that tender yet awful figure of the Man pleading with souls in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, described by Bunyan in one of his most immortal phrases.

Thus Thornton preached on, the strange, unearthly voice echoing down the hushed corridors of the hospital in the deep, still hours before daybreak. And the voice never paused, though words had long since ceased to be distinguishable: . . . quite insensibly, as total unconsciousness stole over him, it did but merge into

the loud breathing of a dying man. He had his wish: he was "a preacher-prophet all the time."

We had crossed his hands upon his breast, and thus they remained. Through the interstices of the venetian shutters the dawn was flushing red in the East. As the flush brightened and all nature began to awaken to the morning of the Lord's Day, the sound of his breathing grew more still; the hoarseness ceased; it gave place to one or two gentle sighs. . . . One of these . . . had no successor. The pure, noble spirit had fled.

The rose-flush in the East had passed into gold as we came forth into the glowing Eastern morning, and in the mysterious breathlessness of dawn walked through the silent streets to his deserted home. All Nature seemed filled, instinct, with love, joy, and peace. And Grace echoed the testimony, for we remembered at that moment that it was the day and well-nigh the hour on which his Lord rose from the dead. . . . And so the sun rose in glory. The day had dawned and the shadows had fled away; and the thought thrilled through one that Douglas Thornton was at that

moment entering upon his first real holiday, the eternal holy-day of the saints at rest.

And yet, if personality be, in Christ, guarded and preserved, it is impossible to think of Douglas Thornton's holiday as a holiday of inaction. As of old, it must be a holiday of work: but of work freed now from the distressing limitations of the work on earth; effort without friction; the perfect rest of joyous and unimpeded activity. It is his service in the Church *Militant* that is over. The fighter is at rest; the worker will never die.

He lies in the quiet cemetery between the Desert and the Nile, in the Egypt which he came to love and for which he very gladly gave his life. The Arabic which he burned to Christianise was spoken at his obsequies, and English brother-clergyman and Moslem convert, Syrian and Egyptian fellow-worker, Coptic bishop and deacon, all took their part, in honour of him whose whole life was to join and not divide, to gather and not to scatter. "*Sow in the morn thy seed, at eve hold not thy hand,*" the mourners sang; and with the words came the pledge that that day's earthly dawn, when his spirit had fled, had told us truly of the Dawn which shines more and more until the Perfect Day; that those who then were sowing precious seed, weeping, should one day come again with joy, bearing their sheaves with them; and that his unfinished labours would be caught up by living hands, and finished, according to the promise of Him who said that undying word—

THE LAST DAWN—AND THE FIRST 283

“EXCEPT A CORN OF WHEAT FALL INTO THE GROUND AND DIE, IT ABIDETH ALONE, BUT IF IT DIE IT BRINGETH FORTH MUCH FRUIT.”

“HE THAT LOVETH HIS LIFE SHALL LOSE IT, BUT HE THAT HATETH HIS LIFE SHALL KEEP IT TO LIFE EVER-LASTING.”

“IF A MAN LOVE ME LET HIM FOLLOW ME: THAT WHERE I AM THERE MAY MY SERVANT BE ALSO.”



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