

Pioneering on the Rivers

*Experiences of the New Zealand pioneer missionary Allan Smith
on the Paraguay and Amazon rivers 1908-1935*

*Dedicated to Allan Smith's mother, Jeannie (1862-1948)
and to his wife, B. Maud (1885-1961).*



I compiled this updated edition for family use in 2016. It includes many photos of our grandfather's work which were recently found in the old family home in Wellington, New Zealand. The house belongs to my brother Allan who is named after the great missionary. A. G. Compton wrote the original 1948 edition of *Pioneering on the Rivers* and the original foreword and preface are appended to this book.

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Allan Smith in 1916 on first furlough

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Heritage of the Past

The smoky haze of battle lay heavy upon the sodden field of Waterloo. Fighting had been severe and unrelenting, for the issues of war swung on the pivot of a general's strategy. Never shall England forget the glory of that day, when following the famous command from the Duke of Wellington, "The whole front shall advance," a valiant concerted movement broke the morale of Napoleon's troops and won the day for the allied forces.

Somewhere among that distinguished company on the side of England was Private William Smith, ancestor of our hero. On attaining this glorious victory, those who were left returned home to the full flush of a nation's acclamation. To have fought at Waterloo was no small honour, and the soldiers revelled in the unstinted plaudits of their friends and countrymen. Henry Newbolt captured the fire of their patriotism in his stirring lines:

*"England! Today let fire be in thine eyes,
And in thy heart the throb of leaping guns;
Crown in thy streets the deed that never dies,
And tell their father's fame to all thy sons!"*

With the advent of peace, the country quietly settled to the usual routine of life, and the bright uniforms were laid proudly away.

William Smith was only a youth of eighteen when he left home, but the war had added many years to his age. Tired of the restlessness of soldiery, he settled down to his trade as a gunsmith, and made a little home for Annie Mair on whose hand he proudly placed a wedding ring. In the joyous years that followed, children were born to them, and family life with its homely joys tasted all the sweeter to the young parents because of the anxious years through which they had passed. The youngest member of their family was Allan, who grew to young manhood in the fading glory of Waterloo.

Oftentimes when the day's work was done, and the family entertained their humble friends, young Allan would listen spellbound as his father proudly re-

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heard the strange things that befell his regiment under the command of the Iron Duke. No wonder that a boy's mind became inflamed with the lure of adventure, and kindled to dreams of greatness by all he heard of distant fields and glorious conquest. Home ties grew irksome in comparison to that which his father never tired of telling, until one day a little home in old Britain was strangely empty, and two hearts awoke to a new pain. Reluctantly they had released their youngest boy to the call of the sea.

In the excitement of the new life opening up before him, Allan had given no thought to the consequences of his decided action. To the flapping of sail and the shrill cries of the seamen, they had nosed the quivering "Brig" into the setting sun. That night when all the excitement of their departure had died away, the pangs of homesickness tugged at his heart. He almost regretted that he had persisted in his wilful choice.

For what seemed like hours, he lay awake on the old rug the ship's mate had thrown in the corner of the fo'c'sle for him. However, he was only a boy, tired at that, and in a little while in his dreams he was sailing to adventure and fortune on some distant shore of the world. However, it seemed that no sooner was he asleep than he was roughly awakened and sent to the cookhouse. Long hours of grinding toil quickly disillusioned Allan.

Distance had not yielded the green fields of his dreams. At the end of a long voyage, he had suffered many months of cruel treatment at the hands of rough, godless men. The smelly grime of the fo'c'sle, and the tropical storms at times threatened to wash them off the deck in fiendish fury. No one was more pleased to step ashore in the friendly shelter of his home port than young Allan Smith.

The absence of her boy had brought a weight of care upon the mother. She had not heard of him since that eventful night. For all she knew he might have been shipwrecked or washed overboard; yet with all the hope of a mother's heart, she looked daily for his return. When a big boy in sailor's rig bounded

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into the home with a cry of recognition, he was greeted with all the strong tenderness of a mother's welcome.

At this time, a spiritual awakening had begun to stir Britain from her forgetfulness of God, and voices were raised in the bold proclamation of faith through Jesus Christ. Perhaps it was regret for the sorrow he had caused them that brought a conviction of sin upon Allan so that he could not rest or sleep. Who can tell the pilgrimage a soul may make? Undoubtedly it was the hand of God reaching out to the prodigal. Nor was it long ere the dawning light of God's salvation brought peace through believing to the heart of this young man, tired of wandering, and more than tired of his sins.

Life became a wonderful thing in the grip of this newfound experience. Energies spent in the ways of the world were now just as wholeheartedly used in the service of his wonderful Master. He noticed that no one was interested in the ragged waifs of the street and no one cared for their souls. They presented a challenge that Allan was ready to accept. Each Sunday found him out after these strays of humanity with the message of the Gospel. In such a work, it was necessary often to provide clothes for many of them before they could come to the class. This noble effort was widely appreciated, reaching even to the ears of the Duke of Fife, who henceforth made a donation each year towards the good work.

About this time, the special missions of Moody and Sankey were creating a great stir throughout the land. In London the leading newspapers had largely featured the great meetings, the blessings of which had spread throughout England and Scotland. Away in Aberdeenshire lived a humble but godly family by the name of Fyfe. All the neighbourhood had rejoiced when James won the heart and hand of bright little Isabella Milne, for both were well known and highly respected for miles around. Their union was a happy one, and eight children saw the light of day in the godly atmosphere of a truly Christian home.

Regular in attendance at their place of worship, the Free Church of Scotland, they also opened their home for the Cottage Meetings that were a feature of

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the spiritual awakening at this time. These good people lost nothing by this unselfish action, for on one glad night under the powerful preaching of Mr Stephens, an ardent soul winner, their Jeannie, a bonnie girl of fifteen summers, accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as her Saviour.

Great joy overflowed in the many Christian hearts of Aberdeenshire when they knew that Moody and Sankey were coming to their district, and amongst the thousands who attended the great meetings was Jeannie Fyfe, her face aglow with her newfound joy. An extra special treat was an invitation to Huntly Castle, the lovely home of the Duchess of Gordon. In those wonderful grounds, a large company gathered to meet the evangelists. Dwight L. Moody gave a short, telling message; and the man with the marvellous voice, Ira D. Sankey, sang the “Ninety-and-Nine,” a sacred song that had thrilled vast London audiences that very year.



Moody and Sankey 1874

A few years pass, until one day in the ordered providence of God Allan Smith crosses the path of Jeannie Fyfe. They had so much in common in devotion to Christ and His service that not many months elapsed ere the reckless though gallant young man of Banffshire had won the love and pledge of the quiet Christian lass from the Shire of Aberdeen.

After their marriage in the year 1880, they settled in the town of Macduff in Banffshire, Scotland. This Shire is a long narrow county stretching north along the north-west border of Aberdeenshire, from the remote mountain valleys at the north base of the Cairngorm group, to the shores of the Moray Firth, and is wholly agricultural and pastoral, except for a row of busy fishing villages.

For one happy year, the young couple lived content with their cosy nest in Banffshire. Then reports of great opportunities for young couples in New Zealand, away in the Southern Sea, began to filter through to the residents of

the little town. Allan could not settle however much his little wife hoped he would. Perhaps it was the call of the sea again, he was not sure; but it was irresistible, and in the year 1882, their passages were booked on the "Port Glasgow," a sailing schooner on her maiden voyage to the Antipodes.

With mixed emotions, the young wife gazed at the floating homes tied to the wharves at Greenock. She dreaded the long voyage; but God would be with them, and her woman's heart was brave. All the din of a large shipping port sounded in their ears—the shouts of seamen, the loading and unloading of cargo, the hoisting of sails, and a thousand other noises familiar to the sea. There was great activity the afternoon they slipped their mooring and sailed out from Greenock through the Firth of Clyde into the North Channel. They stood on deck until the land drew cruelly away into the mist. They might never see the shores of their homeland again. The thought chilled them. With a glance toward the lonely unknown wastes of sea into which they were driving, they sought the warm shelter of their quarters, leaving the deserted deck to the eerie shadows of the night.

Storms seemed determined to make the "Port Glasgow" fight every inch of the way. Rough seas swept the decks and the wind howled incessantly through the rigging. For months, they never saw land, and the ship's officers were far from their ease. A cargo of iron pipes for New Plymouth was affecting their compass. They might be anywhere. One sullen day after months of severe buffeting, to the tremendous relief of the ship's company, they sighted land at last. As the dim outlines of the New Zealand coast came slowly into view the hearts of young Allan and Jeannie Smith grew strong with hope. It was a new land to them, an untried path; but their confidence was in an unfailing Friend; they could trust all with Him. Even then, they needed Him, for the wind had increased to gale force, and the rolling of the schooner had shifted the cargo in the hold, so that the boat had a dangerous list to starboard. For one anxious hour, the Captain feared that nothing would save them from being blown on to the Wellington Heads.

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Unknown to those on board, however, a little band of Christians was praying for their safety during those awful moments when the vessel was being driven towards the rocks. No sooner had they reached the shelter of the harbour than the pilot's boat came out to the Schooner. Several men scaled the rope ladder. To their surprise, Mr and Mrs Smith heard their names called, and Mr Johnson introduced himself. Friends in the homeland had written telling him that they would be on the "Port Glasgow." He it was who had called the Christians to prayer when it was rumoured that the schooner was battling for its very existence out beyond the Heads.

To crown all, Mr Johnson had secured a little cottage for them, so it was with glad hearts that Mr and Mrs Smith left the Schooner on which they had lived for four long months, and went with him to their first New Zealand home.

That night they knelt together to thank God for His marvellous protection and to commit themselves afresh for days ahead in a strange land. They were not rich in this world's goods – all the capital they possessed was two shillings and sixpence – but they were quietly confident that God would never, never forsake them. They were fabulously rich in faith.

Nine months from their landing on New Zealand shores, a little cry was heard that brought great joy into that humble home. None could be more proud than they of their firstborn son. All the hungry love of parenthood was lavishly outpoured on this little man of their own. They gave him the father's name, and ever so sacredly



Allan Smith 2 years old 1885

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dedicated him to the Lord. Here was a little life steeped in prayer from his birth, and earnestly committed in devoted faith to the Master. It is true that a work of grace was still required to make him the man he was to become; but in the rich heritage received from parents and grandparents, there were deeply planted those seeds of faith and endeavour, which God was to use in great exploits through the years ahead.

The Pranks of a Boy

Allan Smith junior grew up as do most healthy boys, full of mischief and bounding high spirits. With the coming of his small brothers Bruce and Douglas into the home, he found himself with good company for any exploits he might care to plan.

“You mustn’t fight, Allan,” his mother said to him, as tales of his prowess at school filtered through to the little home circle. For her sake, he honestly tried; but one day he came home in desperation.

“Mother,” he burst out as he flung his school bag on a chair, “I’ll just have to fight. I’ve got to protect Douglas.”

Behind the lad’s natural love for a good fight, there beat a big courageous heart that would not see his young brother bullied.

On another occasion, he and Douglas were at work on their special task of keeping the paths free from weeds. Douglas was passionately fond of birds and found it difficult to keep to the irksome work on hand. To bring him back from the birds to paths, Allan picked up a piece of dirt and aimed it at his brother, unaware of a fragment of glass embedded within it. At the sight of blood flowing rather profusely, Allan became alarmed, but full of resource, he ran for some leaves he had heard contained healing properties, and then rushed into the house.

“Mrs Jacobs,” he whispered to his mother’s friend with whom he was in special favour just then, “I want some hot water, quick!”

“What do you want hot water for anyway, young man,” she enquired, her curiosity roused.

“Douglas has cut himself, and mother would get awfully frightened if she saw him with blood all over his face,” answered Allan in a rush of words; “Quick, get me some hot water and I’ll make a poultice with these leaves.”

“You go up, Allan, and tell your mother,” replied his friend sharply. That

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interview might not have proved so disastrous for Allan if Mrs Jacobs had not insisted on accompanying him, for so the whole story came out!

Though with no tendency to evil ways, he was never far from the scene of action if there were any pranks to be played. More often than not, the boys were able to hoodwink the victims of their jokes, but not always. On one particular night, he turned off the gas at the meter in the Newtown Gospel Hall so that all the lamps had to be lit again. Unfortunately, from Allan's point of view, a Mr Kilby was near the door and, giving chase, overtook the culprit and brought him back. The shame of that night taught Allan a long remembered lesson.

Full of life, he had no sense of danger. Fear was an unknown quantity, and he would take any risk. Nothing pleased him better than to gallop a spirited horse along the shore at Lyall Bay, or the thrill of making it jump improvised hurdles. He was also passionately fond of a good wrestle or any rough and tumble with the boys.

Despite this, Allan was open and frank in his character, always revealing a manly tenderness towards any weaker boy needing the shelter of his strength. Among the boys he was the acknowledged leader, popular and handsome, as well as powerfully strong. His pent up energies found vent quite often in the pleasure of doing useful things, as well as in boyish fun and mischievous ways. Many a small carpentry job about the house was attempted, and usually neatly finished.

In the winter evenings, Mr Smith would show the boys how to build miniature sailboats, and how to make the sails just as he made them for full-rigged schooners in the old fishing village of Macduff. With the lengthening evenings of spring, they would go together to the old Lagoon in Newtown Park to race their model yachts. These experiences gave Allan an early love for boats.

Allan's Conversion and the Strange Events Preceding It

“I’ll shoot you, Smith!”

As these startling words rang out, Allan, who was walking some paces ahead of his companion, turned to see a revolver pointing straight at him. Before he could grasp the seriousness of the situation, there was a flash, followed by the sharp ping of a bullet, then a sudden shock and staggering a few steps he fell forward with the blood rushing from a wound in his head. The other lad, Bolton, filled with horror at what he had done, took to his heels, leaving Allan lying on the roadside.

It seems that Bolton’s father, preparing to leave for a day’s pig-shooting, had carelessly left his loaded revolver on the table, and the boy in a spirit of daring had snatched it up, together with a sheath knife to stick in his belt, and had run off to join Allan on his way to school. His idea was to give his friend a “good scare” only, but unaware that the weapon was loaded, brought about a tragic, almost fatal, result.

Allan’s face was blackened with gunpowder, so close were they to each other when the gun was fired. A cry for help soon brought a neighbour who had heard the report. One quick glance told him that Allan had been shot through the eye, which lay loosely out on the cheek. Wasting no time, he assisted Allan to a house close by, and when the bleeding was stanchd, he was removed to the Wellington hospital just a few blocks away.



Wellington Hospital 1886

News of the shooting soon spread down the street. His sister Bella was the

first to hear of the accident. With fear clutching at her heart, she ran home, bursting breathlessly in upon her mother who was nursing a babe only some few weeks old.

“Oh mother,” cried the girl, “Allan’s shot!”

“Go and bring him home, Bella,” exclaimed the mother, dazed with the sudden news.

“Mother we can’t, the man’s taken him to hospital.” Wrapping up her babe, Mrs Smith went through to her neighbour.

“Take my baby,” she said to the good woman. “Allan’s shot and they’ve taken him to hospital. I must go to him.”

“How is he, Doctor?” She could hardly frame the question.

“I’m afraid there is little or no hope of recovery, Mrs Smith, but I will report to you when I remove the eye.”

Later in the day, an anxious mother pressed for the Doctor’s verdict on the real condition of her boy, and learned that the bullet had cut the eye in two, struck the skull, and rebounded to the back of the nostrils, cutting away the tonsils in its passage.

For two weeks Allan’s life hung in the balance. The doctors could not find the bullet, but afraid to take the risk of a prolonged search, they fought rather for his life.

So serious was his condition that the Christians in Newtown met earnestly in prayer that the doctors and nurses might be in the control of a Higher Hand all through those anxious days. The doctors feared for his recovery. Then slowly, ever so slowly, he drew away from the brink of death.

No visitor was more regular than young Bolton. Every day he came round to enquire at the hospital. As many another boy before him, he had revelled in the cheap yellow-back adventure books that poured out so copiously from the printing press. His teacher had warned him several times to give up reading them before he did something that would bring him before the public. He was

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now genuinely upset, and could not do enough to show how sorry he was for what he had done.

“What are you going to do to that boy when you get out of hospital, Allan,” enquired the Doctor one day.

“I quite forgive him,” came the gallant reply. “I’ve nothing against him, and I can’t think he can have anything against me.”

All the happenings of this anxious month had come with tragic suddenness upon the Smith household. A shadow seemed to hang over the little home without Allan’s cheery presence. However, in the purposes of God, this strange set of circumstances was to be God’s way of reaching out for the mind and heart and will of this young man. Already he was being prepared to carry the Gospel to souls living in spiritual darkness along the river ways of Paraguay and Peru.

“When I was left on the roadside, alone and bleeding,” said Allan, “I felt



Wellington Hospital Ward 3, 1903

that my end had come. Like lightning, my whole life came before me. I saw that with all I knew of the Bible, all I knew of God’s salvation, I was not prepared to meet God. My sin of rejecting God’s love and God’s mercy seemed tremendous. To

die with no hope, and my soul to be lost! My mind seemed to reel. I was in an agony of soul, although I felt no pain from the bullet wound.”

“It seemed impossible for human skill to effect a cure,” continued Allan, “yet it pleased the Lord of heaven and earth to answer prayer. Slowly and steadily I began to mend, but this did not bring rest and peace to my troubled

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conscience. I lay thinking about the future, wondering whether there was pardon for a sinner like me.”

“One afternoon a person came to where I lay, my head all swathed in bandages, and repeated, softly and earnestly that well known text, John 3:16:

*‘For God so loved the world
that He gave His only begotten Son,
that whoever believes in Him
should not perish
but have everlasting life.’*

“I listened attentively, and eagerly drank in the precious words. I knew that text well and had often repeated it. Now I listened as one who realised his need of a Saviour. As the words sounded in my ears, the truth began to dawn upon me: that God so loved *me* that He gave His only begotten Son to be insulted, and spat upon, and arrayed in mock royalty, and afterwards crucified by men He had created out of the dust.”

“Such love smashed my stony and stubborn heart; I believed the record; I accepted the Saviour; the Holy Spirit entered, and I was born of God.”

The Growth of a Soul

“He took his stand right away,” said his mother when we were conversing together, “all the boys in his class noticed a big change after he had left hospital. Before his accident he had been the ring-leader in any bit of mischief that was brewing, but on his return to school he settled down to take a real interest in his lessons, as though life for him had been filled with a strong new purpose.”

“At home,” continued his mother, “we did not notice the same difference. He had been a little gentleman even before conversion. I could always depend upon him. He showed a manly thoughtfulness towards me at all times and would confide in me concerning his plans and escapades.”

After he returned to school, there were occasions when Allan, with a growing sensitiveness, would be made aware of the fact that he had only one eye. Few can be more cruel than spiteful boys. Time was when they would have licked the dust; but with all the ardour of a newly converted soul, Allan did his best to



Allan's mother Jeannie aged 86 in 1948

ignore their cowardly insults. He would be as his Master, who, *“when He was reviled, did not revile in return.”* Though he little realised it then, he was being trained in God's school, his whole character being mellowed as he passed through the refining fires of godly self-control.

Little incidents often influence a whole life and give birth to some noble ambition. Hearing that Allan had lost an eye, his uncle and aunt, Mr and Mrs John Taylor, who had come to New Zealand in quest of health, paid a visit to the Smith home. In his uncle's heart was sown a seed of kindly purpose, for,

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some days after his visit, a letter came addressed to Allan, with instructions to buy a glass eye, "*for God can use you just as well as that missionary Mr ...,*" referring to a well-known missionary who had only one eye.

Allan never forgot this encouragement. Into a young life flooded with that wonderful first-love of a newborn soul, there came a vision of missionary service, and a longing to be a man whom the Lord would choose to represent Him in some heathen land.

At this time, Allan was not much more than a boy, years of preparation lay ahead of him. With the vision of being a missionary before him, he applied himself diligently to his lessons at the Newtown school and did well. When he was leaving school, the problem that faced many parents came to Mr and Mrs Smith: to what trade should they apprentice Allan? His choice was carpentering, perhaps architecture, so he was sent to the Technical College for a short course of training. In this apparently simple choice, there was to be seen later the guiding hand of God.

Meanwhile he was growing in spiritual grace and Christian experience. His Bible Class leader, Mr Wood, was an earnest soul who followed Allan with prayerful affection through all the eventful years that lay ahead of this ready scholar.

Another man to whom he owed much was Mr Edwards senior, father of his chum Harry, who was keenly interested in the young Christian men of the community, and would take them with him to help in the cottage meetings at Upper Hutt. He knew how good it was for a young man to bear the yoke in his youth. In this way, Allan learned to break the silence and publicly declare the work of God in his soul.

His first attempt at public speaking was still fresh in his mind, when Harry and he paid a visit along with Mr Winnicott to Stokes Valley. To their dismay, this brother calmly announced that they were to take the opening part of the meeting, and that he would close. Allan spoke for a quarter of an hour, falter-

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ingly perhaps, but earnestly; and not strange to relate, his text was John 3:16, through which he himself had seen the light.

Though hesitant at first to speak in public, he revelled in the grander service of intercession, with all his heart. In the secret place, he was free from those entangling bonds of nervousness; there his lips did not close clammily upon words that failed to express what he longed to say. Prayer in the presence of God was a delight; there he could lay hold upon God for his mates and friends, and with all the confidence of his newborn faith, he knew that God heard and would certainly answer.

The missionary vision still lived on in Allan's soul; this was the goal to which his life moved. He felt confident that someday in the will of God the way would open for him. Meanwhile he could pray for God's work and God's missionaries.

One day a sudden inspiration came to him, as light at break of day reveals a greater horizon—why not form a “Missionary Prayer Band?” Allan wasted no time in seeking out his special chum Stanley Harrison, a quiet refined youth destined later to rise high in the New Zealand Government Service, and to him he outlined the proposal. Together they set out to pray for the work of God in the foreign fields. The greatness of the task grew upon their souls, as the knowledge of the tremendous need was impressed upon them.

Missionary zeal glowed in their hearts to white heat, until they felt it was not enough to pray. Souls were perishing around them, as well as on the far-flung shores of the world. What could they do? This exercise of heart led them to join with others in open-air work at several places where crowds congregated. Allan was the prime mover, his bright, popular leadership holding the young men together in staunch loyalty and unflagging service.

Then he became especially exercised about Gospel meetings in Kilbirnie. Stanley Harrison suggested the canvassing of all the homes with Gospel literature. This they wholeheartedly did, announcing at the same time that meetings would be held each Sunday evening in a building they had hired between them.

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However, they had trouble. While the meeting was in progress, the young hooligans who had crowded into the back seats to have an evening's entertainment, would throw hymnbooks at the speaker, and in every conceivable way seek to upset the service. One of their tricks was to conceal a clock under their seats, set the alarm going, and cleverly vary the sound by putting on, or taking off some of the coverings, to make location difficult! Outside, they would tie ropes across the street to cause a disturbance close to the hall.

Through all this, the boys gamely held on for a whole year. Allan was not one to give in easily, and whatever he took in hand, he carried through, inspiring those at his side with the same courageous perseverance. Hard though the work of those months undoubtedly was, they counted it all joy, for some of those rough, ragged boys found the Saviour, developing into fine men despite their heavy handicap in early life.

During this period, the father's grocery business in Wellington was developing rapidly, and Allan was called home to help his father in the shop. Here he earned experience he would never have had otherwise. In daily contacts with men and women over the counter, he gained an insight into human nature, and readily learned to exchange thoughts on current topics.

"Allan was very attentive to his father's business," said his old schoolmate, Harry Edwards. "If I went round to the shop and found him busy, he would never leave till he had finished any work he might be doing."

Gordon Anderson, another schoolmate and later one of New Zealand's leading surgeons, used to assist Allan weigh out sugar, and help generally behind the counter. In recalling his various contacts with him, the Doctor said that Allan was "especially good with boys." For instance, he would tell them about the boy who was shot and how that boy both lost and found his sight, making a lasting impression upon them by removing his glass eye!

He was fond of music, and nothing pleased him more than a crowd of Christian young people singing the rousing hymns from Sankey's. Miss Daniell at the piano, young Ryland playing his violin, and Allan his flute—all providing

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an excellent accompaniment to the young voices. Those were glad, happy evenings, when young people filled the most impressionable hours of their youth with joyous praise.

The years were passing. Allan's interest in Christian service had not flagged. He had a class of boys who almost hero-worshipped him. The open-air and indoor preaching filled most of his spare evenings, but in spite of this, he felt he was sidestepping his main goal. A fresh burden lay heavily upon his heart. For days and weeks, he pondered prayerfully over his future pathway.

Allan didn't want to leave the business where excellent prospects awaited him. Still that was only a natural human desire for business success – the inner man hungered for souls. A few days later, Allan discussed the matter with his father. Training on one of the New Zealand Bible Carriages would be an excellent preparation for a missionary. Would his father be willing to release him from the business?

Allan's father slowly pondered the "pros and cons." He would miss his boy in the business, but he wanted to do the right thing. He realised that the Lord's will was surer than his choice. Committing his boy to the Lord, he freed him for the next season's activities. Harry took over Allan's class of boys, and another man was engaged to take his place in the shop, so that he was now at liberty to launch out for the Lord with all his heart, and time, and talents.

The months with the Bible Carriage were rich in spiritual experiences. Continual rubbing of shoulders with a fellow worker in the cramped space of the carriage and the house-to-house visitation with its frequent disappointments and rebuffs, all tended to rub off the awkward selfish corners that seem so much



A Bible Carriage (like the one Allan worked on)

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a part of human nature. The outdoor life of the Bible Carriage was healthy, but for anyone whose heart was not aflame with a love for souls, it was at best a lonely wandering existence.

The carriage workers would sometimes leave the horses resting on some farm while they made a quick visit home. During one of these visits, Mrs Smith noticed that Allan was unusually pale and reserved. This continued for several days, until one morning he was his own bright self again.

“What was the matter, Allan,” she asked, “you were beginning to look really ill.”

“Oh, it’s all right, mother, I’ve got the victory now. For years, I’ve been exercised about the mission field, but I’ve always wanted to go to China or India, though in my heart I knew that it was to South America God was calling me. I’ve been rebellious about it, but victory has come at last.”

It had been the Enemy tempting him to ignore God’s plan, but from then on, he never looked back or regretted the decision made that day.

Allan Falls in Love

The summer season on the Bible Carriage was quickly passing. Many isolated homes tucked away among the hills of New Zealand's back-blocks had been visited, and not a few precious souls had come to know the Lord. Now, after a brief spell, the carriage was on the road again moving north.

Meanwhile, his chum Harry Edwards, being keen to join Allan, had offered for a few months service with the carriage. It was while Harry was his companion that Allan met his future wife, Maud, and many a hearty laugh has been raised since, when talking over those glad, shy days when he walked on air and made flying visits to a little farmhouse in Manawaru.

Maud Ladbrook's father had passed away to the Father's Home through the Valley of the Shadow. For years, the brave little widow had struggled to provide for her family of one boy and three girls, of whom Maud was the youngest. Then the mother married again and became the wife of Mr Martin, an earnest Christian farmer who had long held her in esteem. When Mr Martin heard one Sunday that there was a Bible Carriage at Te Aroha, some miles away, he sent two young men



Maud Smith (nee Martin) in 1916
on first furlough

from his Bible Class to invite the workers over for the day. Allan was alone, and to the amazement of these young men brought up strictly on the fine old

principle that only that which was absolutely necessary should be done on the Lord's Day, he was shaving himself!

A meeting had been announced for that night, and as his mate was away for a few days, Allan gratefully accepted the assistance of Mr Martin, the whole family driving over to Te Aroha for the service. The next day they took Allan on a picnic. Perhaps it was then that their eyes commenced their dancing and found the light reflected!

When Harry returned, there was something about his mate that puzzled him. "Where are you going, Allan?" he queried as he saw him mounting one of the horses.

"Oh, just to see a young lady," he answered, his eyes twinkling in a half-teasing way, "it's another case of Isaac and Rebecca!"

And with a laugh, he was galloping off in the direction of Manawaru.

At Mr Martin's invitation, they brought the Carriage to his homestead. Allan could hardly contain his delight, although he knew that another reason entirely had prompted the kind action. The Martin homestead was in the centre of a large farming district that could be visited in all directions by the young men; at night, their horses could be turned loose in one of the paddocks.

The family welcomed Harry most heartily, and both the young men revelled in the warm, homely touch of family life again. One morning, when Harry was out in the cow bail and Allan was off somewhere helping Maud, Mr Martin sensed the situation. At breakfast time, he quietly slipped two spoons on the porridge plates as they were passed to Maud and Allan. No sooner was this noticed than the whole family, excepting the mother, set to teasing them. This bantering they took in good part, whilst the rafters of the old farmhouse rang with peals of hearty laughter.

For six weeks, the young men moved about the district. On their frequent visits to the Martin homestead, Allan became aware that Maud's mother was quietly avoiding him. He wanted to discuss the future with her, but she divined his intentions, and "dodged" him all the time. At last, it was time to

Allan Falls in Love

leave, and the mother had to say “Goodbye” to him. Grasping his opportunity, Allan told of his love for Maud, and his desire to have her as his helpmeet in the missionary work to which he was confident God was calling him.

In that eventful month, with no desire to hurt, Allan brought anxiety and pain to more than one mother’s heart; his mother in Wellington was afraid that this girl had ensnared Allan and would mar his Christian service, whilst her mother was equally perturbed because he wanted to carry off her daughter to South America. Time made apparent to them all, however, that it was a true union of kindred hearts, tenderly sealed forever with the blessing of God.

Preparations for Sailing

His apprenticeship in Christian service had given Allan the quiet confidence of practical experience. He now realised that he had touched only the fringe of spiritual attainment, and this knowledge kept him humble. At the same time, unknown to Allan, the fruits of the Spirit in his life were manifesting themselves to the Christians in Wellington, with whom he had previously laboured. Once more, he threw himself wholeheartedly into the grocery business, eager to repay his father for releasing him during the Carriage season. All too soon, he would have to say farewell, for the call of God had come, and the tremendous need in South America tugged ever so strongly at his heart.

In this waiting time, a constant correspondence was going on between Allan and Maud. It was a trial of patience to them both that so many miles separated them from each other; but they revelled even more in the warm exchange of thought that came with each eagerly awaited letter. Then one memorable day, to the excitement of the whole Smith household, Allan brought Maud home to meet his parents. If the family had held any misgivings as to Allan's choice, all doubts were soon dispelled, as Maud quickly captivated their hearts with her quiet charm and sparkling good humour.

"Dad, you must try to give Allan some money." It was Mrs Smith who spoke. For days, she had been troubled about Allan and was worrying lest he should not have all he needed when he sailed in a few weeks' time.

"I should like to give the lad all he needs," replied the father, "but our wee bit of money is all tied up in the business, and it is very hard to lay hands on any ready cash just now."

God was testing the young man's faith. Not much in the way of gifts had come to him. Only a few missionary-hearted Christians at that time were interested in the speedy carrying of the gospel to other lands. Allan, unaware of his parents' anxiety, was spending much time in prayer concerning the supply of his need, conscious more than ever now of the seriousness of this step,

Preparations for Sailing

yet knowing just as surely that God had called him for service abroad. As he continued in prayer, quiet confidence was born afresh in his soul, God would provide. And so it proved, for all his needs were supplied abundantly.

The day the boat sailed, cold rain poured incessantly out of a leaden sky, as though in sympathy with the occupants of a little home in Newtown. To loving hearts, this inevitable separation brought a numbing sense of loss, for the ties of family were strong. With the passing hours, however, there stole into their hearts, above the keen pain of parting, the satisfying peace which comes to those who give because of One Who gave His all.

Just before they left the house, the whole family knelt around the Throne to commit their missionary son to the loving care of God; first, the father prayed for their boy, then Allan sought the blessing of the Lord upon his loved ones. It was an hour full of emotion, with affectionate love at its strong flood tide.

The Call of a Continent

South America was known as “The Dark Horse among the Continents.” World attention, which had so long been riveted on the fabulous wealth of the East, was now turning to that land of mystery.

It was the appalling spiritual need of this great land that called to young Allan Smith. He had pored over the map, and had gleaned all the information obtainable. He saw that South America consisted of a series of republics. Bounded on the north by the Caribbean Sea and on the west by the Pacific Ocean, lay Colombia, an awakening republic with enormous resources that had scarcely begun to be developed. To the right and further to the north lay Venezuela, known as “the Neglected Republic,” where lowlands, tropical climate, and other characteristics make this land one of the most difficult on the Continent; whilst further east lay the Guianas, the foreign colonies of South America, controlled by England, Holland, and France.

South of these extended the giant Portuguese-speaking Republic of Brazil. Through this vast Republic flowed the Amazon River, navigable by great ocean steamers. This wilderness seemed too vast to be conquered by puny



The Call of a Continent

man. The savage tribes of the Amazon basin were disappearing. The Amazon will become more than ever one of the great waterways of the world.

Westward again there was Ecuador, the Republic of the Equator, where much of the population was Indian, and ivory nuts were exported to make buttons and ornaments.

Bounded by the great Pacific on the west, by Ecuador and Colombia on the north, by Brazil and Bolivia on the east, with the slender coast-belt of Chile to the south, Peru climbed up into the clouds, a land of mountains, overwhelming in their vastness and soaring grandeur.

Bolivia, the highest inhabited country in the Western Hemisphere, was bounded on the south by Argentina, known as “the Republic of the Melting Pot,” because of the fact that more than half of its people were foreign born. At the wide mouth of the River Plate flourished Uruguay, the smallest, but one of the most modern of South American Republics, a land of aggressive education and industry.

The remaining Republic yet to be described is Paraguay, which was well up in the interior. Allan read that it had an area of 161,647 square miles, and a population of approximately one and a half million. During the autocratic rule of Dictator Francisco Solano Lopez from 1863 onward, the country was plunged into fearful warfare. At the beginning of the conflict, during which they fought the combined armies of Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay, the total population of Paraguay was estimated at 1,200,000. When the war terminated in 1870, there remained about 200,000 inhabitants, of whom only 20,000 were males, mainly old men and boys. This tremendous disparity in the numbers of each sex, brought in its train many unfortunate tendencies, and illegitimacy was still tremendously high.

To Paraguay, the apparently least attractive of these republics, Allan Smith first felt the strong stirrings of God’s call. Only the sure knowledge of divine guidance gave him strength to face such a difficult field.

A Vision that Ventured

When a man counts the cost, and throws off the tie-ropes of affection that hold him to country, friends and kindred, Satan is bound to blow the salt spray of doubt and depression into his eyes. Fortunately for young Smith, however, the excellent companionship of fellow-missionaries filled with friendship days that otherwise would have been utterly lonely.

“My first recollection of Allan,” writes one of those missionaries, “was when, as a young man full of zeal in the Master’s service, he left New Zealand for the distant unknown.”

“Right from the beginning he was always seeking opportunities to share the gospel message with his fel-



SS Corinthic on which Allan Smith sailed from NZ in 1908

low-passengers on our steamship the SS Corinthic.”

Days merged into weeks whilst the good ship, travelling via Cape Horn to Liverpool, ploughed steadily towards the land that was to hold so much of adventurous service in the years ahead. Weary enough had the long sea voyage become, and they were glad when they drew near the South American coast, soon to disembark at Montevideo, that enterprising city of the South. However, Montevideo was not the end of their voyage, for on arrival there; they crossed by a palatial ferry steamer to Buenos Aires, the capital of Argentina.

The revolutions of the 19th century had freed Argentina from the fetters of Spain. Argentine cattle would find an excellent market in the heavily populated areas of the world. Many fortunes were made as the country opened up and railroads crept across the pampas. It was over this growing network of

A Vision that Ventured

railways that Allan and his friends travelled to Cordoba, an Argentine town some 420 miles from the coast.

Allan was not slow to appreciate all the help and companionship of Mr and Mrs Kirk, experienced missionaries in South America, with whom he had travelled from New Zealand, and in whose home in this new land he was to live during the first difficult years of language study.

“At first after landing in South America,” wrote Mr Kirk, “Allan’s activities were reduced to language study and occasional conversation with any English-speaking person whom he met. In Cordoba he soon endeared himself to the Christians, notwithstanding the language barrier, thereby showing his good qualities as an ambassador of the Lord amongst a foreign people.”

His fellow missionaries in Cordoba gave the young worker a welcome that was genuinely warm and considerate. He had been there only about a month when Messrs. Langran and Doom invited him to join them on a colportage trip into the interior.

“We started off on the 27th June,” wrote Allan to his parents in a letter dated July 19, 1907. “Our outfit consisted of a light gig, two horses, a tent, a pot, and a kettle, a number of rugs and a stock of Bibles and New Testaments. I wore riding trousers, and a poncho, a sort of native overcoat like a travelling rug with a hole cut in the centre to put your head through. With Mr Kirk’s leggings, and a knife for cutting bread etc., I looked like a regular bushranger! We travelled over a dusty road and under a hot sun. At 11 a.m., we halted for breakfast. I lit a fire and made ‘asado’ that is, meat grilled on hot ashes, whilst the others sold Bibles. They returned ready for a good meal, which consisted of a thick piece of bread and meat, the bread serving as a plate. The way they eat meat is very amusing. A piece is grasped by the hand at one end, whilst the other end is placed in the mouth, and the small part held by the teeth is cut off by the knife held in the other hand!

“Breakfast over; we were soon on the road again. By nightfall, we reached a small village and pitched our tent. The next thing was to get a fire going and

something to eat. I had to set to work to make some soup. It was a new experience to me. I felt rather afraid I would make a mess of it, but I did not let on to the others, and just tried to remember how I had seen you make it, Mother. In about two hours, it was ready. We all sat round the fire and had as much as we could eat; the soup seemed to please them.

“The next thing was to get ready for bed. Several rugs were spread on the ground. After thanking the Lord for all His goodness and preserving care during the day, we turned in. The ground was rather hard to lie on, but I managed to get a little sleep. We were up again early in the morning, had a cup of tea, struck camp and set off again.

“The people in the country places are dark in complexion and have very ugly features. They all carry a knife and a revolver. The knife is a very deadly weapon as they can use it with remarkable dexterity.

“I felt rather strange when alone in the camp. When anyone came and asked what we were doing, all I could say was ‘no comprendo’, indicating that I didn’t understand.”

On this first trip, more was accomplished than any of that little party dreamt of. Allan added many new words to his vocabulary. Along the road as they journeyed and in the stillness of an Argentine evening, his companions would tutor him in the soft-toned Spanish. Through eye-gate in every direction, the things he saw conveyed the meaning of words he was learning, and thus his knowledge increased daily in an interesting way.

That advance, however, was trifling in importance compared with the new vision that now came before him.

Observing the difficulties of overland travel on that journey to the interior, Allan began to visualize the vast possibilities of the gigantic rivers that tap the peopled provinces of inland South America; for in the next letter to his father in New Zealand, the thrill of this great exercise that burns with growing purpose in his soul finds expression in these words, “Mr Kirk expects to make Cordoba his headquarters, but I do not think I will be remaining here longer

A Vision that Ventured

than is necessary to learn the language. I expect it will take me two years to get a good knowledge of Spanish. I am much exercised as to where the Lord wants me to labour and my thoughts ever turn towards Paraguay and Brazil, two countries to the north of Argentina. There are a great number of Indians, and many, many towns without any missionary.

“In order to reach these parts, a twenty foot oil launch is necessary, as over-land travelling is very expensive and slow. Many hundreds of miles are navigable, whilst large and important towns have been built close to the river. A good boat would enable one to get over a thousand miles into the interior, at very little cost. I have written to Tom Wood asking what it would cost to build an oil launch and send it out here.

“It would be grand if New Zealand could have the honour of building and sending out the first mission boat to South American waters! It is quite a new venture, as none of the other missionaries have thought about the rivers as a means of travelling.

“I long to be able to speak the language and take the gospel into places where none have ever gone. Much of this country has never been explored—I do not speak of the Argentine, where people are as well educated as in New Zealand, but of the interior. Many of the native tribes have never seen a white man and are so hostile that it’s not safe to enter their territory. I believe the Lord has caused me to think about the boat for a special work.”

In the first paragraph of his next letter home, Allan continues about the proposed launch. He is full of it and the burden grows daily.

“My letter telling about the boat would no doubt startle you; but as it takes such a long time to do business by mail, I had to write straight away when I first felt exercised about it. I am not in a hurry for the boat and want to master the language.”

During the months that followed, Allan filled the days with good works and a diligent study of Spanish. Occasionally his seniors would include him

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in their Bible trips, which made a much-appreciated break from his exacting study.

“He was very quick of perception in a difficult and dangerous position,” wrote Mr Kirk when referring to one such trip. “This was first put in evidence on our journey to Paraguay in 1908. When about 100 kilometres out from Cordoba on a moonlight night, we were travelling by a winding road through a wooded country. Langran was in front on the loaded Tilbury carriage, Allan and I were riding some thirty yards behind, when the Tilbury hit a stump and turned upside down, throwing Langran clear and the horse on its back, kicking in the air. Quick as a shot, Allan left his saddle and put his knees on the head of the kicking horse, holding it down and quiet. I was then able to undo the harness and free it. This was the one and right thing to do, and he did it without a moment’s delay.”



A Tilbury carriage

“On that same journey,” continues Mr Kirk, “even the steerage accommodation on the river boat was overcrowded. As there were no berths for us, we had to sleep wherever we could find a corner on deck. At times, we would awake drenched with the drizzling rain, and chilled with the winter cold, but this hardship seemed to have no effect on Allan’s spirits. Then all through the revolution that broke out while we were in Asunción, we had Mauser bullets whistling everywhere, over and around us, and a field-gun being fired off in the street some forty metres away.”

“We were having a good time there, selling Bibles and distributing tracts,” writes Allan concerning the same incident, “when all at once a revolution broke out between the troops and the government. We were living in the centre of the town near to where the principal fighting took place. It was

A Vision that Ventured

fierce, and lasted for 36 hours without ceasing. Rifle bullets were flying in all directions and the roar of the cannons seemed to make the earth tremble. It is estimated that 200 were killed and 1,000 wounded. One man with whom we left the town counted eighteen dead bodies lying on the street, as he made his way to the boat. Many who just a few hours before had received a Bible and were told the story of redemption had passed into a dark eternity. What a terrible thing death is, and how certain it is to visit all, whether prepared or not.

“The outbreak of the revolution stopped our further progress and we were obliged to return and leave our letters and part of our baggage, as we could not get a carter to take them to the ship, and the post office was closed. We had only enough money to take us part of the way and so reached Corrientes, just over the border, with only a few dollars in our pockets. This was soon finished, and the three of us were stranded in a strange place without a cent. If ever we prayed, it was then. We talked of selling our baggage, but no one would give anything for it, and when we were at our wits’ end, the Lord came in and we received £10 by telegraph from a brother in Santa Fe. It is a real thing to trust the Lord when in such circumstances. Our hearts went out in praise for deliverance.”

It is in passing through such experiences that a man’s soul grows great. Winds of adversity only drive the roots more deep, and give the tree a greater capacity to draw food from the soil in which it lives. In addition, loneliness prepares a Christian soul the more perfectly for the Companionship of the Master.

“Amidst all the bustle and rush here,” Allan writes on the eve of his first Christmas in a strange land, “I find my thoughts wandering back home.”

“I have often sat and tried to enter into your feelings the night I left home for this place. God bless you Mother, and make up to you far more than your loss.

“At times I would very much like to be back with you; but with it all, I am glad to be here for God.

“No word of Bell getting married yet? Douglas will be kept very busy now,

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poor chap. No doubt, they think it would be fine to be away amongst the Indians, but there is little romance about it, mostly stern hard work with many heartaches and difficulties.

“I expect to be going with Mr Will Payne to a town 150 miles from here, to hold some meetings. The need for real power in one’s soul is very great. Oh, to be able to wield the Sword of the Spirit in such a way that sinners will be awakened out of their sleep of death!

“I often wonder what the Lord has in store for me, and seek to use well the hours as they come, content and happy to be here for the Master in spite of the times of loneliness which creep over one at times.”

On one memorable day, however, this loneliness was transmuted to joy by the arrival of Maud.

A Strange Welcome

Where was Allan? Didn't he know she was coming? Why was there no one to meet her? These and a hundred unnamed questions tugged at the heart of a young woman of 23 who, with growing anxiety, scanned the motley crowd on the wharf at Buenos Aires. At her side was John Ross, a young missionary, also from New Zealand. It was a very early hour of the day and they had just come ashore from the river steamer that had brought them over from Montevideo. They fully expecting a warm greeting from at least one familiar figure, but, alas, no sign of recognition flashed them its welcome. All that could be heard was the shouting of cab drivers, loud, insistent, and threatening, as a pack of wolves closing on their prey.

Neither of them could speak the language of the people around them, but to their great relief one cab driver addressed them in broken English, and, after a fruitless wait, they asked him to drive them to the only address they knew of in Buenos Aires. The cabby looked surprised and vastly amused, and tried to explain that people do not usually live in their post office mailbox! They then asked to be taken to a good boarding house and were driven to a very large and pretentious-looking hotel.

Immediately a note was written and posted to Dr George Hamilton, another



Dr George & Isa Hamilton in 1908. The boys later served the Lord as doctors in Argentina.

missionary from New Zealand, at the already referred to post office box. They then settled down to wait for his arrival. It was oppressively hot, and the hours seemed to drag on interminably as the day wore on bringing no reply. At last, about 9 p.m., to their great joy, Dr Hamilton appeared in the lobby of the hotel.

Yes, he had received their letter, but had been searching the city trying to locate them as, in the rush and agitation of strange circumstances, they had forgotten to give their address! God had mercifully overruled the mistake and guided the doctor to them, so that before 10 p.m. they were being warmly welcomed at the doctor's home in the suburban town of Quilmes.

Meanwhile there was no sign of Allan. The fact that the steamer had arrived nearly three days ahead of her scheduled time accounted for his nonappearance. How would they get in touch with him? Actually, that very night he was crossing from Buenos Aires to Montevideo in the ferryboat that rode uneasily on the heavy swell. He was keyed to the highest pitch of excitement, though terribly ill at ease—it was a rough crossing!

Next morning he went out to the steamer in a launch, expecting to find Maud on-board. A fog hung heavily as a blanket over the harbour, but what was that to a young gallant? In high spirits, he scaled the rope ladder flung down to the launch.

Breathlessly, he explained his mission, and, to his dismay received the reply: "All ashore last night, Sir."

He had missed, after waiting fifteen months for his girl!

A few enquiries located them, however, and soon Allan was journeying back to Buenos Aires and out to Quilmes. Next day they left for Cordoba.

Loving friends welcomed Maud to the warmth of their family circle, and in the halcyon days that followed, two young hearts lived in the wonderful years ahead when together they would serve the Lord in Paraguay.

The wedding ceremony was held in Cordoba, Argentina on 9 September 1908. It was very simple. There were only a few missionaries in those days, but they did all they could to make it a memorable occasion for the young couple, and joy filled the air. The bride's carriage had rubber tyres – and was drawn by two beautiful white horses with tiny bells on their harness. Two splendid brown horses were harnessed to the second carriage.

The young bride did not know Spanish, so could not say "yes" or "no" to the

A Strange Welcome

marriage questions. This unusual fact Mr Kirk explained to the Officials, who were very considerate, requiring only her signature on two or three papers in the presence of the witnesses. All this occupied only some fifteen minutes, whereupon the bridal party drove to the home of Mrs Will Payne, whose illustrious husband was absent on one of his pioneering trips somewhere in Bolivia, for which land he was used of God to obtain religious liberty. Here they enjoyed a tastefully arranged afternoon tea that served as wedding breakfast.

When all the kind good wishes of their friends had been acknowledged and the blessing of the Lord was prayerfully sought for them by loving hearts, they slipped quietly away to their own wee home, un-



Mr & Mrs Will Payne, at whose home Allan and Maud had their "wedding breakfast"

packed their boxes and soon had the rooms looking homely and comfortable. That night as man and wife, they went to the usual weeknight meeting.

"We had no honeymoon," said Mrs Smith afterwards, "but went straight back to housekeeping. No, I was not disappointed. Although we had some great financial trials, we shall never forget the kindness of the native believers as they wished us every blessing and gave us eggs, bread, cups, saucers and other useful things.

"Allan thought they were such beautiful rooms; but to me, not accustomed as he was, to the foreign houses, the house looked like a big stable. The rooms were un-papered, just plastered walls on which were stencilled designs; the floors were tiled, actually an excellent thing in a sub-tropical land. There were only two rooms, and a tiny kitchenette outside. All the cooking had to be done on a round 'brasero,' as there was no stove."

PIONEERING ON THE RIVERS

In this humble way did two “Great-hearts” light the torch of a truly Christian home in the land of their adoption.

Sunshine and Shadow

The years that followed their marriage were full of light and shade, their letters of that period portraying the uneven tenor of their lives. It was well that they who ventured to serve their divine Master both possessed His compassion for lost, degraded men and women.

Each day Maud would plod away with the language study. Fortunately, Spanish seemed to come easily to her. In his letters home Allan is full of her praises. Yet a sentence in his first letter after their marriage reveals that in his great happiness he is ever mindful of his Father's business. "I have a great longing," he writes, "to get to work in Paraguay."

Happily for them, the serious trend of missionary routine was lightened with the fun and the cheery atmosphere of their little sanctuary. John Ross, the young man who had come to South America in the same boat as Maud, was invited to share their meals and homely joys. Somehow, it became common knowledge that he was corresponding with Allan's sister in New Zealand. "What do you think of the news of John and Bell?" Allan writes in his letter home. "Oh, wonders never cease! I am pleased to think Bell is getting such a nice chap. Maud gives him a great time of 'barracking.' John says he is watching us so that he will know what to do when his turn comes. When the Lord does send Bell out, she will be great company for Maud. I cannot tell you what a great blessing it is to have Maud here, she is so full of fun and good humour that we seem to be kept bright and happy."

"In the city of Cordoba," writes Maud, "the streets are named as the days of the months. One morning John walked home from the tent and said that he had walked from 9th July to the 24th September. No wonder the poor boy was ready for his dinner!"

Over and above all their homely joys, they never forgot that they were there to make their Saviour known. Nothing so depressed them as the travesty of

religion paraded through the public streets by the representatives of the Roman Church.

“We have just come through some very ‘holy days,’” writes Maud to her mother. “All last week was ‘holy,’ but Friday was ‘most holy.’ The people came out in black, even having black-bordered handkerchiefs for the occasion. Jesus was crucified again in the form of an image: the whole event that happened 1900 years ago was re-enacted in one of the churches. When the body was in the coffin, the people crowded into the building. The women kissed the feet, and wept aloud, ‘Mi pobre Señor,’ which means ‘My poor Lord.’ Afterwards the Virgin Mary was brought out, and also this glass coffin containing Jesus, with a painting of a cross, a crown of thorns, a ladder, a hammer and nails. The whole lot was carried through the streets under a beautifully wrought canopy, behind which followed the bishop in all his pomp, and the evil priests, bareheaded and barefooted, who walked along behind, shamming sorrow. Crowds of people followed, and the central ‘plaza’ was just one mass of people. Policemen guarded the doors of the church. On Saturday at 9:30 a.m., shots were fired and crackers were flying everywhere. Jesus was supposed to have risen. After that, they ceased to be so solemn, and one would never have known that anything had happened.

“Last Saturday we went to see the cemetery, which is about an hour’s walk from here. It was a sight we would never forget. The place where the children and poor people are buried is something hideous: it seems beyond description. Homemade crosses and such-like are about six or eight inches apart, and just look like a crop of wild flowers. They are buried in long trenches as close to each other as is possible. Those who can pay are buried in niches in the wall. Into each of the niches a coffin is slipped, the opening sealed, with an inscription in front. When a body has lain there for some time, the coffin is taken out to make room for others, and the bones tipped into a large well.

“We wandered round the cemetery and came to this well. Out of curiosity we looked in, but drew back with a start. On recovering from the first shock,

Sunshine and Shadow

we looked again and there we saw this deep well almost full of ‘dead men’s bones,’ and skulls in great numbers. It made one’s flesh creep. Our minds at once were occupied with the resurrection. To think that from that well will burst forth thousands of beings to meet their God!”

In Allan’s letters to his parents, there is ever an honest frankness. Obviously, he dreads more being read into his letters than he ever intended to convey, and because of that factor, he felt that he could write freely to his own folk with the assurance in his heart that they would understand and be discreet. Even with them, he strives to be above reproach.

“I hope this gossipy letter,” he writes one time, “is read in the spirit in which it is sent, and that nothing is read into it. It is just a frank, unvarnished letter to father and mother.”

It was that free unpolished expression of thought, however, that made his home letters so descriptively interesting.

“At the time of writing,” he continues, “we are just expecting to get away to Paraguay. We have buyers for the little we have to sell which is not a great deal, but quite sufficient for ‘pilgrims and strangers.’”

Journey to Paraguay and After

It was a memorable day for Allan Smith when he set out with his like-minded companions up the great inland river to their new sphere of service for God in Paraguay. They had journeyed by train from Cordoba to Rosario, a large river port a considerable distance from the sea, to which all the large steamers from England can safely steam, and from which they embarked on one of the river boats for Asunción. Their luggage was quite an item, totalling among the three of them almost a ton. Everything had to be carried aboard.

“The vastness of the river is what impresses one,” writes Allan. “Just think of it, we are on a journey inland up a river quite as far as from Wellington to Sydney. Some of the boats take seven days – this one takes four. The scenery along the river is nothing to a New Zealander; just low-lying banks covered with thick jungle and lacking the majestic grandeur of rugged hills and rocks. On Sunday, we had our little organ up on deck and sang hymns during the afternoon. At night, the Captain and Purser came to ask us if we would again sing and play. We did so and they all listened to the gospel sung in Spanish.”

It is not difficult to imagine how eagerly one excited passenger scanned the banks of that vast river as day after day they steamed into the heart of a great Continent. His vision was no illusive dream. Tremendous possibilities lay wrapped up in his suggested use of this great river way.

“The sight of this large river with its many towns makes us think about the expected boat from New Zealand, and when it will be coming,” were the words he penned at that time.

Asunción was reached late on the last day of August 1909, too late to do any-



Folding pedal organ

Journey to Paraguay and After

thing with their luggage. Next morning they were up early and away house hunting. After much enquiry, they found a house that would be at least a temporary shelter, and returned to the Port in order to pass the customs. Fortunately, all their luggage passed through without difficulty, and in a short while they were unpacking their cases in their first home in the Republic of Paraguay.

“At present we have only our boxes and two beds,” writes Allan to his parents. “I suppose we are in the same position as you were when you first landed in New Zealand. We have been busy making some furniture; so far we have made a table and a washstand, and have a washstand well on the way for John. Maud keeps well and likes this town. We celebrated the anniversary of our wedding on the ninth of this month (September 1909); twelve months of happy married life. Our last home letters have gone astray. Mr Kirk sent five on from Cordoba, but we received only two of them. We have been looking round for a suitable place to keep a boat. I still believe the Lord is going to send one.”

In his letters, Allan is very matter of fact about any work he undertakes. This is fully evident from Maud's letters. About the same time she writes, “We find Allan's tools, and his knowledge of how to use them a great blessing. Furniture is expensive, but we can get timber, so Allan is busy making a sideboard. He has already made two washstands, one for Bell and John and another for ourselves. You know how he does his work, everything has to be just so and exact, or look out, it will surely come to pieces. I have to keep him in bounds or there would be nothing left of him but a few buttons and a spot of grease!”

At first in Paraguay, they were not able to do much visiting because of the unrest and revolution among the people. In a quiet way, they gathered a few children together for a Sunday School. Within a few weeks, however, things had quietened, and they were having some very interesting cottage meetings with the neighbours.

“Two families seem much interested,” writes Allan, “and enjoy the little times spent with them. One old man said to me the other day, ‘I know that

PIONEERING ON THE RIVERS

what you say is the truth, but if I were to become a Christian they would hang me; my brother is a bishop in the Church (Roman Catholic), I have five cousins who are priests, and all my friends are in the Church.’ John and I have been very busy visiting the ‘ranchos’ of the surrounding district. We have already visited almost every house in this city. Shortly, God willing, we expect to



The River Plate basin with Cuiabá (Cuyaba) in the far North

make a journey inland right into the forests. There are a number of villages in that direction.

“Some time ago we had a visit from Mr Wittington, a missionary who is

Journey to Paraguay and After

working some 250 to 300 miles to the east, among the wild Indians; at least he is seeking to reach them. It is impossible to get near them at present, he says, as they live in the heart of the forest and are very wild and frightened. Mr Wittington is a dear soul, who is enduring hardness for Christ's sake. He represents a Scottish mission, and is alone with an Indian boy as a companion."

"We are still exercised about having a boat to work on the river, and have been making all the enquiries possible," continues Allan. Seldom is the proposed gospel boat far from his thoughts. In practically every letter to his parents some mention of it appears. "We have been told that the Government will give all the help needed, and probably release us from Port dues. A chart of the river has been promised from Montevideo to Cuyaba (Cuiabá), a distance of approximately 2,500 miles. By following the River Paraguay right to its source and then looking a little to the right you will see another river going still further inland on which Cuyaba is situated. It is the capital of the Matto Grosso province of Brazil, and is an important centre.

"Our plan in connection with working a boat is to go from village to village, and colony to colony, holding meetings whenever possible, visiting, leaving portions of the Scriptures and living on the boat. Accommodation is difficult to obtain in these places. Many of the settlements are small with only a handful of people who, in most cases, are very fanatical; yet they have souls to save. By means of a boat, these villages can be reached from an important centre.

"James Chalmers, the martyr of New Guinea, said towards the close of his life, 'I want to live long enough to see both sides of the Fly River occupied for 1,000 miles up. We do not want to step out before God. We must be careful to mark time with Him, and not let Him get too far ahead of us. We must not lose His grip.' So it is with us, we realise our need to be led by the Master, but we must also realise that it is easy to lag behind because of the roughness of the way. Up to the present we have not been ready for the boat, but things seem to be heading up for it now. We are in a state of expectancy, knowing that the Lord's time is best.

PIONEERING ON THE RIVERS

“But it does not do to say too much about what we are doing, or it may give a false impression. I like to let go sometimes, but not to everybody. Missionary work is no easy task, yet God is for us. The devil is against us, but he is not going to win.”

Meanwhile the arrival from New Zealand of Allan’s sister Bell, after being united in marriage to John Ross, in Buenos Aires, brought added joy to the little missionary household in Paraguay. It was a real touch of home to hungry hearts.

“Bell and Maud are great chums,” writes Allan, “and find themselves fully occupied. Bell is getting to work with the study of the language. Little by little, she gives us the home news as it comes to mind. We get on very happily together in our wee house of three rooms. The saddle the boys sent is a real treat and very necessary.

“We expect by the Lord’s help to get a good deal of work done in the interior of the country before the launch comes, for I still believe it is going to come, but in the Lord’s own time.”



John and Isabella Ross in 1922. Isabella was the sister of Allan Smith.

Waiting Years

Several years pass. The small house that is home to Allan Smith and his wife resounds with the childish prattle of little Maud Fyfe Smith. In another home, a like joy has come to Mr and Mrs John Ross. Nor have these two homes been without trial since God first enabled their light to shine forth in dark Paraguay.

Revolutions had swept the land, leaving them utterly dependent upon God for their daily bread; sickness and the wilting effect of exhausting summers had left their mark. Sometimes, too, it seemed as if those in the homeland had ceased to care, the letters were so few

and the interest in their work so small that lesser hearts would have despaired.

We owe a debt of gratitude to the fond Mother who preserved through these years Allan's frank and touching letters, without which we would have lost forever many a glimpse into a brave undaunted soul.

"Another welcome letter has just arrived," Allan writes to his Mother. "It's grand to get letters from home, especially when passing through times of difficulty. Your desire, Mother, that I may prove kind and thoughtful at all times, especially in times of sickness, came home to me. It seems so easy to forget the little things that make life happy. There seems so much selfishness in one's make-up. Just when we think we are doing grand, we are sometimes suddenly confronted with the fact that we are neglecting our noblest duty in life – that of living out the divine lessons taught in the Scriptures before those at home, who are best able to judge our sincerity.

At times, I wonder what the Lord thinks of our lives. We can talk like angels about the precious things of the Bible, and live like unsaved men, shutting



Maud (Maudie) Fyfe Smith,
born 7 October 1910

PIONEERING ON THE RIVERS

ourselves up in the little world of self. Living as though we had no Heavenly Father to care for us and our needs, or striving with might and main for a crust, and a rag to cover our shame. May the Lord help me, for I feel my depravity greatly. What an easy prey one would be for the devil if it were not for God's sovereign grace. Many in the homelands are lifting up holy hands in the Lord's presence for blessing, and we realise it."

He continues in the same letter, "The first part of this house is really like a shop and just the thing for a hall. This room measures 34 by 18 feet, with a very high ceiling – at least 18 feet high – and it will hold 100 people comfortably.

"I am at home with the language and the people now, yet there is much to learn. In fact, one is never at an end of learning a language. I am busy translating a tract, 'The Portrait of Mary in Heaven,' into Spanish. It is my first attempt, therefore is not as good as it might be.

"It is reported that the bubonic plague has broken out here in this town, and that several deaths have resulted. So we seem to be in the midst of trouble, but with it all we have peace foreign to our surroundings."

There is a distinct break in the correspondence between the months of March and August 1911. On the first page of his letter dated 12th August, Allan makes fresh mention of the proposed launch. For several years he has made repeated mention of the great need, and the vision that lives on undimmed.

"I feel the time has come when we could use a boat to advantage. Not that a boat would save souls, but it would enable us to visit the places upriver with the gospel. The dear Christians at Newtown are interested in supplying this need. Do you know whether the boat is built or not? My reason for asking is this: you remember the 'Work' book with instructions in carpentering, etc., that I brought with me, well it gives full instructions how to build a launch. As I have had a lot of practice with the tools, I believe that with the blessing of God I could build one during the hot months when little can be done in the way of visiting.

Waiting Years

“I thought of writing to Tom about this suggestion, but if the launch is built and ready to be sent out, my letter would be a great disappointment to the young people who have built it. Make enquiries, Mother, and if it is not built, you could just put the matter before Tom in confidence, I do not think he would take it amiss. I am not anxious to build the launch on my own, but I would gladly do so if it would be a saving, though probably it is the Lord’s mind to send the launch finished and ready for work in this needy field.

“By the bye, I wrote a letter, enclosed £1 towards the launch and registered it some five months ago. Do you know if he got it? I am expecting word at any time, however, to say that the boat is on the way, so I will not be surprised if this letter is too late. The Lord knows I want to do His will, and am not seeking my own way.”

Allan’s letter was in time, since nothing had been done. Mr Edwards had already written a warm-hearted letter to Allan explaining the long delay. The meetings had not forgotten about the launch, but they had not been at liberty to have it built because of many other pressing needs. Thus Allan’s suggestion was eagerly seized, the young people undertaking to supply the engine, when Allan should have constructed the hull.

With something definite in hand, Allan began to make plans for the new boat. The dream of years was now to merge into glorious reality. Yet unknown to this brave soul, a testing time, surpassing any trial of previous years, loomed out of the cloudless sky and burst in fury upon all their plans.

“We have been witnessing some dreadful sights lately in these parts. In the battle that took place in this city, 200 to 300 people were killed. Bell will have told you about it, but perhaps she did not tell of two recent battles fought in two villages in which 1,400 were killed; it is not known how many wounded.

“If it were not for the fact that our God knows no change, we might well be concerned about the future. We do not know what to expect next. The people are leaving in great numbers, only those who cannot get away are staying here. It is more than three months since we were able to go into the country or hold

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a meeting. The trains are practically stopped, only an occasional one runs a few miles out. We do not know what to do. The town is patrolled at night, so that the people are afraid to come to meetings. The Lord alone can guide us and open up our way.

“Don’t think we are complaining Mother—far from it, the Lord is very real. Never before have we been so tested financially as at the present. Little Maud is almost right again, but little Nell (Ross) is very thin and weak. I believe if the weather had not changed they would have lost her, the heat has been so overpowering and stifling.

“Yesterday another battle was expected to take place here in the city but so far it has not done so. Maud keeps quite cool and calm during it all, and does not seem in the least upset. I do not know what I would do without her.”

Thus into the refining fire this weary would-be builder of the gospel launch was once more plunged. It needed the skilful tempering of a Master-Worker to give this man’s metal sufficient strength and elasticity of purpose for the years of tremendous strain ahead

Dawning Light

It was the darkest hour. There seemed no other way but through, yet the “barrel of meal” yielded only their daily bread. Could God furnish a table in such a wilderness of insufficient supplies? That God could, and did, supply all their need, this whole narrative amply proves.

Maud’s grandfather, who had resided in Christchurch, New Zealand, had made provision in his will that his property be sold and distributed among the grandchildren. Following his death, there ensued the usual manifold signing of papers, with much correspondence back and forth, before the final settlement was made. Yet this was God’s gracious provision after their long years of exercise. Soon the keel of the long looked-for gospel launch was being laid and shaped in the yard of their little home in Villeta.

On an earlier occasion, when the revolution of 1912 had rendered work impossible in the city of Asunción, Mr and Mrs Smith, with Maudie and baby Gordon, made a visit to the village of Franco Viejo where an Englishman, William Kiehl, managed a small business.

“In his mud hut attached to the store we were able to hold gospel meetings,” writes Mrs Smith.

Even there, life was uncertain, for on one occasion several customers from a distance had tethered their horses outside, when passing revolutionaries, surmising that the store held a picket of soldiers, opened fire.

“We had just time to snatch Gordon out of the pram,” related Mrs Smith, “and to lie down behind some bales of tobacco. Bullets pinged close to us, only to spend themselves in the wall beyond. Allan was sitting up behind a bale, the rest of us prostrate on the floor. I advised him to lie down too, and he had scarcely done so when another shot was fired. Had he not lain down, the bullet would have gone through his back. The horses lay dead at the door, and a dress left lying on the fence was riddled with bullet holes.”

“Later, when the rebels entered the premises, Mr Kiehl served them with all

that they demanded. Their greed was their defeat. The rebels began to look round for canoes in which to carry away the valuable pile of cowhides, and this gave Mr Kiehl his opportunity. Quickly writing a note to the Governor of an Argentine province across the river, he slipped it into the hand of a poor Paraguayan woman who was able to creep away unnoticed with the necessary instructions. At that time Britain had an agreement with Argentina to protect her subjects.

Alone and unmolested, the woman safely delivered the letter, with the result that an Argentine war boat was dispatched to Kiehl's aid. To the utter dismay of the rebels they were captured and the canoes confiscated by the war-boat on their way across the river. Fortunately no human lives were lost, and Mr Kiehl with his guests gave their heartfelt thanks to God for His marvellous preservation.

"The war-boat left soldiers for our protection, and returned to its base," continued Mrs Smith. "We were able to stay without further molestation, doing what we could to direct poor souls to the only Saviour Who provides salvation for whosoever will, without money and without price.

One particularly distressing case was brought to our notice. Two elderly women were found dressed in old sacks, with rags the only wrapping for their feet. They had given all their money to the Church through the priest who came once a year—just an annual visit—to say mass for the dead, conduct marriage services, etc. On his last visit, these old people had only one cow left, and a few fowls. They had no furniture; it had already gone to pay for masses. Rags were now the only coverings for their bed. Again they asked the priest to say prayers for their parents that their souls might now rest in peace.

'What have you?' queried the priest.

'We have no money,' they answered, 'only one cow.'

'You will have to pay,' the priest callously said, 'you must bring the cow.' Then, and only then, would he mutter his prayer! Christians in the homelands little realise the ugly sore of a false priesthood, as it appears open and una-

Dawning Light

shamed in the more backward countries. Would that those who profess to follow the Liberator of Calvary had more of a heart-care for these poor deluded souls; there would be more praying, and giving, and going.”

It was from this little village of Franco Viejo that the Smiths finally left to settle in Villeta for the building of their first mission boat, the “Aurora,” which was to break the dark clouds of past disappointment, and prove to be the “dawning light” of a noble enterprise.

“Aurora” the First Gospel Launch

Rome was not built in a day, nor is a boat.

Long, tedious days soon demonstrated that fact. Many factors intervened: the ship-builder was new to the job, the weather was extremely hot and the woods used particularly hard.

“Allan is slogging away at the long-looked-for launch,” writes Mrs Smith. “Already he has the keel and the main ribs ready, but he had a difficulty in getting good curves. It is a big job single-handed, and he will be very tired of it before it is finished. These woods are so hard and tough. Allan looks very well just now, but he will get very thin carpentering in this hot weather.”

There is a break in the correspondence in the months that follow. Life is too full for much in the way of letters. Five months pass before the following description of the launch is received from the busy boat builder:

“It is wet weather with us,” he writes, “so I must stop and do some writing, although I don’t like it very much, especially as I am getting toward the finish with the hull. At present I am putting on the second skin of planking. The painted canvas between the two thicknesses of planking makes it very neat and tight; I was able to obtain a special tar for the purpose.”

A very important matter that called for early discussion was the naming of the gospel launch. They had first thought of “Goodwill” but finally decided that in Spanish its meaning would not be fully conveyed to the people amongst whom they were to evangelise.

“The only other name that Maud and I can think of,” continues Allan, “is ‘Aurora,’ which is the same in both English and Spanish and means ‘the dawning light.’ It seems very appropriate as, in connection with the mission to this country, it may signify the dawning of the true light in the fullest sense.”

“At last the hull is finished,” writes Allan to his parents two months later. “How thankful I am! It has been a stiff job. However, the launch is not completely finished by any means. The cabin and general inside work will take

“Aurora” the First Gospel Launch

a long time; the work is getting very tedious and seems as if it will never be finished. The Lord has given guidance, and help to persevere.”

Then in letters to his own folk, there appear those little trying experiences that seldom find their way into print. The money that had enabled their dream launch to take shape was all spent, and the boat was far from finished. Again they were to know the blessedness of the “trial of faith,” that sifts, mellows, and enriches all those whose only stay is in El Shaddai, the all-sufficient, mighty God.

“The finishing of the boat will take a lot of money one way and another, without putting any unnecessary things into it. We had rather a trying experience a week or two ago, but the Lord delivered us in a remarkable way. We came to the end of our money and had only three pennies left, with rent, milk, etc. to pay in two days’ time. A man came to our door, and after coming in and

talking a bit he said that he had heard that I had a bicycle, and wondered if I would care to sell it. I thought a bit, hardly able to believe my ears. The bicycle had been four years in Paraguay and had not been used. I told him I would sell it. He looked at it and then went away.

Sure enough, he returned

next day with the money, about £5, and took it away. How our hearts praised Him for such a deliverance. The Lord will supply, there is no doubt about that.”

Those months of testing! Only the intimate home letters reveal how sorely trying they proved even to these stout hearts. Little wonder indeed that at



Allan Smith's first launch, “Aurora” or “Break of Day”

times they became “very weary and depressed.” It took them all their time to live, yet somehow they gradually set aside sufficient to buy an anchor, then locks, hinges, deck fittings, and a pump. Added to all this came a more subtle suggestion that only a true “Great heart” could have resisted.

“Two days ago,” Allan writes home, “a man came from Asunción to try and buy the launch. He was very anxious to buy, but I said that it was out of the question. Then he wanted me to build one, as he could not get such work done in Paraguay. He would supply me with all that was needed, if only I would make him one like the ‘Aurora.’ It was the first of its kind in Paraguay and evidently just what he wanted. He tried hard to get me to do it, but I said I could not as I had more important business to do. Then I told him what it was, and why I must be about my Father’s business.”

In due course, the first gospel launch to pioneer this great Paraguayan river way was answering sensitively to the hand of the man who had dreamed dreams God delighted to make into realities. Before me as I write lies an opened volume of “Echoes of Service,” with its account of the “First Voyage in the Mission launch ‘Aurora.’”

“We have just returned from our first journey of any importance with the boat,” writes Allan in this copy of ‘Echoes of Service.’ “Messrs. Jenkins, Ross and myself left with a good stock of literature and made downstream, visiting a number of villages. The people came out well, and listened with attention to the Word. It would seem that the Lord has begun a good work in some hearts there. The round trip was only 480 miles. We are exercised about making a longer journey of some 900 miles.”

In recalling those early days with his first launch, Mrs Smith writes with all a wife’s loyal devotion, “Allan would be away about three weeks on one of these trips, during which time my eyes wearied at watching the river daily for his return.”

“Poor Allan planned that boat in his bed at night, and all day,” continues Mrs Smith in reference to the ‘Aurora.’ He could scarcely hear any other conversa-

“Aurora” the First Gospel Launch

tion at meals, but would sit looking out of the window at his job—no time to speak or think of anything else. I think of all those years of longing for a boat, then the months of hard grind. Often in Villeta while constructing ‘Aurora’ he would continue working after dark, and when the babes were safely in bed, I would stand there holding a lantern with one hand, and the end of a board with the other, until he decided to knock off and have tea.”

Great hearts, both of you! What a joy was yours to watch your little boat ride the river waters, confident of its power to conquer every mood of that great waterway.

In Need of Furlough

It's the Year of Our Lord 1915. Periods of ill health have left their mark, and greying hairs begin to appear. Sunshine has blended generously with shadow, and the children playing round the door have brought their own joy. Maudie is rather slim, curly-headed, always on the move, her eyes taking in every movement, and her little tongue never still. Gordon runs all over the place, but more leisurely, a little "fatty" with straight hair and a big head. Alfred, the youngest in the family, is under two years of age and is experiencing his first troubles with teeth.

Then a thrilling thing happens. Their home folk and fellow-Christians of Newtown Hall suggest that for their own good and for the work's sake, the Smiths should consider a furlough. They tell them that their passage money from South America to New Zealand is already available. To realise the overwhelming joy this news would bring to these tired hearts, we have only to read their letters home to their own folk.

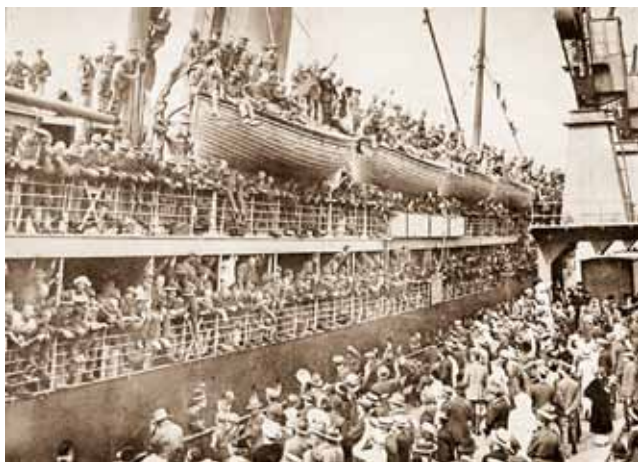
"The busy days go by, occupied with the work of the house and babies," writes Mrs Smith, "and I find one's strength gets less after one or two summers in this climate, so that work which is only ordinary in New Zealand becomes quite burdensome in this country."

The same tiredness creeps into Allan's letters to his parents, but only there. Nothing whatsoever of it appears in any of the missionary magazines. He writes, "There are a lot of little jobs these days somehow. We all have our times of being downcast, but we are sustained day by day. It gives great cheer to know that there are sympathetic hearts at home who know how to pray, for at times a worker seems as if he can scarcely pray, being so depressed by climatic influences and surroundings. Things move on slowly here. Sometimes all seems darkness and doubt; other days are full of hope and cheer. Amidst it all, He remains faithful."

The day they went aboard at Buenos Aires was a high day – the load had

In Need of Furlough

lifted. Their only route to New Zealand was via England and South Africa. The boat was crowded with British troops off to fight for King and country in the “Great War” (World War 1). Among them was Mr Robert A. Laidlaw’s brother, on his way to a war from which he was not to return. He seemed not to miss any opportunity of Christian witness among the boys, conducting meetings regularly with the help of another Christian fellow. They had not been out of Buenos Aires many days when he handed Mr Smith five sovereigns. This generous token of fel-



World War 1 troop ship leaving port 1916

lowship could scarcely have come at a more opportune time, for the Smith family of five had embarked at Buenos Aires with a through ticket and less than three shillings over!

In London the streets were all dark, blacked out because of impending air raids. The horror of war hung heavily over the whole country. It was in London that Dr Hamilton, a fellow missionary, also returning to New Zealand, had a narrow escape from death. He was in a bus along with other passengers when the warning was given to take cover from aircraft overhead. Obeying immediately they watched from their shelter as the bus on which they had been riding was blown to pieces.

The departure from England was not without its anxious moments. Vessels carried high-powered guns as far as Dakar. They had a terrifying time passing through the English Channel where they were chased by submarines. Torpedo boats manoeuvred at a safe distance, hungry to discharge death into enemy

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craft. Passengers shared in the ceaseless vigilant watch for every suspicious movement. There was a sigh of intense relief indeed, when all on board felt that they were again comparatively free from danger.

There were no difficulties on the outward voyage save for an outbreak of scarlet fever, when many of the passengers were isolated. Eventually they berthed at Cape Town, where permission was given to land. The Smiths, glad of a brief spell on “terra firma,” went to see Table Mountain, the level-topped wonder of the town.

Their funds were low. It was no easy thing travelling with an empty purse and three children. Purchasing some biscuits and condensed milk while on shore, they discovered that it had taken exactly every penny of their money in payment. They were to have met Dr Hamilton and returned with him to the boat. Fortunately, however, the Doctor had forgotten the appointment and returned alone, thus saving the Smiths any awkward moments. In the evening the Doctor told Allan how disappointed he was to have forgotten them, but not a word was breathed about the lack of funds until later in the evening when Dr Hamilton handed them five pounds that he had received from one of his patients. Then Allan told of the day’s trial, and how relieved they had been over the Doctor’s lapse of memory.

How strange and wonderful is God’s providing care! He had sent them five pounds to enable them to land in London, and here was another five pounds enabling them to land comfortably in New Zealand.

“At Wellington,” related Mrs Smith when recalling this furlough in New Zealand, “Grandma was brought out in Will Anderson’s launch to meet our ship. I was so excited to see members of the family, I held up the baby to let them see him, and suddenly discovered that it was someone else’s little urchin!”

There is no place like home. Restless souls have wandered all over the earth, and have returned to find home the sweetest place of all. The Smiths had gone forth with hearts yearning to fulfil the great commission. They had reckoned

In Need of Furlough

on the loneliness, the times of testing, and the heartaches. They would go back to it gladly, for it was their lifework. Meanwhile, well, it was nice to be home.

With returning health, there came a widening vision. The Paraguay work was in need of a larger boat than the “Aurora.” In his weariness, Allan had dismissed the vision as impracticable. But now God was challenging him afresh, and this call was finding a big place in all his thoughts. He found it increasingly difficult to fill in the days doing nothing. The Lord’s doings on that great river must be rehearsed in the hearing of those who loved his Lord. Thus, soon after their return, Mr and Mrs Smith were visiting assemblies throughout New Zealand.

Some received their report gladly, thrilled that there was such a great opportunity for gospel work on that vast river, but there were those who brought an ache to the hearts of His servants by criticisms of the launch. The money being spent in building launches was unwarranted, they suggested; the idea of a larger launch met only with protest and indifference. How differently those who criticised would have viewed things had they been out on the field themselves, and witnessed the struggles, discouragements, and triumphs through which His servants had passed! These disappointments however, only strengthened their trust in the One Who never fails nor forsakes. It was His work; He would undertake for them in everything according to His will; they need have no fear.

Nor was their trust in Him betrayed. When they again left their homeland for South America there was £700 in their keeping for the larger launch (\$95,000 in 2016 currency!). War still raged with unabated fury. Practically all shipping between England and New Zealand was commandeered for troops and provisions, but they were able to book passages via the United States of America, where they planned to purchase the machinery for the new boat. Whilst there they visited assemblies in Canada and the United States, embarking again at New York for Buenos Aires via the Brazilian coast route. Not until late 1917 were they again in Asunción. To their great joy, the Lord

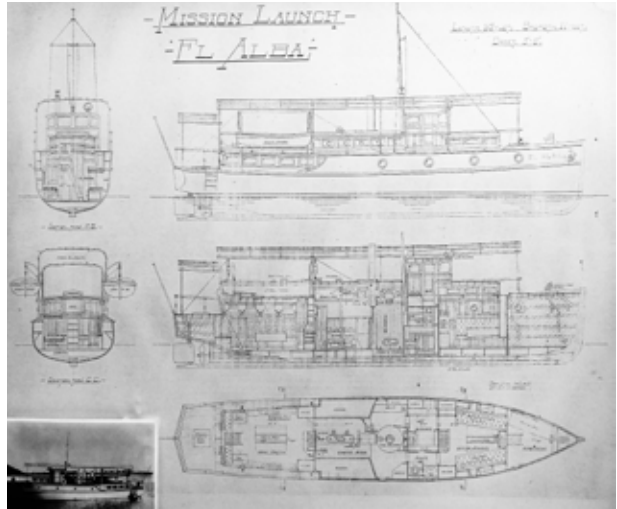
PIONEERING ON THE RIVERS

had continued to increase the good work commenced in that town, and warm hearts greeted their return with Christian joy and rejoicing.

A Widening Vision

Another beginning, longer months of strenuous planning and toil, a greater responsibility in the building and manning of a larger boat – all these things were faced with rare courage by Allan and his brave wife. No missionary society had guaranteed them aid in the great venture. All that had come to them had been given voluntarily. For the future, as in the past, their only source of courage and provision was the Almighty God, and in Him, they had complete confidence.

As soon as they were settled in a house, Allan commenced to lay the keel of this second boat in the backyard of their humble home. The plans had been bought in New York, where estimates of the costs of its construction had been obtained. Because of war conditions and delayed construction, these costs soon proved very much under-estimated. It was with a real feeling of regret that Allan placed the “Aurora” for sale – he had built



Plan of “El Alba”

it himself, through long weary months. Only the high purpose for which it would be used had held him patiently at his task. The “Aurora” had proved indeed to be the “light of dawn.” Appropriately enough, the name of the larger launch was to be “El Alba,” the dawn, a venture that would make possible a greater penetration of the true light into the inky darkness of the interior.

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Nothing but the love of Christ could have constrained Allan Smith to undertake this fresh venture, involving intense planning, and long hours of hard grind, besides taking his turn faithfully at preaching. We have a glimpse of his earnestness in that connection from one of Mrs Smith's letters. "The planning of the 'El Alba' and the work etc. was trying and lay heavily on his mind, so that often he would dream about it and jump out of bed, tearing a hole in the mosquito net where he leapt through. Until he was able to obtain help, either Miss Lewis or Miss Raven, who had arrived in Asunción soon after we had, and who were living with us, would be called out to hold up a board, or steady a plank." Then through the influence of William Cornelius, a Christian man from England in the employ of the local Tramway Company, permission was obtained to build the "El Alba" in a disused tram shed.

Allan had built the "Aurora" alone, but for the construction of "El Alba"; he was in urgent need of assistance. The first man he employed was Fermin Farina,



Waterfront workers in Paraguay

who was provided in this way: a Syrian in fellowship with the little local church brought him to Allan with the following suggestion, "I am not a carpenter but I would like to help build the launch, so I will pay this man's wages."

Unfortunately, Fermín the first employee on the gospel launch, was a fast-living fellow and sadly addicted to drink. However, there he found not only steady employment, but also found in Christ deliverance from his vices and by the work of God in his heart, became a wonderful trophy of grace.

There were other helpers in the construction of the hull, just ordinary men Allan taught while on the job. The timber for the launch was bought in rough-sawn boards. All the smoothing was done by hand with very ordinary tools.

A Widening Vision

There was a certain amount of metalwork requiring a degree of skill, besides the many extra little jobs such as the galvanizing of thousands of bolts to be used in the hull.

Nine months passed, crammed full of busy toil, when the recently formed Tramway Company sold their whole concern to Italians. All the privileges granted to Allan were cancelled immediately. During the changeover, he had worked desperately hard, for the launch was not quite ready for launching. Instructions were issued by the new company that if not soon removed, the boat would be sold with the building. There now followed one of the sorest trials a servant of God can ever know, the seeming hiding of God's face. All they could do was just blindly trust, their faith anchored upon the sure promises of God. It was not easy. Prayer was made unceasingly, yet it pleased the Lord that no relief should come.

This was a terrible time for Allan. The responsibility of having to borrow money, and the problem of knowing what to do about the boat, was almost too great. It had to come out or be sold with the shed, and he had no money to get it out. To borrow money for his Master's service! How Allan's whole being revolted from the thought. A loan had been offered to him, but it was only with the utmost reluctance that he finally decided that it was imperative to accept, despite his own feelings about the matter, and despite the fact that interest was to be very high!

Why did God allow such a thing to happen? Was Allan away in heart from the God Who hears and answers prayer? At once we are conscious that this big-hearted man would not have toiled so undauntedly nor have made such desperate sacrifices, were not his whole being constrained by a real passion for the dying souls of men.

Maybe, in the will of God, the reason is supplied as this very narration of facts stirs the hearts of thoughtful God-fearing readers to resolve that no such shameful neglect of God's work and God's servants be found against them on

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the debit side of the divine ledger opened at the Judgment seat of Christ. God sometimes takes a longer view of things than our puny minds conceive.

Money was not everything. How to move the boat from the shed to the river was a very real problem. It all had to be done after midnight because of the trams running. At that time, trams were still somewhat a novelty in this backward town, and the shining rails presented a great contrast to the streets themselves, paved with uneven cobblestones and presenting a very rough, broken surface.

This was the plan. First, portions of the shed walls had to be taken down in order to get the boat out: then by moving it inch by inch on rollers along the tram lines, they were able finally to transport the boat to the



El Alba being transported through the streets of Asunción

water. It took almost a week to accomplish the task, for early each morning the boat had to be taken off the tram lines, and deposited on the side of the road until the following midnight.

Naturally, this crazy builder of boats was the talk of the town, and a motley crowd assembled on the riverbank to witness the launching. Doubts were entertained by many as to whether the boat would float correctly, and some bets were made thereon. Certainly none of the men would risk going on board for fear it should go to the bottom – none except Allan.

To the astonishment of the multitude of sceptics, “El Alba”, launched on the first of February 1919, floated like a swan! Everyone had thought Allan was a

A Widening Vision

total amateur, but now opinion swung completely around in his favour. He was even approached by government representatives with the request that he build a similar boat for them, or else let them have the plans.

Once more Allan was weighed in the balances, and found true. So he gave

the Govern-
ment a copy of
his plans for
the boat, which
alas, when
they finished
proved lop-
sided, owing to
bad workman-
ship. Of the
work put into
the “El Alba,”
Mrs Smith
said, “Allan



Allan Smith on board at the launching of “El Alba”

was very thorough, and would not let anything pass except the best. ‘It’s done for the Lord,’ he would say, ‘and it must be just right.’”

Workers for “El Alba”

“Launched on 1st February 1919, but not yet finished.” How true these words appearing in the “Echoes of Service,” under a photo of “El Alba.” Beautiful she looked as she floated gently after the great event, yet there were a thousand and one things to do in fitting her completely. Mr Emmett, a dear old man from New Zealand, who had come on his own account to give what help he could with the boat, slept on board and made an excellent caretaker.

In July of the same year, Allan is still slogging away, completing the cabins, installing machinery, and a special gas-producing plant by which they would be able to generate their own fuel from the low-priced charcoal. “At times it has seemed as if it would never be brought to a finish, but a few weeks ago we had a trial run and everything went splendidly.”

The boys, Gordon and Alfred, loved nothing better than making “El Alba” the centre of all their adventures and amusement. In doing so, they gave their mother times of real anxiety for their safety. On one occasion, Alfred was fishing off the bow of the boat when he lost his balance and



Allan and Maud's children:
Alfred, Gordon, Joyce and Maudie

fell into thirty feet of water, swarming with piranha fish. Fortunately, Fermin Farina, who was not far away at the time, jumped in and rescued him as he

Workers for “El Alba”

was going down for the last time. Alfred had been on board again only a few minutes when he wanted to know, “Daddy, can I have a bath?”

Only those who know the piranha can realise how wonderfully God cared for this little chap. Duguid, author and explorer, gives an interesting account of this unique species of fish:

“Suddenly, Urrio pointed to the foot of the chute. There, in the muddy water, was a leaping struggling mass of silver fish. It lurked like a cloud beneath the surface, and stretched for many yards in a great circle.

‘Piranha,’ said the red pilot, thoughtfully. We pressed him for details, and he told us that the piranha is the most dangerous creature in South America, the man-eating fish of the Rio Paraguay. More terrible than the tiger, it herds together in numberless swarms, and preys on every sort of flesh. No-body in his senses swims in these parts, though a healthy man may sometimes pass unscathed. Anything in the shape of a boil or an open wound is fatal, for the smell of blood travels with the current and draws piranha to the source in a moment.

‘Let’s cut off the alligator’s tail,’ continued Urrio, ‘and see how long it takes for the piranhas to clean him out.’



Piranha fish - they attack in a pack and leave only bones

Resting the tail on the thwart we dealt it a smart blow, and then lowered the body at the end of a long rope. Almost at once, we were conscious of strife. The dark water kindled, a troubled cloud grew to immense proportions and a silver terror shone beneath the surface. Occasionally there was a bright flash of scales, and a flourish of fins as a fish was forced into the daylight by the weight of its companions. An air of concealed energy, hor-

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rible and intense, kept our eyes fixed on the jerking rope, and I reflected that if ever a liquid may be said to heave, the Rio Paraguay did that afternoon.

Gradually, as we watched, the knobbly back sank, until it hung vertically beneath the boat. We hauled with all our strength, and as the body slithered over the side, a spout of water shot into the engine. Queer, flapping noises came from the interior, and a deep-bellied fish fluttered on the floorboards. Meanwhile the alligator had shrunk rather in the manner of a pricked football. It was no longer rounded and fat, the sides had fallen in. When we rammed an oar up the stump of the tail, it sounded muffled. Indeed, it was little more than a water skin."

Good news of fresh workers for Asunción who were greatly interested in the launch work came as a special cheer in November. They were Mr and Mrs Joseph Martinez, commended from the Palisades Park assembly in New Jersey. Mr Martinez was a great joy to Allan, for he proved an adept at joinery, and much of the lovely interior work on "El Alba" was the product of his skilful hands.

The months sped by. There were with encouraging services in both the open-air and in the hall. Work on the launch was proceeding as quickly as funds permitted.

In the meantime God was searching out those workers who were to join the Smiths in the actual working of the launch on its first voyage with the gospel.

"Gordon M. Airth, who has been engaged in military service in Egypt and



Joseph Martinez and Gordon Airth

Workers for "El Alba"

Palestine," so the report appears in the *Echoes of Service* magazine, "is now free and is about to set out again for Argentina." However, God had another sphere of service for him, and after a few months in Argentina, he was bound for Paraguay to help Allan Smith on the launch.

First impressions are both interesting and important. Was Allan Smith's vision in keeping with the work and money put into the "El Alba?" An outsider can best judge. Gordon Airth's impressions in a letter to the "Echoes of Service" magazine leave no room for doubt. "After spending a few weeks with the new Bible Coach in Argentina, I came to Asunción, a 54 hour journey by train from Buenos Aires, arriving here just a trifling matter of 33 hours behind time!

"Although a city of approximately 120,000 souls, and the capital of a Republic, Asunción gives one the impression of being just an overgrown village, having few buildings of any appearance. The poor Paraguayan is indeed deep down in the miry clay of sin, living on the lowest level that the corruption of the human heart can conceive. The spiritual darkness is appalling. But praise God; even here the power of the gospel is evident."

"I was glad to find brethren Smith and Martinez, their wives and Miss Lewis in good health, and count it a privilege to be able to reinforce their number. The work here has been difficult, yet the Lord has blessed the labours of His servants in no small measure. There are about 25 believers in fellowship, while some Syrian brethren brought to Christ in Asunción are now 'sounding forth the Word of the Lord' in faraway Syria.

"My interest specially centres on the launch, which brother Smith has the joy of seeing almost complete after such a long period of backbreaking and heart-breaking work. I think our brother has solved the problem of the evangelization of this part of the country, as by means of the launch we can reach many important towns in Paraguay and North-east Argentina, as well as numerous towns and villages of lesser consideration lying along the banks and tributaries of the great river Paraguay.

From Santa Fe in the south, to Asunción, a stretch of 700 miles, there is to

PIONEERING ON THE RIVERS

our knowledge only one labourer for God. From Asunción to Corumbá in the north, another 700 miles, there is only one place occupied, while east and west one can proceed up the tributary rivers and encounter only two or three messengers of the Cross.

To reach these towns overland would involve long and tedious journeys along almost impassable roads, besides incurring considerable expense for accommodation of the poorest description. The launch provides a home for the workers. They can travel up and down the main river and up the larger tributaries; then having the launch as a base to work from, they can proceed up the smaller rivers in the motor dingy carried on board. They can reach many towns otherwise inaccessible.



El Alba at anchor

The launch is a splendid testimony for the gospel, being the finest and smartest boat ever built in this country. It commands the respect of the officials and those in authority. The Lord willing, we trust to be enabled to set off soon on our first journey.”

Sometime later, there appears another letter from the same pen. “During the past few weeks we have been able to visit several places on the river using the Aurora. The Lord has seen fit to prolong the trial of faith with the larger vessel, as we have not yet been able to use it yet. However, God willing next week we will get the machinery going and commence work on the river.

The visits in the small motor launch have brought home to us more than ever the appalling and urgent need of the people living on the riverbank. Some

Workers for "El Alba"

of the settlements are of sufficient size to justify the presence of a residential worker."

Yet another very welcome helper in the person of Will Payne, pioneer missionary statesman of South America came to their aid. So deeply was he impressed with the launch and its latent possibilities, that he penned these words to England, "I should like to feel that more interest was being felt in this launch work. It is a big thing, and brethren Smith and Airth are working hard at it. The fitting-out for a six-month's trip is no light matter. It is the only way the people in these parts can have a chance to hear the gospel."

First Voyage of the “El Alba”

Great preparation and much activity was the order of the day in the Smith household. The gospel launch “El Alba” was being fitted out for its first voyage. Provisions of rice, flour, sugar, galleta and other necessities in sufficient quantities for the voyage were taken aboard. Great indeed was the excitement on the day they left Asunción.

On this first trip there sailed with Allan and his wife, Will Payne one of Bolivia’s pioneer missionaries, Gordon Airth who, having come as an unsaved young man to South America 16 years before, was now taking the gospel of his salvation to needy souls in this very land. Additionally, there was a Christian Paraguayan lad, Lucilo Miranda. At home in Asunción, Miss Lewis undertook the responsibility of both mothering and tutoring the Smith children, while Mr and Mrs Jose Martinez ministered to the growing needs of the young church.



First trip on “El Alba.” L-R: Gordon Airth, deck boy, Maud Smith, Will Payne.

“After several years of much work, many trials and hope deferred, we have in the mercy of God had the great joy of commencing our first voyage with the gospel launch ‘El Alba.’” states a special report signed by Will Payne, Gordon Airth and Allan Smith.

“Leaving Asunción, we sailed up the River Paraguay to Concepción, the second city of the Republic, 200 miles north, calling at just one or two places. Our purpose was to make a straight run up taking our bearings on the way, and then

First Voyage of the "El Alba"

work every house and port on the return journey. This proved to be a wise plan, as two days after leaving Asunción a revolution broke out.

For some way up the river, the launch was eyed with suspicion by people, who mistook it for a government vessel. In several places the men rushed off to hide in the woods, or crossed the river to take refuge in the limitless Chaco, home of the wandering Indian, fearing they would be commandeered for military service."

At Concepción, a rather terrifying experience overtook them. One of the tropical storms for which the Rio Paraguay is noted, sprang up suddenly. Here the current is strong and they did not know where to find suitable anchorage. When they finally dropped anchor it would not hold, owing to the clayey nature of the riverbed, and the boat began to drift quickly towards an old pier jutting from the bank. They tried to avert the danger, but the collision was inevitable.

In an effort to save the launch Mr Smith's left hand was badly crushed, but there was no time to bandage it as the launch was at the mercy of the current. Some trouble was caused by a large beam that projected from the pier becoming jammed under the handrail, however both boat and crew were marvelously preserved from serious injury. As soon as they had freed the boat, they decided to go further up river and anchor in a shingly bay. All night long the launch pitched and rolled as if at sea, although they were fourteen hundred miles inland.

"From Concepción," continues the report, "We went to the town of Belen, five leagues inland, shivering with the early morning cold for about an hour on a train and then frizzling in heat as the sun mounted high during a cart ride of two and a half hours. At Belen, a small work has been maintained by Dr Lindsay, a self-supporting medical missionary. His influence is felt all over northern Paraguay and he has translated the New Testament into the native Guarani language. At his invitation, we were privileged to hold a week of spe-

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cial meetings at which we realised much help from the Lord, the whole town being stirred up, and a number accepted Christ.

“Returning to Concepción, we had one more meeting, and then set off on the return journey with the launch. At Ybapobo, a lumber estate covering sixty leagues, we had two splendid meetings. All the management and a large number of workers with their families were present. It was amusing to see the police commissioner, whip in hand, inviting the people to come right up to the circle. We were glad to see he used peaceful persuasion and not the whip!

“It would occupy too much space to mention the many places visited. There were sugar plantations, lumber camps, cattle ranches, farms, etc., at each of which we were cordially received, literature distributed, souls dealt with, and arrangements made for more extended visits on the next journey.

“We would ask friends to praise God for all His

wonderful help and dealings with us during the voyage, and for the privilege granted of reaching so many places where hitherto Satan has held unchallenged sway. We would ask, also, for the earnest prayers of the Lord’s people for help in navigation. The Lord carried us through many places of which it might be spoken, ‘Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.’ The water which for over three years had maintained a phenomenally high level, commenced to drop rapidly after we left Asunción, and on our return journey was so low that



Allan Smith's second launch, "El Alba",
the Smith family standing on deck

First Voyage of the "El Alba"

even experienced river pilots had a man at the bow of the vessel sounding for the channel as they went along.

"It was with great sorrow that we were compelled to cover the ground so hurriedly, and pass by so many places still waiting for the gospel. Although over six weeks at work on this section of the river, it would require three or four months to do justice to it.

If the Lord wills, after the intense heat of summer has passed, with its myriads of voracious mosquitoes and other insatiable insects, we hope to go up river to Corumbá in Brazil. It was a great joy to have brother Payne with us, for who as practical as Don Guillermo! Much impressed with the needs and possibilities of the work, he intends to return, God willing, to accompany us on the Corumbá trip, which will occupy at least six months.

"The launch is just the thing for the work. Those who advocate a smaller launch little realise what a sorry life they would condemn us to. We found our promenade deck none too spacious, nor our cabins any too commodious! The small motor launch has fully justified its existence, as, in addition to being used to reach towns up the smaller creeks; it saved us from a serious predicament when machinery broke down, and moreover, on several occasions it had to be requisitioned for sounding purposes."

A hurried inspection of "El Alba" soon disillusioned one as to any preconceived notion of luxury yacht appointments. We go down the hatchway and look inside the stern cabin. On either side are two bunks, one folded within the other to barely project from the walls. This cabin is quite a storeroom, as well as a living room; there is a table and half a dozen chairs, all homemade, with such extras as the organ crowded into its small dimensions. Everything that can be folded has been built that way. The chairs fold into a small space, and the table, which accommodates eight people, can be turned on its side, thus occupying only a fraction of its extended size. There are windows on both sides above the bunks; while at the end is a little writing desk and bookcase with glass doors, and on either side a built-in wardrobe.

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There is at this time no electricity – just kerosene lamps; the former more up-to-date means of lighting is to follow in due course. Just at the bottom of the stairs, there are two cupboards, one for stores and the other for gospel literature. The literature is sorted into the various languages, Spanish, Portuguese and Guarani. Two built-in medicine chests complete the furnishings.

From this cabin, one enters the engine room, and then, passing through the galley beyond, reach the forward cabin. The lower bunks here can be used as seats, the collapsible top bunks acting as backs, and both suitably covered. A

narrow sideboard and wardrobe, and various drawers and cupboards, plus a folding table, furnish this cabin, from which a companionway leads up to the pilothouse above. The latter contains one bed, the steering wheel



Smith family on deck of El Alba about 1925

with chart table, and a door on each side gives access to the deck. These doors are rather low and raise many a lump on the heads of forgetful members of the crew!

The galley, on the port side, measures only three feet by five, and has no other ventilation than the two doors, which sometimes create a through draught. The one porthole does not open, but at least lets in sufficient light to enable meals to be cooked on the small wood-burning stove. Plate racks above the sink and table, and pots and pans underneath, fill the rest of the available space. This leaves a minimum of room for the missionary sister who does the cooking. She's almost cooked herself, when as well as the heat thrown out

First Voyage of the "El Alba"

by the stove the surrounding temperature is well over one hundred degrees in the shade.

On the starboard side, opposite the galley, is a small lavatory, which later is to be enlarged to provide the luxury of a full-sized bath in the space occupied by the gas-producer, which has proved unsatisfactory and unsuitable for a closed launch.

The day begins early with a simple breakfast of coffee with porridge, or perhaps only bread and marmalade. The chief meal comes at 11.30 a.m., afternoon tea about 3 p.m., and another substantial meal at 7 p.m. Sometimes there is plenty of meat and usually some vegetables, but in many places, there is a great scarcity of fresh food of any sort. Sweet potatoes or mandioca have to take the place of the Irishman's favourite standby.

Very often resort has to be made to charqui, meat cut into long thin strips and dried in the sun, but often presenting unsavoury green or mouldy patches. It can be used for soup or pounded into meat cakes, but it is at best an unappetising substitute for fresh meat.

Occasionally a timely catch of fish will fill a need, and more than once alligator's tail has found a place on the menu. Sometimes oranges and bananas can be had in abundance and very cheaply, thereby providing some compensation for lack of vitamins in the diet, but there are periods when nothing in the way of fruit or green vegetables can be obtained.

The main thing, however, was that the launch proved a real home, in whose privacy weary workers could relax at the close of a busy day. It was their base,



Visitors on El Alba

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moving with them wherever the work called. To these brave-hearts, spiritual necessity was more important than mere fleshly comfort.

“Although the official language of Paraguay is Spanish,” concludes the report, “the bulk of the population prefer to use their own national language, which is Guarani; many understand only a little Spanish. It seems imperative that workers on the launch should get hold of this difficult Indian language.

“On one bank of the river we have the people speaking Guarani, while on the other bank we meet with many Lengua Indians, and further up the river, in Brazil, Portuguese is spoken. Wisdom is needed as to how much should be attempted in this direction.

“Finally, pray for blessing on the seed sown on virgin soil, and that the way may be opened for the continuance of this work on which, after such a prolonged delay, the Lord has graciously permitted a beginning to be made.”

From an Interesting Diary

Voyage followed voyage with just sufficient time between for the necessary work of overhauling “El Alba” on the stocks and the general preparations for each long trip. It was a wonderful cheer to Mr Smith to have all these opportunities after so much trial—the joy was almost too great.

Within the compass of a few pages, we record some interesting incidents from the crowded months covering five subsequent voyages.

“In the mercy of God we were able to carry out our plan to start on the second and longer trip with the launch, leaving Asunción with the same group on board as on the first trip.

“There were many things to arrange in view of the six months’ journey in districts where shops are few and very poorly supplied. At the last moment, we found that the charcoal we had bought was damp. We had much trouble over this, as it was impossible to generate sufficient gas from it for the engine, thus we were much delayed. It is good to see the Lord’s hand even in such things. Our start from Asunción was most opportune, as another of the frequent revolutions broke out soon after our departure, and the delay on the river allowed the first excitement to pass before we reached a port of any size.

“At last we reach Puerto Rosario where a large timber trade is being developed by a Swiss gentleman, Mr Monod, a distant relative of the great Pastor Monod of France. Here we expected to find a stock of charcoal that we had



Joyce on a seller's donkey
outside the house in Asunción

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ordered by letter, but the revolution had completely upset everything and no men could be found to prepare it. Most of them had gone off to the forest to escape military service; a few were held for sentinel duty, and about 23 were seized by a gunboat that came along and carried them off to fight. There were a few days of heavy conflict in Asunción before the government troops could dominate the situation. The revolutionaries are now some fifty miles from Asunción, and both sides are preparing for a big battle, neither willing to risk things without further preparation."

As no news had reached them from Asunción, the postal service being at a standstill, it was decided that Mr and Mrs Smith should make the journey down of some ten hours in the small launch, to see how it fared with their children, while "El Alba" waited for the fresh supply of charcoal. They found that there had been some days of anxiety and privation for Miss Lewis and the children, as well as for Mr and Mrs Martinez, but all were well and happy in the Lord.

While in Asunción Mr Smith interviewed both the President, and the Minister of War, who not only gave him papers bestowing on "El Alba" the privileges of a ship of war of a friendly nation, but also issued instructions to the authorities not to interfere with their work but to render all possible help.

After four days with the children, they had a long tiring journey back to "El Alba." They were some 50 hours on the small launch, 22 hours actual traveling against the strong current; the remaining 28 hours being spent on the tiny craft tied to a tree somewhere on the river bank each night. It was not considered safe to go ashore.

"Last week," reads another account of those days, "we had some excitement owing to a big storm that burst upon us unexpectedly one night. The weather had been increasingly hot for some days and on Thursday, the very oppressive atmosphere presaged a storm.

"After nightfall heavy clouds gathered. At about 10 p.m., when the crew had already 'turned in,' a sudden gale drove us against the bank. It was a case of

From an Interesting Diary

all hands on deck. Mr Smith shortened off the cable of the stern anchor that had been put out for just such an emergency. We then drew in the slack of the bow anchor chain at the same time loosening the rope that tied us to the bank. This allowed the launch to draw away a bit from the shore and prevented pounding on the bank.

“However, almost immediately both anchor chains snapped and the current carried us out into the river. The engine was already running, ready for emergencies, so we decided to make for a more sheltered spot on the other side. Just then, the ship began to fill up with dense smoke from end to end. It was discovered that the engine had become dangerously overheated because the cooling water system had become blocked with sand, so we were obliged to stop it lest the cylinders should crack.

“It was a weird situation. In the inky darkness of the night the rain fell in torrents, the wind howled around us, the waves beat heavily against the hull, thunder roared and lightning flashed, while we tossed about on the wild waters, minus anchors and with a crippled engine.

“Suddenly Mr Smith saw the outline of land, and, realising we had been blown back to the bank, he jumped ashore hoping to tie a cable, but



Ready to go to school in Asuncion, Paraguay

before anything could be done the launch swung out again into the current. Dashing down the bank he made a jump for the small launch which was tied astern, and, half falling into the river, he had a great struggle before managing to get back on board.

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“Some minutes later we again touched the edge, and the Paraguayan boy, nimble of foot on the slippery clay, climbed the steep bank and fastened a rope to a tree. Mr Airth followed with a second line, and thus secured, we lay pounding violently against the bank and wondering if our vessel would be dashed to pieces before morning.

“The anxiously-awaited daylight came at last, and we found that we were in a tiny cove not far from our anchorage of the previous night. The storm gradually subsided, and then we set to work to recover our anchors without which it would be impossible to travel. We prayed much that the Lord would give us good success. He answered, and soon we were again in possession of those indispensable adjuncts to our equipment.



River baptism

“When we finally got the two tons of charcoal for which we had waited so long, the gentleman who provided it refused to accept any payment. An hour’s run up the river brought us to a ‘toldo’ of Lengua Indians, in which some sixty of them live under the same roof. There are several thousand of this tribe scattered over the great Chaco territory, besides thousands more of various other tribes of primitive nomadic Indians.”

There were many days of quiet plodding for the Master. Much visiting was undertaken, with meetings almost every night. Souls drew near to the

From an Interesting Diary

Kingdom, several entered into the blessedness of salvation. There was both opposition and indifference that made the going hard.

“We have had the great privilege of presenting the gospel to persons belonging to the aristocracy of Paraguay, whom we would never have been able to reach in their city residences. Here on their country estates and cattle ranches, seated alongside their servants and workers, they have heard the message, and we look to the Lord to open their eyes to the precious truth. We find among them some already weary of the falsities of Rome. While it is still true that ‘to the poor the gospel is preached,’ we thank God for the wonderful opportunities of giving the Word of Life to a class of people so seldom reached in these lands.”

Stormy Times

“Five months ago today,” writes Allan on the 27th of October 1922, “we commenced our present journey. It was our intention to reach Corumbá, 750 miles to the north, and return to Asunción in about six months’ time; but here we are five months out and only half way to our proposed destination! True, an enforced delay of six weeks at Puerto Rosario accounts for some of the time spent, but only as we go on do we realise something of the immensity of the task that confronts us with the launch. We feel we cannot deal with these scattered groups of people by just leaving some literature and passing on. So we have endeavoured to get near to them in their homes, making friendships, and wherever possible, having a meeting.

“As the launch was leaking, owing to the effect of the severe bumping received during the storm at Rosario, we put into a quiet stream for repairs. While there at



Botanical Gardens, Asunción - FRONT left to right:
1 Allan Smith, 2 Joseph Martinez 4 Mrs Maud Smith,
6 Maudie, 7 Marjorie Airth (nee Lewis)
BACK 2 Gordon, 3 Bruce, 4 Joyce

Puerto Cooper, we had three good meetings on the estate, and were able to pass up another river in the small launch to spend the weekend at Armandina, where a good meeting was held in the house of a German carpenter. Just after leaving to return to the launch, a violent storm broke upon us and in a few minutes we were drenched to the skin, while ahead lay over an hour’s run in a cold south wind. Nearing the main river, we encountered rough water, which sent wave

Stormy Times

after wave right over our little boat. But in the goodness of God, we were preserved from disaster. We were all sorry for the Indian guide with us; his shivers were enough to make the whole boat shake.

“Leaving Cooper, we arrived at La Novia, a lumber establishment with a notoriously bad reputation. Here we had to fight to obtain an entrance, but the Lord undertook for us, the debauched-looking administrator gave way, and eventually we had a good hearing.

“Soon we reached San Salvador, where the manager and engineer of the large freezing plant received us very heartily and insisted on our staying ashore with them during our visit of two weeks. Some engine trouble had developed, and we were able to avail ourselves of the workshops and materials to effect repairs. For two weeks, we had meetings nightly. Interest was sustained and two souls professed to accept Christ as Saviour.

“We were glad to meet an Englishman and his wife here who are seeking to let their light shine. He is a fine trophy of grace. For years a backslider and confirmed drunkard with a wretched home, he came to our house in Asunción two years ago in an almost dying condition. For four months, he was cared for and nursed back to health, but best of all he was restored to Christ and delivered from the thralldom of drink.

“Several other places were visited, after which we arrived at Puerto Pinasco, a large factory for extracting tannin from the ‘quebracho’ tree. There are 10,000 people on the estate, so here we remained for two weeks having meetings each night in a large open shed. On



Puerto Pinasco factory for extracting tannin

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the third night, a ball was to have been held, and acting on the advice of the Chief of Police, we suspended our meeting.

“About 9:30pm as we sat on deck, a friend came over to tell us that the people were waiting for us and had been waiting since 8 o’clock! We hurried over and found a good gathering, which, considering the counter attraction was quite remarkable. Praise God, much interest was aroused. We believe some are seeking for Zion. Here brother Will Payne left us to continue his journey towards Bolivia, and we felt a distinct loss as we went forward with our reduced ‘crew’.

“Passing on, we came to a large island called Peña Hermosa (Beautiful Rock), so called because of a high and notable rock at one end, which looked pretty indeed with its luxuriant vegetation. There are some eight or nine small farms in the island, and we had a fine gathering with the simple people. We were rather taken aback, however,



Peña Hermosa island

on going ashore at night for the meeting, to find ourselves confronted with a double row of children with hands clasped in an attitude of supplication for our blessing – as is their custom when visited by a priest.

“A further move brought us to Saladero Risso, a large establishment where meat is dried for export, and where we had two encouraging meetings in spite of a continual downpour of rain. As we write, we are at another tannin-extracting establishment, Puerto Casado, 323 miles north of Asunción. The property of this company covers an area of 1,300 square leagues, equal in extent to the whole of Belgium.

“Scattered along the western bank are numerous tribes of Indians. At some places such as Pinasco and Casado, a good number of Indians are employed,

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including Lenguas, Angaites, Sanapanas, Chamacocos, and Sapuches. How one longs to be able to tell these poor Children of the Chaco something of the Glad Tidings!

“We would greatly value prayer for one of the leading men in this town, a noted revolutionary leader, who has several murders and numberless crimes to his account. His boast is that no man dare face him while he has his revolver in his possession. This man was arrested by the preaching of the gospel at our first visit, when the Lord evidently spoke to his guilty conscience. He told us that for several weeks wherever he went the words ‘Neutral you cannot be,’ which he had heard us sing, pursued him relentlessly. After a time he felt that God had forsaken him; but has been roused again at our second visit. He has not yet decided for Christ, but there is evidently a fierce battle going on in his soul.

“At Guarany, about 500 miles north of Asunción, we had a series of splendid gatherings in the largest and brightest hall we have used in Paraguay. Night after night the people came with evidence of real interest, some coming from a place 40 miles inland and remaining several days in order to hear the message. These meetings were held from 9:30 to 11 pm, an unusually late hour, but even then the heat was suffocating and the perspiration just rolled down. We had many visitors on board, and friendships were formed which we trust may lead some to form a friendship with Christ.

“Having already spent six months on the journey, with Corumbá still 250 miles ahead, we decided to return to Asunción from this point. On the return trip, we were welcomed at each port of call and found the people ready to listen again to the message.

“Before reaching Concepción we ran on the rocks at a particularly dangerous part of the river which we had not navigated on the upward journey, having made a detour through a small river alongside in order to visit a large cattle ranch. The river level having dropped considerably during the interval, we had to return by the main channel, when suddenly we crashed into the rocks at

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twelve miles per hour, coming to a halt with the launch well out of water. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, a vessel striking as we did would have had the bottom ripped open, but the Lord mercifully preserved us and the launch suffered no harm beyond a slight increase in the leakage occasioned by storm during the earlier part of the voyage.

“Assistance and appliances were forthcoming, and after twelve days’ continuous hard work, we were free again with heartfelt thanks to God for a marvellous deliverance from disaster. The day after the accident, a friendly captain stopped his passenger steamer over two hours in a vain attempt to pull us off, much to the disgust of some fanatical women passengers who protested angrily against the captain for stopping to take ‘the devil’s boat’ off the rocks!

“On the eighth of February we arrived back in Asunción after eight and a half months’ service on the river, during which time we covered about 1,000 miles.

“What a glorious privilege has been ours these past months! At only one place during the whole trip did we find any public testimony for the Master. All over the land ‘Satan reigns and darkness rests,’ and how great is that darkness! The false light of a counterfeit Christianity only serves to intensify the spiritual darkness of poor, debased, distracted Paraguay. But praise God, thousands have for the first time heard the message of redemption through the blood. Hundreds of Testaments have been placed in the hands of those with a mind to read, and over two hundred Bibles have been purchased by interested souls. The enlightening beams of the Gospel are now reaching further and further afield.”

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THE usual course in arranging for a meeting at one of the estates was to find the leading man who, having given permission would send his second man to round up the employees. Thus the men treated Mr Smith with respect because of the influence of their chief who himself was often present at the meetings with his wife and family.

“From a port called Rosario, we travelled overland four days by bullock cart to visit a shoemaker, Don Jose Dure, who was converted through hearing the gospel at an open air meeting in Asunción. Straight away he had said, ‘I must go home and tell my people,’ and soon after returned to his native town. Setting up in his cobbling trade, he took in shoes to be mended and gave out tracts, and soon began to experience much persecution for the gospel’s sake. The dear man and his wife were overjoyed at our unexpected arrival.

“The local authorities were interviewed and permission obtained to hold public meetings. That evening and the following one we had well-attended gatherings in the school, but on the morning of the third day the schoolmistress refused to allow us to continue there as the priest was threatening to excommunicate her for allowing the ‘heretics’ to preach in her school.

“A leading business man then gave us the use of a large room in an empty house in which two more meetings were held in spite of continual stoning by boys instigated by the priest. Indeed Don Jose’s house, where we were staying, was also under fire practically the whole time we were there, but in the mercy of God no one was hurt.

“Some young men who had given a sympathetic hearing to the gospel were so angry with the priest for his unscrupulous tactics that they indiscreetly broke open the door of his house and were going to drag him out, but found him ready for them with a revolver in his hand. The priest accused us of being party to the assault and began to gather ‘lewd fellows of the baser sort’ in order to make a violent attack on us.

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“In the early morning of the next day, the police superintendent and the local judge, who had been very friendly and helpful to us, came and begged us to slip away quietly before more trouble began, as the small police force of four men would be impotent in the face of a drunken mob.

“Fortunately the same day a neighbouring judge sent his boy with horses to conduct us out to his place some three miles away where we had a meeting, and the following day the lad acted as our guide back to the river. Instead of taking the main road, we cut through the forest paths and over trackless plains, and so covered the sixty miles to the river. In places the track was very muddy and slippery, and at one stage the pack-horse became bogged down and only the two mattresses kept it from sinking further. We had not done much riding for a long time and our horses were very bony, so we were pretty exhausted by the time we reached the launch.

“Just as we arrived back sometime after nightfall, we encountered two men, who on seeing us asked in surprise, ‘How did you get here? We met armed men on the road looking for you.’ They had been paid money to take our lives. What chance would we have had against armed men in a narrow pass? But our Heavenly Father had watched our ‘goings in’ and our ‘comings out,’ though we were quite unconscious of it at the time.

“Since then God has blessed the shoemaker’s testimony and souls have been saved, among them some of his own relatives. He and his brother built a small hall the meanwhile praying that the Lord would send someone to open it for them. The Lord answered, for Mr and Mrs Airth were led to go just at the right time and it was duly inaugurated by a series of gospel meetings and the baptism of the first believers.

“Terrible storms were not the only source of danger on the river,” continued Mrs Smith. “At many places there are large sandbanks to be avoided. On one occasion, we were badly stranded and had to work day and night to get clear. Towards morning, we managed to get the boat ready to move on. Cables attached to anchors fore and aft were hauled in and the boy Lucilo was warned

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not to let the stern cable foul the propeller. Just then a large Brazilian boat passed by, which attracted the boy's attention. The next moment our engine stopped. The cable had wound round and round the propeller shaft! This meant that Mr Airth, Mr Payne and Mr Smith, each in turn had to get into his bathing suit and, clinging to the launch with one hand while submerged to the neck in water, work a hacksaw with the other to cut the steel cable from the shaft. It was an all-day job, and every time they severed a strand, it would spring back and cut their hand. The water was cold so I had to keep them supplied with frequent cups of hot coffee. Lucilo was very repentant!

"On another occasion Allan nearly lost his life by drowning. It was an oppressively hot day and we had gone off in the small launch to a quiet place for a bathe. Allan swam out into the river not realising the strength of the current, and suddenly we heard him call out, 'Gordon!' and almost immediately he went under.

Mr Airth swam out at once, but before reaching Allan, Allan sank for the third time. Just as the Mr Airth was about to dive, he suddenly felt Allan under his foot and was able to bring him to the surface and pull him across to the opposite bank which was then the nearer side. Mr Airth had shouted to me to look for someone to bring our small launch across, but as I could



Jose Duré and Jose Britos converted on launch in 1927 at bow

find no one strong enough to crank the engine, I had to paddle it over, using a floorboard for the purpose. In the goodness of the Lord Allan was quite conscious, and after he had got rid of a lot of the water he had swallowed and

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felt somewhat revived, he got up and started the engine and we returned to ‘El Alba’ with deep thanks to the Lord for His delivering mercy.”

There was now to come a big gap in the launch fellowship. Their friend and co-worker Gordon Airth was to go on his well-earned furlough. Every cloud has its silver-lining however, for on the fourth voyage the Smiths planned to take their four children, with Don Fermin the first man employed in the construction of the “El Alba,” as seaman, and his wife as cook. With this happy crew, they weighed anchor on 23 August 1924.

“Our first port of call was Zeballos Cué, where 500 head of cattle are slaughtered every day at the large meat-extract establishment of Liebig’s,” writes Allan. “The next place we touched was Villa Hayes where we had three very well-attended meetings and much interest, especially as Don Fermin gave his testimony in Guaraní, the native language. It was a joy to see him telling out of a full heart to his own people what the Lord had done for him.

“Time forbids us to tell of visits to places along the river such as Tayicare, Antequera, Buena Vista, Ibabobo, Romero Cue, and many, many other ports of call.

“At Pinasco, however, the enemy was particularly busy. The manager received us kindly and gave permission for meetings in the schoolhouse. The first meeting was large and rowdy,



Allan's permission to live in Paraguay 1926

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the next was worse. This seemed strange, for we had not experienced anything of that kind on previous occasions.

“At the third meeting the climax was reached. Several employees from the office came along to see if they could catch the offenders. At the commencement of the meeting, all was orderly. The Major in command of the Forces came to the door, stood awhile, and then went away. Soon, small stones were thrown in, but the soldiers who were supposed to be keeping order only laughed. Later on, live toads tied together were tossed in among the people. The speaker was hit three times and the doorkeeper received three nasty blows on the back. Mrs Smith was also hit, while one young woman was struck by two toads that fell round her neck, giving her a terrible fright. It was very difficult to make people hear, but the meeting was closed in the usual way and no notice was taken of the disturbance.

Next day the manager sent for us, and upon arriving at his office, he explained that he wished to apologise on behalf of the Company for what had happened. The Company’s lawyer, who is a Paraguayan, was instructed to write a letter to the Major making it clear to him that such things would not be tolerated in the future. For this we were deeply thankful, as it showed clearly that the Lord was undertaking for us.

“Thus Satan outwitted himself. It was hard to believe that we were in the same place when the next meeting came round. There was perfect order and quietness. It seemed, however, that something was wrong. This time the enemy tried another tactic. The soldiers were doing all in their power to keep the people away. But for those who did come there was quietness and they could enjoy what was said. For five weeks we continued to hold meetings, and the last one proved to be the biggest and best.

“We found that a son of the manager at San Jose had been arrested by the word preached previously, and was now seeking the Saviour. While on board visiting us he received the light and professed to be saved. His name is Emilio Machiel.

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“There is a Brazilian official stationed here in this miserable frontier place, Rio Apa. He has been twenty years on coastguard duty, and this is the first time he has ever seen a Bible or heard the gospel. The old man listened with attention and seemed glad to obtain a portion of the Scriptures.

“At Guarany we found a new manager in charge, who seemed pleased to receive us and gave full liberty to work among his people. Just before reaching the port, something went wrong with the reversing gear. When the order was shouted down to stop the engine upon nearing the landing, nothing happened. Again the order was given. Again, nothing happened. Then up came Fermín shouting ‘Maestro, the engine won’t stop.’ Fortunately, there was room to get clear and put out into the stream.

“We went down into the engine room to look for the trouble. Upon examining the reversing gear, it was found that two screws had fallen out and allowed the two arms that engage and disengage the clutch to rub on the revolving cone until it was quite worn away. A new piece would have to be made, and in order to get the old piece out the whole engine would have to be lifted.

“Things looked serious, as there appeared to be no way of repairing it. The manager was approached on the subject. ‘That is nothing,’ he immediately replied, ‘we will soon fix that up.’ It was a great relief to get the piece out, the new one made and everything put back in its place satisfactorily. We were all thankful when it was done. Nor would the manager charge anything for the job – thus the Lord undertakes for us.

“From Guarany on it is quite new ground, as we have never gone higher up the river on previous journeys. Port Perez is a poor miserable place, but to our



Maud Smith passport photo 1926

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surprise, we found the people anxious to hear the message and buy Bibles. In an hour's time, we had sold seventeen copies. At Barranco Branco quite a number of men are employed at meat-drying works. The owners were friendly and arranged that we should have the use of the hotel for meetings. We were astonished at the interest and attention shown by people who had the appearance of cutthroats and thieves.

"Just before we left, the foreman came on board to buy a Bible and said that he was really interested and concerned about his soul. A big, strong, fearless man, yet he seemed quite moved; though he did not say much, he was evidently thinking deeply.

"It was with thankful hearts we dropped anchor in Corumbá, situated nearly 2,000 miles from the sea. During all the journey of 750 miles, the Lord had blessed and protected us. The authorities had treated us very well, allowing us to enter their ports as a ship of war, which saved us much expense and trouble. It is possible to go up river as far as Cuyaba, which is another five to six days' journey by river steamer.



First pages of songbook thought to have been used on El Alba

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“Puerto Suarez is six leagues to the west of Corumbá, and is a Bolivian port at the end of the road that passes through Santa Cruz, where Dr and Mrs George Hamilton are labouring. It is 450 miles by a bad road to Santa Cruz, which takes 17 days on good mules. In wet weather, the travelling can only be done by bullock cart, and then it takes 30 days.

“There the official in charge received us well. There is a resident priest, so we did not know how the people would respond; but they turned out well and listened with much attention. It was said to be the first time the gospel had ever been preached there. The official asked if we could send a qualified teacher to take charge of the school, which has sixty children, and at the same time do mission work among his people.

“‘I am convinced,’ he said, ‘that you are the only people who can help us, and I am prepared to do all in my power to help, if you will only send one or two workers.’

“The man seemed really in earnest. It may be that the Lord has someone prepared for this corner. The school would give a good opening, and may prove a stepping stone to greater openings among the large population of Indians around.

“Before leaving Puerto Suarez we invited the same man to visit us on board the ‘El Alba’ at Corumbá. He came on the day appointed. Again, he pressed the matter of a schoolteacher, saying, ‘A visit is all very well, but we need someone in our midst to live and teach.’ Three Brazilians, who were interested in the work opening up among wild Indians, came on board several times and gave some information about the need.

“May the hearts of the Lord’s intercessors be led out in praise and more believing prayer for this great field that lies open to the gospel.”

“El Alba” and its crew now returned to Asunción, which was reached after an absence of approximately one year. On this momentous voyage, the boys had made themselves indispensable by helping in the general running of the launch, attending to the engine, cleaning, scraping and painting. Gordon was

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now 12 years of age and Alfred 10. The two girls, Maud and Joyce, were just as wholehearted over their particular duties as were the boys. Happy family, united joyously in God's service.

The Seventh Voyage

Seven is said to be the number of perfection. Strangely enough, this seventh journey with the gospel launch “El Alba” was to prove the last ever undertaken in Paraguay by Allan Smith. It is with heightened interest that we watch each movement made at this stage in the progress of the work.

“After the usual preparation before leaving for a gospel trip with the launch,” writes Allan on this occasion, “we sailed from Asunción in glorious weather. We anticipated being away only for a month, until a house was vacant for us. My boys helped me in the managing of the boat, and Mrs Smith had the able assistance of our two girls and Miss McGregor.



The boys help repair El Alba

“At Zeballos Cué, where is situated a large meat-extracting factory employing nine hundred workers, I made preparations for holding meetings in a crude hall, which is used as a boarding house for the workers. We also visited amongst the people in the village, distributing gospel literature and inviting the folk to the meeting. The interest increased gradually, and marked respect and attention was shown by the mixed company who attended.

Each day we had visitors on board to see over the launch, and quite a few private conversations were held among some of the superior classes who visited us. Several Englishmen – born in the country and employed in the factory offices – also attended the meetings and came on board at various times.

“Before leaving Zeballos Cué we had a rather trying but exciting experience, caused by the accumulation of ‘camalotes.’ These were floating islands of vegetation, which were carried down the river by the strong current. Many of these floating islands are the size of a large house. The roots of the vegetation

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growth go deep, and it is possible to walk over them without sinking. Sometimes all kinds of creatures are to be seen on these islands including snakes and crocodiles, etc. with perhaps one or two birds sitting on dead carcasses.

“One of these islands struck us at night, causing our anchor to drag and bearing us downstream. Imagine our difficulty as we lay out in the river. In spite of everyone working strenuously for several hours in a very hot atmosphere, and the engine going ‘full steam ahead,’ the launch still kept gliding downstream with the roots firmly entwined around the anchor chain. Our last resource was to tow across to the riverbank a wire cable, which one of the boys swiftly tied to a tree stump. This was no easy task, particularly as innumerable camalotes continued to float past the whole width of the river as we worked.

Then ‘all hands’ worked with might and main, pulling on the cable, until finally we arrived close to the river bank, where we remained for two days before we could disentangle ourselves. This is only one of the trying sides of the launch work, but knowing something of such trials



Maudie, Gordon, Joyce and Alfred on the launch

you will be able to pray more effectually for us as we travel up and down these vast waterways.”

Small wonder indeed, with the full responsibility resting upon his shoulders, that the navigation used to prey on Mr Smith’s mind. In the middle of the night he had been known to jump out of bed, and fumbling at the door, ask in anxious tones, “Are you sure the light is on the mast?”

“With gratitude to God for His blessing on our efforts,” continues Allan, “we set sail again, anchoring at a lonely spot on the river where lived an Italian

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family who had asked for a meeting in their home. Although only several women and a few children were present, we felt the power of the Holy Spirit as these people eagerly listened to the gospel for the first time. At the close, they entered into discussion and proved by their questions that they were thinking people.

“The next morning they came on board to farewell us, bringing a bunch of beautiful roses for the ladies. We left them some literature, claiming the truth of those words, ‘My Word shall not return unto Me void.’ We felt a great victory had been achieved in that they were so friendly towards us, and willing to visit us despite the fanaticism of those living nearby.

“Lifting our anchor, we set forth for Villa Hayes, an old historical port built on the river front in the great Chaco Territory. Here we anchored quite close to the bank in view of several stores, mud ‘ranchos,’ and a huge soldiers’ barracks.



Allan Smith about 1930, his left eye is made of glass

A ‘fiesta’ was being celebrated on the grass not far off, so that the holding of meetings was impossible for two days. Nevertheless, we were encouraged by being given the free use of a rather over-ventilated dance hall owned by an old German couple. On Monday evening, we held our first meeting in the dimly lit building. Each night the interest increased – military officers, civilians and all types of people attending.

“We also had crowds on board, including many of the military officers. I was able to have interesting conversations on spiritual matters with some of them. The lives of many of these men are so extremely complicated that

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we realise more acutely than ever that nothing but the amazing grace of God can reach and save them. A number of Indians from the Mataco tribe came on board. They live some one hundred miles back in the wilds of the Great Chaco.”

Launch work, meanwhile, was providing many a thrill for the children. What boy would miss seeing a large snake swimming across the river unaffected by the tremendously swift current! Only the head would be visible skimming the surface of the water, until it drew near enough for the long sinuous body – perhaps five or six feet in length – to be seen.

“There were some happenings that gave us all quite a fright,” said Mrs Smith. “On a certain night at one of the ports I had been sitting up reading to the children with the help of the lantern. Hearing what we thought to be a crocodile, we looked over the handrail, there to see a drunk man standing up to his neck in the water. A policeman got him out, otherwise he would have been drowned. Next day he came back to ask if we had seen his hat!



Maud Smith c.1930

“Another interesting trip from the launch was by motor bus to Monte Sociedad, a very pretty rural district, colonised chiefly by foreigners from various countries, where there are two sugar factories. Never before had the gospel been preached in this place, and what a thrilling sight it was to see over three hundred animated people congregated together!

Although several policemen were on guard, it was exceedingly difficult to

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command respect and order the first night. However, the singing and music both pleased and quietened them. Altogether, the majority listened most attentively, and clamoured at the close for literature. A very fanatical man (at whose house the priest stays when he visits there) bought a Bible, and apparently seemed most interested.

“The following night a large crowd again congregated, when better order was maintained, although a mischievous group stood outside trying to create a disturbance during the meeting. When literature was distributed at the close, this group tore up and burned right before our eyes the booklets and tracts, actually going so far as to throw stones and orange peelings at us. On the other hand, two young ladies came forward in front of the assembled crowd and presented the missionary ladies with bunches of roses. We all felt privileged that such meetings had been possible, thus paving the way for a later visit, God willing. Please pray for Monte Sociedad.”

A week after their return to Asunción, the Smiths moved into a house, until the Lord opened up the way for them to leave for a very much-needed furlough in December 1926.

Meanwhile, had we followed Miss Lewis, and later Mr Gordon Airth to the Lewis home in Nelson, New Zealand, we might have been present at a very happy ceremony, when she who had been such a friend and helper to the Smith children was joined in holy wedlock to their old chum, Mr Gordon Airth.

With this enlightenment, we read with interest when Allan Smith writes a few months later, “The launch is now out of the water, being overhauled in preparation for the next trip, when Mr and Mrs Airth intend to go on board.

“Please join with us in giving thanks for blessing and help received, and in prayer for still greater things. We long to see a great ingathering of souls in this country.”

Outline of the Years

Twenty years have rolled their course since the pioneer launch worker, Mr Allan Smith, with ever-enlarging vision, left Paraguay to undertake a similar work in Peru, on the headwaters of the great River Amazon, leaving Mr and Mrs Airth to continue the work so well begun.

There can be, therefore, no more fitting conclusion to the Paraguay section of this narrative than this outline of the years, with the resulting harvest, as reviewed by Mr Gordon Airth in 1947.

“In the course of time the Lord raised up new labourers for Paraguay to share the burden of so great a task, first, in 1927, Mr and Mrs Logan who had previously laboured among the Lengua Indians of the Paraguayan Chaco, and then, in 1929, Mr and Mrs Richmond who went out from Christchurch, New Zealand. At intervals, various other workers have made one or two trips on the launch.

“Quite a number of further voyages have been made, on two occasions as far as Corumbá in Brazil, a round trip of 1,500 miles, taking over a year to complete.

“The population on the river bank is continually on the increase, and now, between Asunción and Corumbá, there are approximately two hundred ports (a “port” may represent a town or large factory, or merely a few houses on the bank).

“With very few exceptions permission has been readily granted to hold meetings ashore, although in a number of places the more fanatical element has



Alfred, Maud, Allan and Gordon
in Corumba, Brazil 1925

shown hostility and youths have pelted the launch crew with stones when tying up to the bank. Police protection, however, has always been given, and the stone throwing kept in check after the initial 'bombardments.'

"In these ports the glorious gospel has been proclaimed in Spanish, Portuguese, Guarani and Lengua, and much visiting done from house to house. Many thousands of Bibles, New Testaments, Gospels, Scripture portions and other literature has been distributed. Hundreds of visitors have come on board the launch, from curiosity as well as from real interest. There have been many opportunities for personal discussion on spiritual matters. All have taken away gospel literature in some form, and by these means, the Word of God has been carried into homes all over the country.

"The question may be asked, what has the harvest been? We may never know the full results of this seed sowing. We do know that there are now many believers along the river, and they are seeking to let their light shine in the surrounding darkness. There are also small indigenous assemblies in the north of the country that are maintaining a humble testimony for God. Doubtless, these would have been multiplied had it been possible to keep the launch more continuously at work.

"In connection with one of these assemblies, it is interesting to trace its origin. In the year 1928, at one of the northern ports, a man came on board to tell us that he was a 'believer' for he already possessed a Bible. It appeared that he had bought it at a sale, when the effects of a deceased neighbour were being sold, without knowing what sort of book it was. As he read it, he became more and more interested, and later had some contact with believers. He was however, still ignorant of the simplicity of God's way of salvation, and when it was explained to him, he joyfully trusted the Saviour and entered into assurance.

"While we were still at the port it was his delight to come for frequent conversations and study of the Scriptures, and, on our leaving, we impressed on him the duty of witnessing to others. Shortly after, the dear man moved to another place where he found several other interested people who had obtained

Outline of the Years

Scriptures from the launch. So they united in their quest for the truth, and on our next visit we found a little group of sincere believers in that port, some of whom were ready for baptism. A little assembly was then formed which has since grown, and recently a few of the Christians, settling in another port, have established a fresh testimony.

“For several years, during the disastrous war between Paraguay and Bolivia, the work was at a standstill as the river was the main line of communication of the Paraguayan army. Since the beginning of 1939, no further trips have been made, as the ‘El Alba’ is no longer seaworthy.

“In the goodness of the Lord, material and equipment have been provided for the construction of a larger boat, this time with a steel hull and various improvements. War conditions, lack of workers for the ever-expanding needs of the work and other factors have prevented the construction of the new boat. Circumstances are now more favourable and it is hoped that a new vessel will be able to continue the promising work begun by ‘El Alba.’”

To Greater Things

The years pass. Up and down the great water- ways of the Paraguay, the gospel has been preached. With this river work in the capable care of Mr and Mrs Airth, the opportunity comes for Mr and Mrs Allan Smith to leave for New Zealand on furlough.

A furlough provides for the missionary something more than rest; it enables the worker to see his toil from the distance, which often provides a corrective, followed frequently with fresh vision and impelling impetus to greater things.

In South America, there is another great river, the Amazon, larger and longer than the Para-



Allan and Maud about 1928

guay. Surely, there should be a gospel launch pioneering its waters. Surely, some man would go to pierce the hinterland of the greatest unexplored region of the world – mysterious Brazil.

Thus a burden, unsought, came to rest strangely enough on the man with greying hair, who on his furlough was describing to assemblies the trials and triumphs aboard the “El Alba” on the River Paraguay.

Amazon was the greatest river on the face of the whole earth draining as it did an amazing amount of territory – some 2,700,000 square miles, in comparison with the 1,240,000 square miles of the Rio de la Plata. If there were no younger men offering did God want him to attempt this herculean task?

While in the throes of this exercise, an extraordinary indication of the divine will was given in the separate exercise of brethren in New Zealand with regard to launch work on the Amazon. When Mr Smith told of the burden that had come to him, there was the general conviction that God was in this thing.

It was with subdued yet, exultant spirit that Allan Smith faced this new chal-

To Greater Things

lenge. He knew, more than the brethren in the homeland, the toughness of the task. His experiences in pioneering the Paraguay River stripped the proposed project of its glamour. It was the need, and the call of the Lord, he must go forward. With this assurance came peace and an intense interest in the land to be possessed. A meeting was arranged in Auckland in which the untouched need of the Amazon River could be brought before the people.

Where there is no vision the people perish. The Indian tribes along this great waterway were perishing. No one cared for their souls! As Mr Smith told of the greatness of the River and of the task, it was borne home to all that something should be done.

The next day brought a very precious token by way of provision for the proposed launch.

Mr Smith was visiting his doctor who was most interested in the proposed placing of a boat on the Amazon. They were about to have prayer together concerning the project when the doctor's young son, Gordon, burst into



The Smith family c.1928

the room. The previous night he had begged permission to attend the missionary meeting with his parents, and the thought of a boat on the biggest river in the world had caught his imagination.

"Have you got your boat yet, Mr Smith?" he asked.

"No, not yet, Gordon," answered Mr Smith.

"Well, I've got some pennies for you to buy your boat," said Gordon proudly, opening his hand to reveal seven pennies.

PIONEERING ON THE RIVERS

“Thank you Gordon, I’ll send you a photo of the boat when we get enough pennies to buy it.”

Gordon disappeared, to return with a shining half crown.

“Well, I’ve got some more pennies for you to buy the boat”

It was only a little thing, but God made it great. Wherever Allan Smith went he told of this little incident. In such a simple way, the Lord had provided the first gift toward the new launch for the Amazon. The gift of the pennies was the token God gave him that day that the Lord would provide for every need in this new project if his faith in God were only as simple and as sincere.

Ready to Do and Dare

Great distances present great problems. The vast Atlantic Ocean lay between the Amazon and England. Which would be best, to build or to buy? All the pros and cons were being considered when Mr Smith noticed in a Marine Magazine of recent issue an insignificant paragraph describing a yacht that seemed the type of boat suited to the Amazon. It was listed for sale at one thousand pounds sterling.

Prayer was very earnestly made that night in the family circle, and again when the children were asleep. “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do” became once more the cry of a human heart. God made His will known to them, and told them what they should do. A friend in England was asked to inspect the yacht, and his cable after inspection read “Splendid for Amazon.”

Were they to go forward without the money? Should they wait until they reached England before buying a boat? Mr Smith felt constrained to cable the owner for his bedrock price. How thrilling was the reply, “Six hundred pounds for immediate purchase.”

Now was the hour of decision. In faith, they decided to accept. God, unknown to the Smiths, had been moving in the hearts of Christian brethren to set aside for the Amazon project a large sum of money. Six hundred pounds for the Lord’s work. So the Lord provided “in the nick of time” the total price the owner was willing to accept as his bedrock price.

Preparations for leaving New Zealand seemed all too slow now. No descrip-



Maud Smith on board at Heybridge Basin, Essex, England

PIONEERING ON THE RIVERS

tion of the yacht was like seeing it. How would they get it across the vast Atlantic? Would it be seaworthy enough to take there under its own steam? If so, would they find a captain daring enough to undertake the responsibility? These and a thousand other questions awaited answer in England.

Leaving New Zealand had its regrets: their four children would have to stay behind for their schooling. This was the high price so many missionary parents had to pay.

The day came to sail; farewell meetings were over, and the goodbyes said. Those who had pioneered the gospel launch work on the Paraguay were now embarking on a greater venture which would call for high courage and undaunted soul.

When Allan Smith and his wife reached England, they went at once to Heybridge Basin where the yacht was moored. “It certainly is the right boat for the Amazon,” said Mr Smith as they examined every part of the yacht. “I like the name ‘Isola Bella,’” commented Mrs Smith, “‘The Beautiful Isle,’ so may it prove to many souls along the banks of the Amazon.”



Out on Isola Bella to adjust compass
near Heybridge, UK



Allan (on left) watches the “Elleve” diesel engine
being hoisted aboard Isola Bella

Ready to Do and Dare

Then came the supreme moment when they started the motor, untied the cables and felt the lovely yacht move smartly away with Mr Smith at its helm for the first time.

How to take the “Isola Bella” across the Atlantic became an increasing problem. The Shipping Company asked the astounding sum of one thousand pounds to freight



Maud Smith and friend on deck of Isola Belly in England

the yacht to Manaus on the Amazon. They were advised to take the yacht across the Atlantic in her own power, if the right captain was available. In this way, there would be a saving of some five hundred pounds.

Preparations were made for the long voyage. A new diesel engine was installed, and ballast was increased by the use of concrete in the bilge. During these changes to the “Isola Bella,” Mr and Mrs Smith moved from town to town telling of the Lord’s work on the River Paraguay, and outlining the great possibilities ahead connected with the newly purchased launch for the Amazon.



Maud with retired sea captain who volunteered to sail Isola Bella from UK to Amazon

In the course of his talk when in Glasgow, Mr Smith mentioned for prayer the need for a captain to take charge of the “Isola Bella” for the Atlantic voyage.

After the meeting was over, an old man spoke to Mr Smith and said, “I will

PIONEERING ON THE RIVERS

take your boat across the Atlantic.” It was Captain John Grey, ready at the age of 73 to undertake this responsible task.

Referring to this time, Mr Robert Barnett of Bothwell writes, “Allan Smith very considerably brought the vessel in her own steam from Southampton, round the East Coast to Grangemouth, from whence the ‘Isola Bella’ sailed through the Forth and Clyde canal via Glasgow to the Clyde and back to Southampton. This cruise served not only as a preliminary test for the yacht’s sailing capacity, but also allowed interested friends to inspect the vessel. This served to encourage prayer for her purpose and mission on the Amazon.”

One brother who had given generously to this Amazon project said, “Even if the ‘Isola Bella’ goes to the bottom we feel it will have served the divine purpose, it will have glorified God.”

There was also an engineer by the name of Willcock interested in their proposal to take the yacht across the Atlantic. In conversation with



Maud and Allan on Isola Bella in England, just inside lock in Heybridge canal

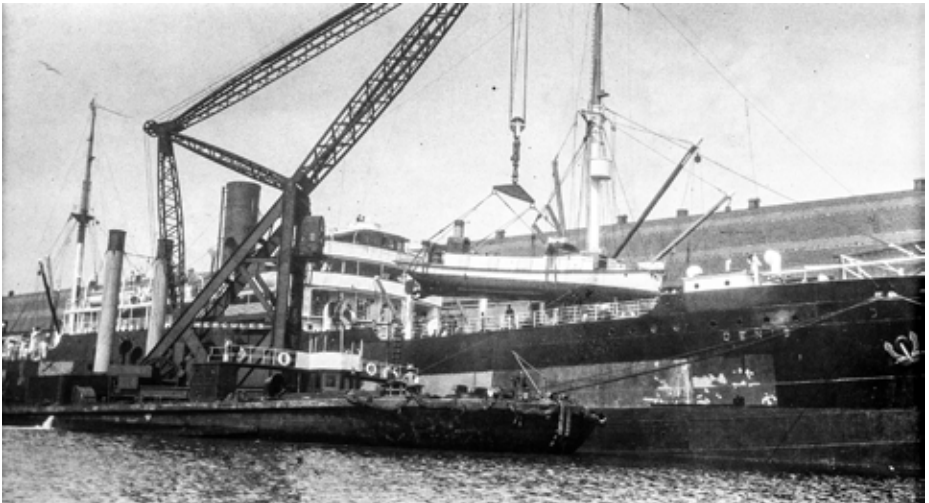
the missionaries of the ‘Isola Bella’, he heard the gospel and professed to be saved. After this, he offered to go on the ‘Isola Bella’ as engineer. Though this was not to be, he had found the Saviour and proved himself a committed Christian in the months that followed. News of his death in Australia years afterward was received from his wife, who added a sentence that bore eloquent witness – “He never lost his faith in your Jesus.”

Now in connection with the proposed trans-ocean voyage there came wave

Ready to Do and Dare

after wave of disappointment and testing. The Rowhedge Iron Works failed to complete the refitting within the contract time limit. This delay hindered their leaving until the season of stormy weather, which caused the Board of Trade to cancel all permission to take the yacht across the Atlantic under its own power.

This came as a stunning blow to all, especially to the old Captain who had looked forward with such joy to this service for the Lord; but all concerned sought to see in it the over-ruling purposes of God.



Isola Bella being lifted by Hercules steam crane onto SS Denis at Southampton

Negotiations were re-opened with the Shipping Company. The courage shown by this small band of missionaries had kindled their interest. The Company marked down their earlier quotation by some two hundred pounds, which generous gesture greatly eased the tinge of disappointment when the Board of Trade forbade the trans-ocean voyage of the “Isola Bella.”

What was the lifting power required to hoist the “Isola Bella?” Would the ship’s crane on any of their liners have sufficient capacity? This was the query by the Shipping Company that roused the missionaries to urgent prayer that the right ship be found with a captain willing to accept the responsibility.

Tests were made with one of the huge wharf cranes, and the stripped weight

PIONEERING ON THE RIVERS

of the “Isola Bella” was found to be 45 tons. Only the SS Denis could carry it if its crane was used to its full capacity. When they had hoisted her on the crane, it was discovered that she was 46 tons instead of 45 tons, and they dropped her into the water again. The Captain of the “Denis,” in answer to prayer no doubt, was willing to accept the risk his engineer had refused to take.

The crane made several attempts but could not lift until a full head of steam was generated, then slowly, very slowly, the “Isola Bella” was lifted up and up to the deck level of the “Denis.” There were just a few inches to spare on the deck. Another few inches and she would not have been taken aboard.



Allan and Maud on SS Denis with chief engineer

What a prize the “Isola Bella” looked, as she occupied the deck space at the bow of the large liner.

God had accomplished the seemingly impossible. As the SS Denis nosed out into the stream, she carried both the Amazon Gospel Launch and its crew. The missionaries had obtained passage in the same boat. They were steaming to a great adventure for God in the untamed regions tapped only by the Amazon, the greatest river in the world.

Land Ahoy!

Everyone was astir aboard the “Denis.” News had come down to the passengers that they were soon to sight land, a luxury after their long and stormy voyage. Though still early in the day, the sun beat fiercely on the open deck. Strangely enough, the passengers hardly noticed the sweltering heat: their eyes were on the slim stretch of land only a few miles away.

“Look at the muddy sea,” someone exclaimed. Sure enough, the sea was discoloured as though it were a river in flood. “It’s from the Amazon River,” explained one who had already travelled that way, “the muddiness is distinctly evident nearly four miles out to sea.”

They had not far to steam until the Pilot ship came bobbing towards them, and the dark-skinned pilot boarded the liner. In a few hours, they had berthed at Belém, the largest and most important city on the Amazon, and the gateway to its great Jungle Basin.

To the Allan Smiths it was an hour long to be remembered. They had reached the River, until now an intangible thing of the future. Many thoughts welled up in their hearts as they saw the land they had come to possess for the Lord.

As soon as the loading and unloading at Belém was through, the “Denis” continued its way up stream to Man-

aus some 850 miles inland. It was difficult for the passengers to believe they were on a river, so distant were the Delta islands. There was much interest in the dense forest and the tiny settlements on the near bank, as they steamed towards Manaus.



Old houses in Manaus, Brazil

PIONEERING ON THE RIVERS

“Mr Smith, you can’t land your boat!” said the authorities at Manaus.

“What, man, don’t tell me that – you must be joking!” Mr Smith could hardly wait for the answer.

“No,” came the reply, “it’s an absolute fact, unless. . . .”

“Unless what?” broke in Mr Smith.

“Unless you can guarantee £1,600 (approx.\$210,000 in 2016) that you’ll get it out of Brazilian waters within three months from now.”

“But,” exclaimed Mr Smith, shocked with this unexpected turn of events, “I want to run this on Brazilian waters.”

“The British Consulate has been doing its best for you, but as the Brazilian law is at the moment, permission is impossible. It might have been arranged had you come in under your own steam, but you can’t land it except under the proviso.”

Thoughts of what might have been came flooding into mind. “If only those Iron Works ...” But God stilled the troubled thoughts and gave the perplexed missionary a glimpse of His purpose.

Although Allan had Brazil as the objective, perhaps God was guiding to Peru. It did not take long to check up on the position. Yes, the yacht would be allowed in Peruvian waters, and possibly under the protection of the British flag.

Good, but what about the £1,600. Allan’s thoughts flew to the friend in



Allan and Maud's visa to enter Brazil 1930

Land Ahoy!

England who had said in parting, “If there is anything I can do for you do not be afraid to let me know.”

In faith, Allan Smith ordered the “Isola Bella” to be off-shipped. Now came the initial test the Smiths had really expected. How would the 45 ton capacity crane handle the 46 ton boat?

“We were anxiously watching as they started to hoist,” they afterwards wrote, “and could hear the men keep calling out ‘More steam – more steam!’ and yet it did not move. Then gradually up she went, over the side, and down into the water. We were passing all the time in silent prayer as we watched, and later joined by Mr Morris, the representative of the British and Foreign Bible Society in Manaus, we had a thanksgiving service among ourselves.”

“But, Mr Smith,” queried the President of the Bank of England in Manaus, “you surely cannot guarantee such a large amount; I understand you are a missionary.”

“You forget, Sir,” Mr Smith was glad of the opportunity to bear testimony,



Isola Bella at anchor

“that I have the Bank of Heaven behind me. You should receive notice today that the money has been deposited in England.”

What actually happened was that Allan Smith had cabled his friend of the circumstances, adding “Little risk.” But above all human means it was God Who had promised to supply “all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” Moreover, they knew now that the Lord of the Harvest had need of them in Peru.

Proceed to Peru

At the wharf in Manaus that day there was a young Brazilian youth watching the unloading of the “Isola Bella.” His name was Saidy. As he watched with intense interest, he said to himself, “I’m going to become the pilot on that boat.” He did.

“When actually on the water,” they record, “there was a great lot of palaver. All our cargo was loaded on the ‘Isola Bella,’ and had to go through the customs. Everything had to be discussed in Portuguese. To our relief this was managed by Mr Tate, one of our workers who was on his way to the Indies. He was a great help. What a task, for all our goods had been packed as freight to lighten the load on the ‘Isola Bella’ at Southampton. We had to stay in a hotel for a whole month before the papers for the boat were fixed and our goods through the Customs.”



Allan and Maud with friend at Manaos, Brazil

For the first week on the yacht going up river, everything went well. The powerful diesel engine drove the “Isola Bella” at good speed against the swift current. At all the little ports, they stopped just long enough for the people to inspect the yacht. It was a testimony to the love and provision of God that the missionaries were provided with such a fine boat for His cause and Kingdom.

Only a week away from Manaus and there was a breakdown. The bearings of the motor had seized. There was one cause for praise; all the necessary tools for the job were aboard as they had been provided when preparations

Proceed to Peru

were made in England for the Atlantic voyage. Allan soon had the engine dismantled, the spare bearings fitted and the motor running again. But alas, to hear after only a few hours' running the ominous knock, intimating that they had burnt again. It was more difficult this time; new bearings had to be made. Allan fitted them repeatedly before he was satisfied. To his great discouragement, the bearings once more burnt out. A thorough investigation revealed that the oil was not coming through to the bearing surface. The motor was eventually restored to excellent order; not, however, until 20 days had been lost in the effort to locate and right the fault.

They must now make all speed until the Frontier was safely passed. The time was so short that on the Frontier of Peru they engaged another pilot so that they could travel at night as well, in order to reach Iquitos, the first place in Peru from which the news could be cabled back to lift the £1,600 proviso ban.

Before they were allowed to pass the Frontier, everything they possessed had to be opened by the officials stationed there. As soon as the formalities were complete, they

continued towards Iquitos several days upstream. Presently they saw a sawmill from which a number of men seemed to be signalling them. Then they fired across the bow. The "Isola Bella" was stopped



Isola Bella (on left) approaches wharf at Iquitos, Peru.

and soon a great crowd of them trooped aboard. They were rough, coarse soldiers who wanted to go over the trouble of the customs again. Fortunately

PIONEERING ON THE RIVERS

for the missionaries, the coastguard had come aboard at the frontier, and eventually the soldiers were persuaded to leave.

At night their troubles continued. The floating logs that could be avoided in the daytime made night travelling very dangerous. The missionaries and crew were practically without sleep. One night the "Isola Bella" was right on top of a log, and had to reverse its engines to clear. They were thankful to God that they still had the concrete ballast, necessary for the Atlantic crossing, in the bilge of the yacht; otherwise the logs might easily have pierced the hull below the water line.

In due course, with the engine running perfectly, they anchored at Iquitos and the sixteen hundred pounds sterling was safe.

As they tied up at the dock, the officials came aboard, and were very friendly. Everything quickly passed through customs without difficulty.

Now they learned the reason for their delay, in the divine plan. A few days sooner, and they would have experienced great difficulty at Iquitos from officials who were strongly Roman Catholic; but the authorities had just changed, and the new officials were anti-Rome. The Captain of the Port also allowed the "Isola Bella" to sail under the British flag. The Lord had given the victory.

Land of the Red Earth

For some weeks they stayed at Iquitos. In order to reduce fuel consumption by the “Isola Bella,” Mr Smith built a small launch for use in visiting off the beaten track. During this time he was waiting for a shipment of Diesel oil for the “Isola Bella.” The boat that brought his fuel also brought Edgar Burns, a young missionary from New Zealand, who settled in Iquitos to study the language.

“Our path has been a strange one,” writes Allan Smith, “and now that we are actually on the field we find it so large that it is difficult to decide where we should go. The people are very open to receive the gospel. Our little boat is just about finished. Just fancy, we have built it on the deck of the ‘Isola Bella.’

“The temperature here is between 80 and 90 degrees. It is much more trying, because much more humid, than on the Paraguay. So much moisture seems to cloud the heat, but it feels hot on the brain as if pressing on the head. It’s good to have the launch as a home, I don’t know what we would have done without it.

“This is a very lonely region much like the north of Paraguay, and is essen-



Freight hauling!

tially an Indian area. The people are tucked away out of sight in small villages of palm-roofed huts. It is very necessary to remember that they are without Christ, otherwise we would be prone to ask if our efforts are worthwhile for such a small number. Their need for evangelization gives us much thought.”

With this burden, they felt constrained to move the “Isola Bella” to Pucallpa, a small Peruvian town seven days by launch up river from Iquitos. Pucallpa

PIONEERING ON THE RIVERS

has its name from the peculiar clay formation with its deep red colour. The name Pucallpa simply means “Land of the Red Earth.”

“We left Iquitos on the 14th and it really seemed that Satan had special designs in trying to hinder. When we thought that everything was ready, and the pilot was on board, we received notice from the Despachante that the Capitania insisted we carry another sailor because the river is very low. However, when the matter was discussed with the Capitania later in the day he gave us consent to go with our present crew.

“The houses along the river banks are superior to Paraguayan ranchos, they have fine roofs of palm leaves platted and put on like thatch. The floors, which consist of a kind of bamboo cane split open and laid on the joints, are made high off the ground because the river floods so much.”

As they journeyed they stopped to witness for the Saviour wherever there were



A village by the Amazon River

settlements, however small. It was good to be moving into the heart of this great land with the saving gospel. They saw species of birds and living things that were new to them, all so full of interest. At one place they saw a great black snake crossing the river near the launch, it was a gruesome but magnificent sight. The snake seemed to glide above the water and passed swiftly across without any effort whatsoever. Its head only was erect and at only one place, where the current was very swift, did it give a slight wriggle.

On another day, a huge crocodile appeared alongside the launch. Mr Smith ran to the cabin for his rifle and fired into the water where they had seen it dive,

Land of the Red Earth

with no result. About half an hour later the crocodile appeared again and this time Mr Smith shot it in the brain, for in a moment the reptile rolled over on one side with its great hands stretched out helplessly. They found out at the settlement that this crocodile had stolen pigs, ducks and other food. The folk were all afraid to bathe, and the crocodile had refused to move away.

“We are in a village called Pucallpa with over one thousand inhabitants,” they write home. “There is a school for girls and also one for the boys, both taught by priests and nuns, and naturally they are not pleased to see us. We rented a house in the centre of the village. The first and second meetings were packed, so permission was gained from the owner to pull down several of the partitions. We could borrow only a few small benches, but one man loaned to us some planks, and these we placed on boxes, so now we can seat the people.

“We are kept running as we seek to attend to the sick folk here. People start coming at 7.30 a.m. and crowd the deck of the ‘Isola Bella’ until mid-day. We do not think that medical work will win them for the Lord directly, but it brings us in contact with the people, many of whom we may never meet otherwise.

“Injections are the craze here; they think every ailment should be cured by injection. A



Native Christians on board Isola Bella 4,800km from the mouth of the Amazon

missionary must have some medical knowledge for work in this isolated land, the people are so needy and helpless in sickness.

“On the 9th of February, Carnival Day was celebrated in high style by the villagers. They gathered from all round about, coming in canoes with all their children. Quite early in the day they started dancing to the accompaniment of

PIONEERING ON THE RIVERS

two drums and a whistle. They do not embrace one another while dancing, but occasionally hold their partner's hand, and the women wave a handkerchief in the other hand, their step seeming more like a hop.

"One ceremony carried out in the morning was the dancing round a tree which had been hoisted into a hole in the ground, and the earth well rammed. During the afternoon this tree was chopped down to the accompaniment of music and dancing, and when it fell the folk all shouted while the children rushed to get the paper flags which in the morning had been fixed on the top branches."

The large house, or "tambo" became quite a useful Gospel Hall, and the birthplace of many souls. This set Satan busy in the attempt to frustrate this spiritual work. Following a fire that gutted the storekeeper's home, the local priest fixed the blame on Allan Smith.

Officers came on board the next morning with a warrant for Mr Smith's arrest. It was pointed out to them quietly but firmly that they were on British territory the minute they came on board the "Isola Bella," and that if they caused any disorder he as Captain would be obliged to place them in custody for disrespect to the British Flag. This put the incident on a new footing, and the officials made haste to explain that they had been



"Isola Bella" at anchor

ordered to arrest him for stirring up his followers to fire the storekeeper's house and then they left.

All this caused a great stir in official circles as far as Lima, the capital of Peru, situated beyond the cloud-piercing Andes. In the investigation that followed it was disclosed that the prime mover was none other than the priest

Land of the Red Earth

himself, who was seeking in this subtle way to banish this protestant heretic from Pucallpa.

This place became the scene of many triumphs of the gospel, and the choosing of Pucallpa as a centre and base has proved to be a wise and far-reaching decision, with strategic advantages then unknown to the brave workers on the “Isola Bella.”

Among Savage Tribes

Life was very primitive along the winding way where the Amazon flows to the sea. The native river dweller of Brazil seems to have little or no imagination. He never designs anything and never improves anything. His house is primitive. He is stagnant. Yet, when all has been said, it would be less than the truth were one not to add that he is warm-hearted, generous and willing to share with you his meagre crust.

Peru, however, in whose mountains the Amazon comes to its birth, calls up a vision of the Indian with a history lost in the mists of antiquity. A civilization destroyed perhaps in its outward form, but indelibly graven in the very nature of the race.

Rome has claimed and conquered the greater part of the South American lands. Though her influence is felt throughout Brazil and Peru, her faith is lightly held. If we suc-



Tribal people

ceed in sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ, we will have introduced them to the Saviour who can create in them a new nature.

It was to this noble task that Allan Smith and his wife dedicated themselves. In this ambition, they were true yoke fellows. "I feel sorry for Mrs ... being left on her own, she would like me to stay with her." writes Mrs Smith to her children in New Zealand, "But I feel it is my duty to go with Dad on these journeys and help all I can. Besides, I came here for this work and not to seek a more comfortable life."

Together they shared the discomforts and the thrills of the pioneer among

Among Savage Tribes

these primitive peoples. Back along the years and from this great distance we journey with them through these pages among savage tribes and friendly Peruvians.

“A man offered to guide us to where Pebas Indians, who are called Yahuas here, are camped in the forest,” writes Mrs Smith. “We set off in the little launch travelling up a creek and then tied up. Our guide set off at a great speed through the forest but lost the track several times until he met a semi-civilised Indian who soon took us to the spot. Several times I thought my legs would collapse under me, the track was on a rise, and they walked so fast.



Yahua indians of Peru outside their dwelling

“When we saw the large round hut with low doorways, we could also see several pairs of brown legs flying away. Our guide took us inside – there were several men dressed in short skirts of teased plants, also with a turban of this plant on their heads. It was a time of fiesta and they were painted for the occasion. The women had only a narrow piece of print around their hips and the babies were naked. There were several hammocks swinging and the men sat on these.



“It was fun trying to get a photo. The women and children would not come out-

Maud Smith is just behind the Yahua indians wearing a white hat

PIONEERING ON THE RIVERS

side until I put my arm around each one and gently pushed them. They then had more confidence. When I opened my sunshade, they jumped with fright and then they gathered around to examine it to find out how it sprang open. The women were very curious to know what I was, and began to describe me to the rest. Of course, I had to put a stop to their curiosity. My watch attracted the attention of the small boys. When I put it to their ears, they seemed so surprised!

“We finally left the camp, but they all said they would come and see the boat, and sure enough, they turned up in three canoes. The men soon came aboard, but I had to go ashore to persuade the women and children. Mr Smith took them down to the

cabin, they looked so frightened; but when they saw themselves in the big mirror, they screamed with laughter!



Yahua tribe, Peru

“We gave each woman a needle

and a reel of cotton, also some beads. They did not know where to carry the needle. One put it in her mouth. Another one asked for my hanky and put her's in that. I tried to make signs that the hanky was for her nose, and she nodded and smiled. We took them back to the entrance of the stream and continued our journey up river.

This time we entered the Napo River for the first time. Our first stop in the Napo was Vista Alegre. Although it was rather late, we had a fair meeting. The people who came with us towed their canoe behind the launch and told us of a dying woman. It was 10 p.m. We let down the small launch and set off to

Among Savage Tribes

where this woman lived. Heavy rain came on and drenched us, but there was no time to trouble about it.

We reached the place and found the poor woman lying on a straw platted mat on the floor, the hut lit by only a miserable candle. She had been ill three days.

“We did all we could for her in the three hours we were there. I had brought some hot tea in the thermos and this she drank hungrily, saying she was so weak she had not eaten for three days. We decided we could do no more and returned to the launch, retiring at 4 a.m. News came the next morning that she had passed away; could we give them candles and would we return.

“We were off to the home of the bereaved, this time in the big launch. The neighbours had gathered from all round, as is their custom in South America. It was a glorious time to tell them of the Saviour. While we were doing this, two men were under the hut making a rough coffin out of a few old boards nailed several inches apart. The body was lifted from the floor on the straw mat and placed in the coffin, and a piece of black cloth hung at the head of the coffin on the wall, and on the cloth a cross made of newspaper. We stayed in this port until the next day, saw them take the body across the river in a big canoe for burial, then set out again up river.”



Yahua tribe, Peru

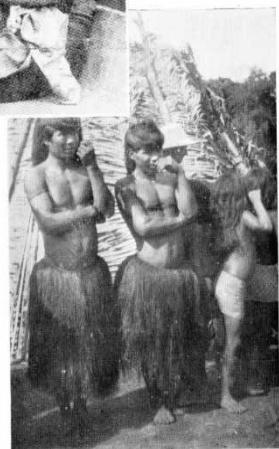
In the days that followed, many meetings were held until the dwellings became sparsely placed and they decided to return.

“A joke on board was the home-made preparation, mostly Epsom Salts sweetened, and coloured with cochineal. It was supposed to cure all ills, and

PIONEERING ON THE RIVERS

this we handed out with a grin to those with whom there was little amiss, as we told them how to take it. On arriving at one place on the way back we enquired eagerly of the people if an old woman was still alive, because this preparation had been prescribed for her. Fortunately she had improved, so a good laugh was enjoyed over our success.”

The trip was over, and leaving the “Isola Bella” at a Port Nazaret in the Amazonas, they ran down to Iquitos in the little launch for the mail. “It was strange to be tied up at the wharf again. The people on the wharf received us nicely and many enquiries were made about our trip. Although all offices were closed by the time Dad was ready to go ashore, he went to the private home of Mr Massey, the British Consul, and that gentleman very kindly came into his office and gave Dad our mail. Oh joy, oh delight – twenty letters from our precious children, and such lovely cheering letters. I cannot tell how they rejoiced our hearts.”



Evidently the “Isola Bella” had returned to the main river just in time. A small steamer with cargo and a few passengers had left for the Napo River but was forced to return. The entrance to the Napo is higher than the Amazon, consequently when the water drops there is a step up, forming a waterfall from the Napo into the Amazon. “What a blessing we returned when we did,” records Mrs Smith, in telling of a steamer that was thus shut in the Napo River for two weeks, “other- wise we would also be imprisoned up there. Here at Iquitos the river is so low now that we have ninety steps to climb to reach the street.”

Among Savage Tribes

The next letter is written "At Sea." The British Consul paid them a courtesy call at the wharf and stayed until they pulled away in the little launch well loaded down with fresh supplies for the "Isola Bella." "At 2.5 p.m. we left the wharf, just the two of us. Four hours' run without any engine trouble brought us to "Isola Bella." We found the crew all well and looking contented; they had heard our engine in the distance and had waited for their supper until we arrived. How glad we were to be back safely, and our hearts were full of gratitude to God for a renewed supply of our needs. Thus we were enabled to buy things necessary for our long journey, which may occupy a year this time, as the Ucayali River is thickly populated."

Life on the Ucayali

There is possibly no tribe among all the savage or semi-savage Indians so fascinating or so distinguished as the Chamas. They were sub-divided into three dialects, Kunibo, Setebo and Sipibo. It was to the habitat of these sub-tribes that the “Isola Bella” was now steaming.

One reason for their haste was news just received in a letter from the Eglinton brothers in Masisea that Mrs Eglinton was seriously ill. The Eglinton brothers, Alfred and Eric, had come from Assemblies in England with the intention of being self-supporting missionaries.

“We are actually on the Ucayali,” writes Mrs Smith, “and steaming towards Masisea which is over 600 miles from Iquitos. The river is lower than it has ever been, and makes the journey longer, for we have to go round every bend, and this river is all bends. Each evening we have stopped at a place where we can hold a meeting, in two of which our audience has been nearly all Cocama Indians, but as they are employed by Peruvians, they seem to understand Spanish quite well.

“In the Port of Muyuy, a small settlement of Chacrerres, a fine crowd gathered; they still wanted more so decided to hold the next in the school further upstream, so that others could hear. Those we were leaving then asked if we would take them up to the school in the launch next evening and they would walk home after the service; this we promised to do. Next day we left with 33 people on board to swell the numbers at our next meeting.

“This morning about 5.30 a.m. we were awakened by those horrible insects *manta blanca* which get through the finest meshed net and make one’s skin feel all afire and itchy. We shut the skylight and sprayed Flit about the cabin, then we had some peace.”

“Our engine works splendidly and Dad sings its praises all day,” continues Mrs Smith in her homely letter to the family in New Zealand, “it is so strong when in any difficulty or on sand banks, and the reverse gear pulls us back in

Life on the Ucayali

great style. It is also such a comfort to have a pilot at the wheel and saves much anxiety. You will remember how nervous Dad used to get when navigating on the Paraguay River. Now he can enjoy the trip and not worry about the river and he is better fitted to meet the people and preach, especially as we are alone for the meetings.

“We have now reached Contamano, the largest town on the Ucayali River. Fortunately for us, two float planes had just arrived from Iquitos, one actually landing beside us. Of course there was a crowd on the bank which made our arrival more important and interesting for us. All boats have to show their papers here, and when we tied up, we blew our whistle. The Commander of the Forces came aboard with three other young fellows. He was very nice and asked us if we knew the Eglington of Masisea. He said they were fine fellows and told us that they had now left Masisea and were working up the Tamaya River that joins the Ucayali. This was news to us and we were glad to have all this information how we would best locate them.

“When we eventually arrived at Masisea we were delighted to find Alfred Eglington waiting for us. We had never met before, but it did not take us long to make friends. ‘Alfredo’ he is called by everybody. He is about 26, and looks pale and worn, which is no doubt brought about by the hardships of their primitive existence among the Indians.

“We left Masisea on 11th September 1931 accompanied by Alfred Eglington, and travelled down river to the mouth of the Tamaya intending to leave Isola Bella’ and continue in the little launch. We managed, however, to crawl into the mouth and found plenty of water to navigate Isola Bella. This river is small but pretty, but oh, the logs we bumped, enough to shatter the nerves of the bravest.

“At dusk we tied to the bank for the night, expecting to arrive at the mission house by the following night. However we did not manage it, for at 5 p.m. we found ourselves at a place with only four feet of water. We tried to pass for some time, but finally gave up. The little launch was lowered and manned

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by Dad, Alfred and Juan the pilot. They searched in the dark for a channel, but were disappointed. However, we slept well and in the morning set out in the little launch, leaving the crew to take care of Isola Bella. Two hours' run brought us to Pashaininti, the mission station manned by the Eglingtons.

“If only you could have seen the welcome we received from the crowd of Chama Indians awaiting us on the bank! They dress in a brownish red poncho, which is sewn up along the sides, but otherwise like a straight poncho as woven and dyed by the Indians. This dark dress makes them look darker. Beads, wristlets and necklets were conspicuous, especially on the men. Most of them wore a shiny piece of metal inserted into the lower lip and hanging down over the chin, this gave a very funny effect from the distance.



Chama Indians in Peru gather on the river bank to greet Allan & Maud

“We had to shake hands with everybody, some met us on the river's edge and then ran up the bank to come forward again to shake hands when we climbed up. Of course, we could not distinguish those with whom we had shaken hands before. We wondered when we would get through the ordeal. The women then dragged their shy, tiny children forward and made them shake hands with us. The children look so plump and happy.



Maud in Peru with Chama Indians

Life on the Ucayali

“Mr and Mrs Eric Eglington gave us a warm welcome also, and we were delighted to meet those for whom we had been praying and about whom we had been thinking for so long. Both looked pale and tired, but are attached to their big family of Chamas. A crowd followed us up to the house and soon filled up the space in the small open room. Their home is simply a Peruvian hut with about four divisions for rooms, they sleep on the floor as do the natives. The two boys are so sincere and earnest. They have a real love for these poor Indians and the Lord is blessing them.

“There is a custom among the Chama Indians here, that enables you to recognise them at a glance as the tribe with the high forehead. When their babies are very tiny, their parents place two boards on the head, with cotton between. These are tightened until the head is quite flat, with the forehead and back of the



head pressed together. They wear a long fringe when they grow older which hides the marks but one can still see that the head is flat. When I first arrived in Pashaininti a woman came and showed me her baby. Full of sympathy I tried to console her; fortunately for me she did not understand Spanish. I thought her baby was born with a deformed head and probably had water on the brain, whereas she was proudly showing me its beautiful head!



Maud in Peru with Chama indian child with flattened head

PIONEERING ON THE RIVERS

“This afternoon a man brought his seven year old boy to Dr Smith! The family had been eating small fish and one of the little ones threw a handful of bones at his brother. A fin stuck in one eye and broke off, leaving a piece of bone in the eye just at the edge of the pupil. Dad made use of some cocaine drops from our medicine chest. He used two drops in the eye, then waited 5 minutes, and repeated this three times. Then with small forceps, he was able to extract the bone. Though a drop of blood oozed out of the wound, the boy never made any complaint. We tied up the injured eye in a bandage and he trotted off quite happy and contented.

“Love affairs are more difficult complaints to doctor. An Indian boy spoke to the Eglingtons some time ago telling them that he wanted a wife and that his mother and another woman had arranged for him to take a small girl. He was asked how big she was, and the boy made a sign with his hand as to her height. He was counselled that she was much too small and that he should wait awhile. This fellow, however, left for the canoe journey and on his return had his tiny wife with him, much to everyone’s disgust, for the girl could only be about six years of age at the most. Just a fat, chubby, smiling child. Another Indian also took a small wife called Lena. She was only a thin slip of a girl about twelve years of age.



A baby of the Chama Indians wearing a board and bandage device to flatten the forehead

“While these two Indian men were preparing to return to the Tamaya River,

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their wee wives were sitting on the bank. I offered them some tins and they ran to take them. Then by signs, I told the chubby one that her fringe was too long and would hurt her eyes. I offered to trim it. They consulted together and then came aboard while I trimmed her fringe, much to her amusement. They ran up the bank, jabbering in their Chama dialect and racing back, they gave me to understand that they wanted all their hair trimmed. I set to work on the two heads. Their hair was like a horse's tail to cut, so harsh and coarse, but they both looked much nicer after the trimming and set to work to shake the hair off their bare backs.

"I gave them some bread, then cut two squares of pink voile from some remnants on which I tacked a hem all round and set the two young brides to work with a needle and cotton. They had no idea about sewing, but Lena was a good pupil and soon learned how to make nice stitches. They ate only a small piece of the bread, and carried the rest to the men. When they were called, they took their sewing away in little bags that I gave them. They looked so happy. As soon as Lena was seated in the canoe, she started again on her work.



Isola Bella - ready to paint hull c.1933

"The Chama Indians have been coming in groups every day, as they like us to sing to them. We also try to tell them something of the gospel, but there is usually only about one in each group who understands a little Spanish, so one does not make much progress. They try, however, to say the words of the

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choruses and sing in such sweet voices and true to music. 'Jesus loves me' is one of their favourites.

"Yesterday a Chama man asked Mr Eglington to teach him something to sing before eating. They called us up to teach them the tune of a short grace that was composed by Mrs Langran:

*Padre Benigno, que en el cielo estas,
Gracias hoy te damos por el pan que das,
Gracias te damos Padre Celestial,
Por el pan del cielo, pan que es eternal.'*

It was such a serious moment as the women with the men tried to say the words, then we sang it over about a dozen times. One would need lots of patience to live among these Indians, yet I am sure they would soon love us and do anything for us. They require workers with a firm character, who will be able to keep them in their place, and at the same time love and help them in every way necessary."

This be Their Monument

Twelve months had passed since Pucallpa had been chosen as the Base of Operation for “Isola Bella.” Meetings had been good and souls were saved. The four-roomed house with its partitions removed had become too small.

“On Thursday evening, the 3rd,” they write, “we gave lantern slides from the Book of Daniel. Our hall was too small for the crowd but they listened well, and seemed impressed.”

A rent increase then caused problems. The Smiths had been paying six soles each month, and now the owner asked fifty soles monthly. This unreasonable demand roused the few believers to express a desire for a building of their own and they offered to give their time to help build it.



Allan and Maud about 1932

“One evening we invited the men to come aboard and discuss the matter of a new hall. Eight men came and we were all on our knees in prayer. It was good to hear several trying to pray for the first time in public.”

Mr Allan Smith promised to secure a section; the lots were marked out in the village, very low-priced at that time. There were sections in an excellent position in the centre of the town that were to be auctioned because their owners had failed to erect the buildings within a given time according to the by-laws of Pucallpa.



The 4 room house rented for the first meetings in Pucallpa, Peru

Thirty days' notice of the auction must be given to the public.

On the day the land was to be sold, a good heavy rain came, and only the

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actual business authorities were present with Mr Smith and a local believer. Allan Smith left the "Isola Bella" at 2 p.m. and returned at 6 p.m. a "land-owner" for the first time in South America.

The believers offered to give two days a week felling timber. Six men worked at the piles for the floor, and on Saturday ten men brought in big timber.

"On Saturday," Mrs Smith wrote at the time, "I went with Dad in the little launch up the river to see the men working at the timber for the hall. Six were chopping at the huge log, splitting it into long posts and squaring them with axes; it is very heavy wood and hard. They have only primitive means to do this work, but seem to work with a will."

"The few believers on the building of the hall," records Allan Smith, "cut down huge hardwood trees to make pillars 8 inches by 8 inches by 22 feet. Then they brought down some fine cedar trees, which when pit-sawn by them, were for the rafters and other building timbers."

During the early stage of work on the hall, there comes a "red-letter day." It was the first baptism ever heard of in those parts. At 8 a.m. several were to be baptised, four men and one woman. A group of interested ones came to witness the ceremony. From the deck of the "Isola Bella" Allan Smith gave the message, then he went down into the river beside the launch and baptised them.

Later in the morning of that Lord's Day, sixteen people gathered into the fore cabin. Seven of them remembered the Lord in partaking of the emblems, their hearts full of praise to God for what He had done.

"It is amusing to hear the rumours which are going round about the baptism. They say we have made them Saints. They say that we changed the names of all those baptised to San (Saint) Juan, etc., and the woman to Santa Magdalena."

The letters home are full of the new building as it slowly but surely takes shape.

"On Thursday the men who had been sawing timber returned with the last of

This be Their Monument

the rafters for the roof. They made a raft of two canoes tied together and six men with oars manage it nicely. When they reach the landing place, they have to spring ashore like lightning to tie up before the current takes them away.

“The frame of the hall is up and looks nice, quite a new style for this region. Some think the roof will be too steep to put the iron on. They expect an iron roof to be very flat. Dad is trying to hurry up the construction of the hall. Sometimes the men think he is too exacting over the job. When they put things up anyhow and crooked, Dad makes them put it right. The roof is finished and the window and door frames in place. The building will soon be ready for its mud-walls and floor.”



Building the new hall in Pucallpa

Another urgent claim to their time and selves comes to the Allan Smiths.

Alfred Eglington, working among the Chama Indians, must leave immediately for medical treatment in England. Mr and Mrs Eric Eglington have not returned from their sorely needed furlough. Would the Smiths consider relieving in order to make this possible in the will of the Lord?

There was much to attend to in Pucallpa, and the construction of the hall was at a critical stage, but they realised the wisdom of maintaining the only evangelical effort being made amongst the Chama Tribe and were ready to fill the gap in this emergency.

“Many things have happened since I last wrote, and I scarcely know where to begin. We are to take charge of the Eglington’s work on the Tamaya River. Sunday was to have been our last day here in Pucallpa for the present, but several cases of illness and injections required our presence, so we remained until Tuesday.

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We baptised a married woman on Sunday afternoon, the same woman we had treated for sores all over her body. She is almost quite well again and so bright. Early on the morning we were to leave, people began to gather on deck and before leaving Dad read a portion and commended them to God in prayer. It was sad to leave them, and many seemed sincerely sorry to part with us.”

Prior to leaving Pucallpa Allan Smith had gathered his faithful helpers together to tell them the reason for the departure, and to commit to their faithful charge the work they were well able to do in connection with the hall. Ten men were allotted the making of the mud walls. Allan felt that they were really too poor to allow them any longer to work without payment, so he suggested a sum of money that would be available to them when the walls were finished. This would compensate for his being absent when there was so much to do.



Maud and Allan Smith about 1935

They were three days' journey away from Pucallpa and busy with many new duties and much opportunity. However, Allan Smith found in the second month at Pashaininti that he could visit Pucallpa, using the small motor boat. He was delighted beyond words to see the mud walls of the new hall finished, and well done, the mud having set perfectly. The men were glad to receive their promised pay. Now the railway sleepers, which had been bought cheaply, needed to be sawed into boards for the floor. Mr Smith gave a Portuguese carpenter instructions to finish off the cornices and make the doors. These were jobs he would have done himself if he had still been in Pucallpa.

After a meal in Pucallpa, Allan Smith was attacked with severe abdominal pains and required help with the little boat on the journey back to the launch at Pashaininti.

“In the distance we could see two men and I knew one was Dad,” Mrs Smith

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wrote. "It appears that all the way to Masisea Dad could only lie full length on the bottom of the little boat. Luiz had accompanied Dad on the return trip in case he was unfit to manage the motor." Thus, suddenly he who had never known illness or fever in tropical Amazon had been sorely stricken. How bravely he sought to carry on through increasing ill health is a silent and eloquent tribute to a very gallant missionary.

“Papachuco” Father of All

Three months later, when serious illness persisted, Allan Smith wrote to brethren in the homeland, “The Lord has put His hand on me, and my health is broken. This is so critical that I have been seriously thinking we must come home. We do hope to see the hall in Pucallpa finished and opened before that time.

“I believe that the Lord is going to reveal His man for this boat, just as He did when He brought Gordon Airth from the deserts of Egypt to join the ‘El Alba!’ Now no ‘human’ could have done that, but the Lord made no mistake. There have been no regrets.”

The Allan Smiths now look for the Eglingtons’ return, trusting that Allan’s health will hold until that time. Ill health persists. “Since Allan has been ill, he has to lie about when he is aboard, and these past few days has not been able to walk. Today he is easier but quite weak, and he has to depend very much upon Wenseslao and the Brazilian, to arrange the work for the many Chamas. The Indians call Dad ‘Papachuco,’ it is a term of affection meaning ‘father of all.’”

With the river level becoming very low, it became necessary to decide without further delay to leave Pashaininti if they did not wish the “Isola Bella” to be imprisoned on the Tamaya River until the winter rains. Preparations were immediately made for their departure.

One of the last things Allan Smith arranged in Pashaininti was to call some twenty-two married men to the deck of “Isola Bella,” and from these he chose ten men who were to act as police. They would judge cases of fornication, theft and misconduct. Ten strokes on the bare back would be the punishment on the first offence. All the men were pleased with this arrangement and agreed to honour the authority of the ten Chama policemen who would be selected for this duty; Wenseslao acted as interpreter.

There was not a day to lose, so quickly was the river falling. But who would pilot the “Isola Bella” on this three day voyage downstream, made doubly dif-

“Papachuco” Father of All

ficult by the low river? Allan Smith was too ill for the attempt and the pilot had left some months before. All they could do was to commit themselves to the Lord and go forward with only the two Chama Indians who had never before handled anything larger than a canoe. Allan Smith rose from bed, made his way to the engine room and started the diesel motor, and the Lord brought them safely through.

As the “Isola Bella” was moving slowly down river, from sandy beach and jungle there watched many a Chama Indian who had come to understand the message of love this “Great Water Spirit” had brought to them. Today there was sadness in their hearts – Papachuco was sick, and he was going away.

“Dad looked exhausted when we were leaving Pashaininti, but the fact that the boat was moving seemed to revive him. The Lord was with us and took charge. How we want to see the new hall at Pucallpa finished and in use before we leave for New Zealand! The Brazilian who is in Pashaininti is coming, with his family. He will work for Dad at the carpentering, laying the floor and hanging doors and windows. Dad is not able; but the Lord enables us to engage this carpenter.”

Later Mrs Smith writes, “Dad is now able to walk better without complete exhaustion, but can- not do much with the tools. The Lord is teaching him to lean hard upon Him.

Dad was pleased on his return to Pucallpa with the believers and the way they are going on. They look so much nicer than the rest of the community, clean and respectable.

“The hall and its yard were quite clean. The men have worked well, and have the boards ready for the floor and the ceiling. Francisco has all the windows and doors hung and is now working on the floor. Dad surprises himself



The new hall in Pucallpa

sometimes when he feels he can hardly drag his legs along to the building. When he gets there, he tries to direct the men and before long, he is banging away with a hammer until he is exhausted. Then he stands up and says, ‘Well I am a fool!’”

Writing himself, he says, “It was a great relief to me when I found I had strength to oversee the finishing of the hall.” The greater joy to Allan Smith was to see the fruit in the gospel. Most of the men working on the building were his children in the faith. Just before his illness, he had baptised some of them, including Panchito. Mrs Smith wrote, “I believe he was the happiest boy in Peru on that day.”

Panchito was now in Pucallpa with his father. The townsfolk were amazed at the knowledge he had of the gospel. They told Mr Smith that one day the priest met Pancho in the Jew’s shop and began talking to the boy, putting questions and arguments forward to confound him. They said that Pancho answered each one clearly and humbly, to the amazement of the group that had gathered. The priest said, “You have a devil,” and went off a beaten man while the people applauded the boy.

Another day the nuns got hold of Pancho, but he was too much for them and respectfully answered them from his knowledge of God’s Word. How true that “The weak things of this world ... God uses.” Pancho had never seen a book, being blind from babyhood, but the Lord enabled him to retain what he had heard from the missionaries until it had become a blessing to his own soul, and a testimony to others.

Then there was Jose Rangifo, nicknamed “Bobo,” in Pucallpa. While the missionaries were away at Pashaininti he was faithful in every way. He was the one who helped to carry on the meetings in Pucallpa, reading a chapter and trying very humbly to say a few words. He was faithful also in the building work of the hall. Bobo thought for a while, then said, “The work that I am doing is for God and must be finished. I cannot leave it even though you offer

“Papachuco” Father of All

me twice as much wage.” This was a great joy to Allan Smith when he heard of it from others working with Bobo.

Then, as the new hall neared completion, a wonderful letter was received from New Zealand. It contained a Money Draft, specially marked “Furlough” and would cover all their travel expenses. Little wonder that they write to the children, “The fact that our future address is unknown gives us a thrill and our thoughts are on the voyage. We dare not allow our minds to dwell upon the joy too much lest through the excitement we become unfit for duty.”



Allan and Maud Smith passport 1934

Inauguration and Goodbye

It seemed impossible that so much could happen in so short a time.

“You will rejoice with us to know that Mr and Mrs Phillip Pent have rented a house in Pucallpa and are bringing up their children and furniture from Iquitos, so that they can look after the work in Pucallpa and set us free to get away when the way is clear.”

In the same letter they record another thrilling moment. The mail boat arrived at 7 a.m., and there on the deck were Eric Eglington and wife waving. All was flurry and excitement, for there too, were Mr and Mrs Pent.

“Mr and Mrs Eglington have a lovely fat baby seven months old and they are justly proud of her. I feel sorry for the mother taking her baby there where millions of mosquitos are ready to bite and irritate them all. Dad took Eric and wife to see the new hall, while Mrs Pent took charge of the baby and I prepared tea. When they returned the tea was ready, but the boat whistled and they had to rush away.

“It seems wonderful that five Chama Indians had arrived here a few days previously from Pashaininti with the posts that Dad had ordered. We kept the boys here working for a few days, so that they were still here. They tied their two canoes behind the boat and travelled as passengers with the Eglingtons to the mouth of the Tamaya. There they would take charge of baggage and family, thus saving the trouble of going on to Masisea and the consequent waiting there.”

Their going home is ever in their thoughts and every effort is being made to leave everything in order.

“I can see Dad is trying to do too much in his endeavour to get the hall finished; he comes in with a crowd of duties he thinks he really must do before we leave. Then I protest that he is adding to his programme and if we can get the hall ready to open, we can leave feeling that everything we should do has

Inauguration and Goodbye

been done. When the hall was nearing completion Mr Ernest Aish arrived to help with the work, and gave valuable assistance.

“Dad has the corner posts in preparation for the Missionary house. He has also ordered all the iron needed for the roof and in many other ways is making the job easier for them.

“We had thought to travel via the mountain trail to Lima when our time for furlough came. But Dad would not be able to travel that way now. Probably the weeks resting on board a steamer will do wonders for him. What a long way to go, and so much money to spend to reach little New Zealand. However, there is a very wonderful attraction there and a powerful magnet that is drawing us constantly. My heart beats fast when I take time to realise that we are actually on the eve of setting out on our trip ‘home’ to be with those we love.

“There is not much to do to the hall now, and the front fence is on the way to completion. It won’t be long before we can have the inauguration of the hall and then, oh happy thought, we can leave. Dad has written to the British Consul asking about steamer connections.”

There was another triumph for the testimony in Pucallpa that came to them unexpectedly. The Municipality decided to lay out their first and only “Plaza” (park) in front of the new hall, which because of its central position adjoins the “cuartel” or Police Station. The Mayor asked Allan Smith to help them plan the “Plaza.” Mr Smith made a fine flagpole and erected it in the centre of the grounds.

An old unfinished section of railway line ran along the “Plaza” and through one side of the hall property. Allan Smith required a little more land on which to build a house for a worker. This gave him a “brain wave,” acting upon which he suggested the removal of the rails to allow completion of the “Plaza,” and asked for the extra land beside the hall. The authorities were unanimous, and from their meeting gave orders for the work to be done and placed a man in charge of the job forthwith.

When the Commandant of the Airbase arrived, he was well pleased with the

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new position of the line, and said it was splendid. However, after representations by the Roman Catholics he came along to suspend the work. Mr Smith met him with the priests and others in discussion, and finally the Commandant ordered the work to continue.

“The 28th of July is the wonderful Day of Independence in Peru, when the schools gather round the flag to sing the National Anthem as the Paraguayans do in May. Can you imagine how the priests and nuns felt when as the teachers of the public schools in Pucallpa, they were ordered to march the schools to the new ‘Plaza’ for the singing of the National Anthem.

They tell us that the priest was furious and tried to persuade the Mayor to allow them to sing before his house, using a temporary flagpole; but the Mayor insisted that they should come to the ‘Plaza.’ As each verse of the Anthem was sung the flag was slowly hoisted until it finally reached the top, Then, to make matters more complicated but beautiful, Captain Allan Smith had been asked to arrange the bunting from the ‘Isola Bella’ in four lines from the big pole. When the flag was hoisted, all these flags rose slowly until three quarters of the way up the pole. There they all hung fluttering in the breeze.”

November 2nd, 1934, was the great day in Pucallpa, the inauguration of the new hall. Though 50 feet in length and 26 feet in width, the building that evening was crowded to capacity. Many of the audience were prominent men of Pucallpa who would hear the gospel for the first time.

At mid-day, the officials of Pucallpa, in response to an invitation, attended a special dinner in the hall. The



At the opening of the new hall in Pucallpa 2 November 1934

Inauguration and Goodbye

priest had openly forbidden any official or any of his family to attend. To the great joy of the believers, at the appointed hour all of the officials turned up in defiance of the prohibition.

In the afternoon, it was the children's opportunity. Over 180 children crowded into the feast that was set for them. The evening was the crowning hour, when Allan Smith preached to a crowded building of people. This was a triumph indeed, made possible through the launch work. It was the medical work based on the launch that broke the power of the priests and gave the missionaries on "Isola Bella" acceptance with the authorities and with the people.

"On the Lord's Day, 4 November 1934," Allan writes, "we had the first breaking of bread in the new building. It



Leading citizens of Pucallpa at the opening banquet for the new hall 2 November 1934

was just lovely to see the believers coming along to a decent place and taking their places round the table. Something away in the wilds to His praise. As far as we know, it is the first assembly in Peru."

The following Lord's Day was the last time the Allan Smiths would ever be in Pucallpa. It was a fitting close to a long life of service together in that great continent. At the close of the morning meeting, it was very touching when all stood to sing the prayer that came sincerely from their hearts, "God be with you till we meet again."

"On Sunday the 11th," we read in a letter from Mrs Smith, "the mail boat was late. This gave us time to attend the morning meeting. Many tears were shed because of our soon departure. I also was weeping. The 'Beatriz' was to sail from Pucallpa in the afternoon, but again her sailing was postponed until 8 p.m. We had a full hall for the gospel meeting, many standing at the back.

PIONEERING ON THE RIVERS

Dad spoke with liberty. Then we again bade farewell to the crowd, some following us to the boat.”

Moored to her anchorage nearby was the “Isola Bella”, home of a thousand memories, her little navigation light the last thing they saw as they steamed down the mighty river they had pioneered for God. They might never return, but they were leaving the message they had brought, faithfully sown in the hearts of its people.

Their Works Follow Them

It seems only yesterday that the author waved a welcome to Allan Smith as he stood with his wife on the deck of the “Ruahine,” when it berthed at Auckland on the 13th of March 1935. He looked to be a man sick and wearied with years of toil in a tropical clime. Nevertheless, there was still evidence that could not be hid, of the dauntless missionary spirit that burned on within its frail tabernacle.

“Knowing that you have all taken a very keen interest in the Amazon venture for God,” he writes to brethren in New Zealand, “we take this first opportunity of giving a brief outline of this work. Later on the Lord willing as health permits we hope to have the pleasure of visiting you.” Few were to have that pleasure or to see the lantern views of the Amazon. We who were privileged to see them in the long hallway of the Missionary Home and were thrilled with his story, waited for his health to return so that all might see and hear for themselves.

Allan Smith was away from home, in Hastings, when a cold he caught brought on the end. On June 11th, he became gravely ill and was transferred to a private hospital where he would receive skilled attention from doctors and nurses. In what proved to be the closing three weeks of his earthly life, he bore a wonderful testimony and often spoke to the nurses of the hope of the believer.

Much prayer was made on his behalf throughout the Dominion as on swift wings the news of his serious condition came as a great shock to us all. We had been expecting that he would recover to health in New Zealand. It was not to be, and He who loved him most, saw fit to take him Home on July 2nd, 1936.

His last hours on earth were sunlit with the peace of God. While loving hearts lingered near their loved one, he smiled again and again to each one as though already his Lord had come for him – and was just waiting till he had bidden them farewell.

Some of the last words he spoke ring with a rare note of triumph, “He brings

them unto their desired haven and they are at rest: that is literally true of me just now.”

At another time he called the Matron, who is a Christian, and said, “My faithful friend, the Lord bless you abundantly. My course is finished. I am ready to go, and I want you to see that all is carried out for His glory.”

His thoughts were continually on the goodness of the Lord and his heart was already in the Homeland.

To his loved ones round his bed he said, “The Lord will be the stay of the orphan and the shield of the widow; He’ll look after you. ‘The eternal God is thy refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms.’”

As he grew weaker, his broken sentences mirrored the greatness of his soul.

“Just on thirty years ... see the mighty hand of God.”

“... throat strengthened till the last message go forth.”

“To my dear mother is due in large measure ...”

“No one will know what it cost to evangelise these regions. No one.”

“If any of you went out ... appreciate to the full the simple gathering ...”

“The simple gathering which gives expression to the unity of the one Body, of the one Spirit ... not a few but all God’s people.”

“Oh God of matchless grace, we look into Thy face, we stand accepted in the place ...”

“The Lord is very real.”

The Lord’s servant was conscious to within fifteen minutes before he passed away to be forever with the Lord.

Tributes to his memory from many parts of the globe poured in with their expressions of affection and honoured him for his work’s sake. Paragraphs from workers on the two South American Rivers, Amazon and Paraguay, express eloquently the place he held in many a heart.

Mr Aish writes, “It was with profound regret that I read the sad news which it was my duty to break to the residents of Pucallpa. To see the expressions of sorrow was very touching. The little assembly has been a house of weeping.

Their Works Follow Them

To really accept the news that their spiritual father had gone Home has not been easy for these babes in the faith. The first news arrived by the ordinary mail on Tuesday evening, and on Thursday your airmail confirmed the sad news. I told Alejandro, and he said, 'It's really true, is it?' Thank you for the detail given in your letter. The part relating to Mr Smith's last days I translated and read to the meeting last Sunday night. The congregation stood in silence for a short time as a mark of respect to Mr Smith."

We come now to the message from Paraguay, the other scene of Allan Smith's pioneering in the gospel launch work. This tribute, fittingly enough, is from his fellow labourer in earlier years, Mr Gordon Airth. "Thank you very much for the kind trouble you took to give us so much information about Allan. Allan's Home-going removes the last of the male members of the crew who were with us on the first two voyages of 'El Alba.' Allan is not forgotten in these river ports, many ask for him and sorrow has been expressed on learning of his Home call.

"I think one of Allan's outstanding gifts was that of plodding perseverance, for his life seemed to be a long-continued struggle against obstacles which were overcome one by one. Not many men would have tackled the problem of another launch in another and perhaps more exhausting sphere after the innumerable heartbreaks and back breaks in connection with 'El Alba' in Paraguay. Of him, it can truly be said that he made William Carey's motto his own: *'Attempt great things for God, expect great things from God.'*

"Well, he has gone, but very tangible evidences of his stay on earth remain. His influence will be felt as long as the launches run on their respective rivers – and long after the rivers themselves have stopped running."

He Built Better Than He Knew

When Pucallpa was chosen as a base for the “Isola Bella,” there was no indication that in one brief decade this village would become the gateway to the Amazon.

Yet so it has proved. The inauguration of the Pucallpa Air Base has knit the Pacific Coast with the Atlantic.

“You would hardly know the town,” writes Mrs Hocking some years later to Mrs Smith. “With the pushing forward of the Carreterra (roadway) the town is growing with mushroom rapidity. Every mail boat arriving brings more people, including young men to work on the road and their families and relatives.

“The U.S. Rubber Development Corporation is making Pucallpa a principal port for land and water based transport planes.

“Then the jungle highway to the mountains and coast is now almost ready for traffic and already contracts have been signed to bring the mail by way of the road and the Aguaytia River. The roadway crosses the Aguaytia. At both ends groups of American tractors work twelve hours a day to open the unfinished portions. Soon Pucallpa will no longer be the sleepy town it has been for over a hundred years.

“You will be glad to know that Pucallpa is having a 30 bed hospital built, equipped and sponsored by the U.S. Government in co-operation with the Rockefeller Foundation.

“Thus the opportunity for service grows with Pucallpa; but the new workers as well as the native believers rejoice in the possession of their fine hall in the centre of all this activity.”

All this time, the “Isola Bella” was in the capable charge of Mr and Mrs R. J. Pullenger who had come from New Zealand to continue the launch work in Peru. Mrs Pullenger’s health was failing.

“I have delayed answering your letter in the hope of being able to enclose

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some snaps of the house and hall, and of the ‘Plaza’ in front of them all laid out in walks, with benches, and flowering shrubs,” writes a new missionary to Pucallpa. “Doubtless long before you receive this letter the Pullengers will have reached home and you will have spoken with them. I do hope Mrs Pullenger will soon improve in health. The change in climate will probably do both of them much good.

“We arrived here safely on January 5th, after seven weeks on the way. As we rounded the bend in the river, we caught sight of the ‘Isola Bella.’ We could hardly wait to get aboard her. The Pullengers welcomed us royally at the dock and as soon as possible, we were at ‘the boat.’

“The ‘Isola Bella’ is lovely! All newly painted and so clean and homely-looking. We were doubly delighted, and here we have made ourselves at home.

“We have visions, too, of building some sort of medical centre should the way open up for it. I understand that was a dream of Mr Smith’s too.”

As the years passed, the workers became aware of deterioration in the hull of the “Isola Bella.” Expert advice was sought and a decision to sell was reluctantly reached.

“We have word from Mr Stahlman that Mr Burns has received the order to sell the ‘Isola Bella.’ They say it had deteriorated badly and that they may have to take a low price for it. That is too bad. We feel however, that the boat has served the Lord’s purpose here in the work at Pucallpa and in all its journeying. The work has been blessed to many, and will, we believe, continue to grow.”

“One of the outstanding conversions,” writes Mrs Hocking to Allan’s aged mother in New Zealand, “was that of Panchito, the blind boy who was saved when your son was here. Panchito is certainly a bright light in this town. He has a neighbour who is an Adventist, and Panchito has been seeking to teach him more perfectly the ways of the Lord. The Adventist finally had to admit that Panchito was seemingly in the right, but invited him to discuss the points

that wore troubling him with the Adventist Pastor (we now boast an Adventist Mission here).

“The night of the discussion, people passing the house stopped to hear what was going on. The Lord helped Panchito, as did his constant study of the Word, and soon the crowd was saying to the Adventist, ‘Why don’t you put away your books and papers and answer the way Panchito does.’ Panchito was citing Scripture passages for each statement he made, and this drew the admiration of the crowd.

“Panchito has another neighbour – a Japanese farmer. Panchito has him interested enough to buy a Bible in the Japanese language, and now the man reads it avidly. He said to Panchito that the more he reads, the greater his thirst to read more becomes. Yet he says he reads with fear. Panchito says to him, ‘That fear is the Devil trying to keep you away from the Lord.’”

“The assembly in Pucallpa goes on with a nice spirit of co-operation,” writes one of the missionaries. “We have up to 150 attending the gospel meeting on moonlit nights, and our week-night meeting averages about fifty in attendance. We have a number of young believers applying for baptism, and others who are showing a growing interest in the gospel.”

The disturbing news that made it advisable to sell the “Isola Bella” did not deter the missionaries.

“Mr Christensen and I have just returned from our first trip in among the semi civilised Cashibo Indians,” writes Mr Hocking. “Eddy made the entire trip in a canoe. Prayer was certainly heard on behalf of this trip, and the information gathered will be a big factor in guiding further work with this needy tribe. We were impressed more than ever by the need of these villages. It is our desire to begin soon visiting regularly some six of the larger villages with the gospel, and some medical help.

“With this end in view, Eddy is going forward with rigging out the boat we have, and already he has a 16 hp motor in good working order. We desire to equip our boat so that we can do efficient medical work from it as well as have

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comfortable sleeping and eating quarters aboard. Let us each make these villages a burden of our prayer that souls may be reached and a testimony set up.”

Another great move forward is outlined in a letter dated August 1st, 1947.

“I have just returned from a visit to the coast and a short trip to the high Central Andes with recording equipment. I had planned a much longer trip, but when the promised transportation and portable generator were not forthcoming, I had to shorten the trip. Four gospel recordings were made in the Quechua dialect. Nearly a million illiterate people speak no Spanish. Missionaries are anxious to have their native workers record gospel messages in song and word in the Ancash, Cuzco and Bolivian Quechua dialects. The million Aymara-speaking Indians around Lake Titicaca may soon have the Scripture on disc if we can get the recording equipment into that area.

“You would find joy with us to see the Chama Indians here drinking in the twelve messages we have recorded for them. Every night more come to listen to the messages played over again. A few nights ago, one fine looking Indian stood up and repeated the message as he listened, showing all was clearly understood. These messages will soon be distributed to their numerous villages along with others about to be made by the missionaries speaking this language. We thank God for the safe arrival of the recording equipment here at the crossroads of the Lowland Indian work and for the work already done in the unwritten languages. Pray for the work shortly to be done in other languages.”

In the purposes of God, the work on the Amazon, so ably pioneered through its initial stages, is taken up by those who follow.

Eternity will still hold the record of their service and soul winning, with its lustre undimmed, even when the rivers themselves have ceased to be.

When Allan Smith went Home, it was true of him as for Pilgrim in the immortal allegory Pilgrim’s Progress:

Then I heard in my dream that all the bells in the city rang again for joy, and that it was said unto them, “Enter ye into the joy of your Lord.”

PIONEERING ON THE RIVERS

I also heard the men themselves, that they sang with a loud voice saying, “Blessing and honour, and glory and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever.”

Appendix - Original Foreword

I count it an honour to write a brief foreword to the biography of Allan Smith. His early death brought a deep sense of personal loss, for we were strangely drawn to each other by ties of friendship that grew rapidly into bonds of deep affection. His faith in God, his devotion to Christ, his heroic labours and his pioneering spirit marked him out as a man of God. Divinely enlightened as to the path of God's will, he "was not disobedient to the heavenly vision."

Allan Smith spent his years of devoted service in fellowship with Christians known as brethren. He was a worthy representative of that noble company of missionaries who, since the days of Anthony Norris Groves, have carried the gospel of the grace of God to the uttermost parts of the earth, and planted churches after the New Testament pattern to become centres of light in the surrounding darkness.

He was a man of deep convictions. His love embraced every child of God. A narrow and exclusive spirit he could not tolerate. However, he realised the immense importance of loyal obedience to New Testament principles and proved their effectiveness on the spiritual battlefields of South America.

When he returned from the Amazon in 1935 and I heard from his own lips some of the incidents now recorded in Mr Compton's thrilling book, my soul was deeply stirred. I felt that if the story could be written it would warm the hearts of Christian men and women everywhere and lead to greater zeal in the work of the gospel. I rejoice therefore that Mr Compton has written this unique and fascinating story, and pray that the Lord will richly bless and abundantly use it.

When we remember the faith and devotion of Allan Smith, we recall the words of Hebrews. 13:7, "Whose faith follow." The purpose of Christian biography is to glorify God, not to exalt man. Paul writes to the Galatians concerning the churches of Judea, "They glorified God in me." As we read this moving record of the grace and power of God in a life yielded to Him and separated unto the Gospel may we also glorify Him by lives of deeper devotion and more sacrificial service, 1 Corinthians 15:58,

*"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable,
always abounding in the work of the Lord,
knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord"*

W. H. Pettit, MB ChB, MBE (1948)

Author's Preface

In writing this biography of Allan Smith, whose life was packed with thrilling events and great decisions, we have sought by careful search and constant check to ensure an accurate record. We tender our thanks, therefore, to all those who supplied letters and information in response to our request published in the various magazines throughout the world.

Our debt to Mrs Allan Smith is very great. If it had not been for her patient helpfulness when for days on end we plied her with questions and checked all information in the presence of a shorthand writer, our task would have been a more difficult one indeed.

We gratefully acknowledge, too, the help of Mr Gordon Airth, of South America, in checking the final manuscript on the Paraguay section.

Among many others who have given us inspiration for the task has been Allan Smith's mother, still with us at the great age of 86 and looking forward to the day when she has this volume in her hand.

To the writer, personally, there has come a fresh compelling glimpse of what God can do through a life thus yielded to Him. Allan Smith's early zeal; his staunch loyalty; his manly ways; the deeds he dared to do; his indifference to sacrifice; and his vision so gloriously fulfilled against terrific odds; these have moved the heart to desire more of God's perfect will, and way.

Our task, chiefly, is to publish the facts; his deeds tell their own eloquent story, and the impact of his witness will be felt in eternity long after the rivers themselves have ceased to flow.

A. G. Compton (1948)