



African Diary

by Dr. W. H. Mullen

"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you." The leader of our Easter sunrise service was reading these beautiful words from Isaiah just as the sun cast its first rays over the distant mountains of Basutoland. We had climbed the high cliff behind us by the waning Easter moon, and were now sitting on a great flat rock quietly waiting for the morning to break. The sky turned from a faint purple to golden yellow, to deep pink and blue as we sang the triumphant songs of the Resurrection. We recited The Apostles' Creed to the clear, jubilant notes of the birds which seemed to be joining with us in praise to God. My feeling of this moment on the mountain-top was caught in the beautiful words of Harriett Beecher Stowe:

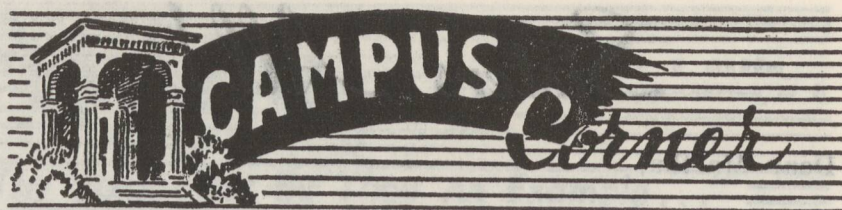
Still, still with Thee, when purple morning breaketh,
When the bird waketh, and the shadows flee;
Fairer than morning, lovelier than daylight,
Dawns the sweet consciousness, I am with Thee.

As we descended the mountain trail I felt as if I had indeed been in the presence of God. While the analogy of spring and the awakening earth are quite impossible here, there was still a newness and freshness that seemed to grip my spirit as I meditated upon the inner meaning of the Resurrection. Once again there arose within me the deep affirmation that life is more powerful than death, that "the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it," and that the goodness of God will endure beyond all natural evil and the wickedness of man. The resurrection of Christ is God's testimony to the world that He is with us in his redemptive, creative love. In this great Christian truth the Resurrection is more than an historical event, and becomes the symbol of the ever-present energy and power of the living Christ whose redemptive love is an active force in our daily experience.

Among my other recent experiences is my exciting trip to Basutoland. I have enjoyed the beautiful mountains from thirty or forty miles away, but this was my first trip into the country. (As of the last week in April the highest peaks have been covered with snow.) Basutoland is a little oval island of territory entirely surrounded by the land of the Republic of South Africa. It is one of three British Protectorates in the southern part of Africa. Its area is 11,700 square miles, and its population is about 800,000, most of whom are members of the Basuto tribe. The country is somewhat unique in that there are no European settlers or landowners, although some white people do have business concessions. Most of the indigenous people live in scattered villages under tribal authority. The Paramount Chief of Basutoland is Moshoeshe II, an Oxford educated man who hopes to achieve internal self-government for his country in the near future, while still remaining in the British Commonwealth.

When we drove up to the border checkpoint a nattily uniformed Basuto officer courteously waved us through the gate. Some of the old patriotic fervor for my original homeland came to the surface when I saw the Union Jack flying brightly against a dark blue sky. After passing

The King's Highway



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through Maseru, the capital town, we drove straight back into the mountains where many villages appear exactly as I had seen them in photographs. A typical village would consist of fifteen or twenty grass-roofed huts, and here and there a patch of mealies (corn) behind a wooden enclosure as protection against the wandering cattle. Children were much in evidence, but not too many men, many of whom are working away in the mines.

We went on as far as Bushmen's Pass, which involved many hair-raising (theoretically, in my case) turns on the sides of the mountains. I didn't exactly push my feet through the floor of the car, but I was relieved when we got back to the lowland. We ate lunch in a grassy spot in the Pass where we could look a hundred miles both east and west. Close by, the smaller slopes were covered with great flocks of sheep and Angora goats, tended, as a rule, by little boys. Once in awhile a Basuto man, gayly wrapped in his colorful blanket would go trotting by on his sure-footed pony.

After becoming accustomed to seeing the simple dwellings and small garden plots, it was almost a shock to make a turn in the road and see down below, in a magnificent valley, the modern buildings of Roma University. The University is run by the Roman Catholic Church, and so far as I know, all the students are Africans. I was interested to discover that the institution was made possible, partially at least, by a large grant of several million dollars from French Canadians. Many of the teachers are also Canadians. As might be inferred, the R.C. Church is quite strong in the country. At one place where we left the car and walked about two miles, we met a mob of singing children. They were dancing merrily as they sang, and as we drew closer I could recognize that they were saying over and over again, "Hallelujah

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