

## A STORY OF "NO-MAN'S-LAND."

BY REV. P. L. HUNTER, KAFFRARIA.



YOU will look in vain in all the maps of your atlas, to find the district called "No-man's-land"; for, though it may still be seen in some old maps of South Africa, the name is now scarcely known, and the reason for it no longer exists.

It is all *someone's* land now; and in it our mission station of Gillespie is planted, among the tribe of Amaxesibe, who now occupy part of "No-man's-land."

Let me tell you how it got the name, and relate an unwritten story in its early history. You have heard of the Zulus, whose power was finally broken by the British arms within the recollection of some of you. In the early years of the present century they were a most powerful tribe, under their despotic and cruel chief Tshaka. His career was one of conquest and bloodshed, for women and children were butchered wholesale, along with the men of other tribes whom he had overcome in battle. Other tribes again were pushed onwards to the north, the west, and the south, who, in turn, swept with rapine and bloodshed over less powerful clans. For years the country south of the Tugela River, in what is now Natal, was a scene of inter-tribal conflict; and in the end so many had perished by war, by famine and privation, that a wide tract of country was depopulated, down to the river Umzimvubu, and called by the name of "No-man's-land."

About the year 1827, a tribe called the Fingoes was fleeing southwards towards Kaffirland before these fierce and cruel Zulus. One family of fugitives had reached a forest, now called Tonti bush, where they sought a refuge for the night.

A little girl of eleven, whose name was Mbukutu, was with her parents and brothers, hiding for fear of sudden attack in the dense forest. During the darkness of night they were awakened by a sound of crashing branches and undergrowth, and, fearing that the Imfecane or marauding Zulus were upon them, they rushed hither and thither in flight. But it was not an alarm of war. The noise that had roused them came from a herd of wild elephants crashing through the bush. Little Mbukutu had, however, been separated from her parents in the dark. All that night she crouched alone in the dismal forest, listening with throbbing heart to the distant cries of wild animals and the howling of the wolves. It was a weary time of waiting; but when her heart grew sick with fear, she kept her courage up with the hope of joining her parents in the morning.

With the dawn she began her search. Wandering here and there she hoped at every turn to come in sight of her friends.

But hope was blighted, and heart failed when no trace of them could be found; nor did she ever see her parents again.

At length Mbukutu found out a distant relative, and for a time stayed with her, till, being badly treated, she ran away. Years had passed by, when at length she heard of her brothers, and learned from them that their parents were both dead. A Kaffir had, by this time, taken her in marriage, but he ill-used her so much, being friendless and of a despised tribe, that she was forced to leave him and run away.

Even the Kaffirs, although they gave shelter to this hapless tribe, looked down on them and called them "dogs."

Mbukutu, now a woman, next settled in the district near where Lovedale is now, and there, for the first time, she came under Christian influences. She heard from the missionary of the Saviour, who had come to seek and to save the lost.

In Him she found a Refuge that never failed—a Friend who never drove her away. At Somerville station, under Mr. Erskine of the Free Church, Mbukutu still lives, now almost blind with her eighty-two years, but able to tell her story, and still a devoted follower of Jesus.

## II.

Seventy years have passed since little Mbukutu lost her parents near the Tonti bush. Jojo's tribe of Amaxesibe now occupy part of "No-man's-land," their villages dotting the grassy ridges or nestling in the hollows, while herds of cattle graze unmolested on the hills. Wild beasts are no longer to be found. The war-cry no more sounds through the land. The strong hand of a civilised Government holds the reins of power, and all that district is now under Cape Colony. As I ride out on a Sabbath morning westward from Gillespie to an out-station near that Tonti bush, a European trader's shop and a camp of mounted police are pointed out to me where once the wild elephants roamed, and where, long ago, that family was broken up in flight.

The native evangelist by my side, James Bottoman, going forth to publish the gospel of peace, recounts in passing the story I have just been telling you, for that little girl was his own grandmother!

But in the valley from which we climbed an hour ago, the clear note of the Sabbath bell will by this time have called the children from all sides to the Sunday school at Gillespie. Little boys come with bright faces and clean cotton shirts, girls in neat print dresses, older lads in suits, though many children are still smeared with clay and wear the "red



MRS. BOTTOMAN.

blanket" — the badge of heathenism. Now the female teacher marshals them in school, and receives from many on entering a bunch of wild flowers in their season, to beautify the table and adorn the church. This is the sister of the evangelist, and another grandchild of Mbukutu.

Before school is over, the church members have begun to gather. Prominent among them may be marked a portly

dame, whom the younger women greet as daughters their mother. Her voice is frequent in earnest prayer, and she is universally accorded the honour of "a mother in Israel." This is Mrs. Bottoman, mother of the evangelist and the teacher, and daughter of that aged disciple, Mbukutu, once a little fugitive in this land. At various stations in the Presbyterian Church, engaged as mission teachers, are two young men of the same family, and one young woman who has just been married to an honoured evangelist of the Free Church.

At Lovedale, among the students under training for the native ministry, is one other son of Mrs. Bottoman, making six grandchildren from one household engaged in Christian work. If I took you a step farther you would find in the fourth generation, among the children of my evangelist, the prize-winners in several years for attendance and progress at Gillespie school. Is not this a marvellous difference from the scene of seventy years ago? No doubt this is an exceptional case, but it shows what the power of Christian truth has done, and can do.

But do not suppose for a moment that our tribe is Christianised. Only sparks of light gleam in the darkness. The Amaxesibe as a tribe are still, by their ignorance and sin, "without God and without hope in the world." From *our* standpoint, however, they are not without hope. The Sun of Righteousness is rising over the land so long steeped in the night of sin. Here, as in other dark places of the earth, we believe the light will yet increase. Be it ours to work and pray for the time

"When the desert and the wilderness  
As Sharon's plain shall be,  
And the love of the Lord shall fill the earth  
As the waters fill the sea!"

## WANG.

BY DR. D. D. MUIR, MOUKDEN.



**W**E have now been a little more than a year away from Scotland. The last ten months of it we have spent here, and a very pleasant ten months they have been. Learning the language has been our daily business until now, when we have taken over the work in the men's hospital from Dr. Christie, who is amongst you at present enjoying a well-earned furlough.

The men's hospital was built with the Children's New Year Offering of 1886-7, and though the boys and girls who collected the money are boys and girls no longer, yet you who are their successors in the Sunday schools of our Church will be interested to hear a word or two about a boy patient who has been with us for some time. His name is Wang, and he crawled on his hands and knees to the hospital gate, and *ku'owing* (striking the ground with the forehead), asked for a medicine to heal a foot which had been bitten by the frost the previous winter, and from which the toes had all dropped off. He was a beggar, had neither father nor mother nor a single friend. He lay, like Lazarus, at our gate, weak, emaciated, dirty, and naked, with a putrefying sore. He was told the healing ointment he asked for would do no good, and he must

come into hospital to be properly treated. He did come in, and after a week or two of good feeding and nursing, an operation was performed.

He was a very good and quiet patient, and after some time was able to walk about quite nicely. While he was with us a great change took place. He listened attentively when the Bible was being read and explained, and he learned to sing some of our hymns. When the gong sounded for worship, he could be seen stumping across the compound and taking his seat in the hall. The time came for him to leave us, and he did not want to go back to his old life on the streets. One of the deacons—a good Christian man—took him into his shop, and there he is now, a healthy, changed lad, trying to practise what he was taught in the hospital. Had there been no hospital here, he would certainly have died a slow and cruel death on the streets. Had he not come under the influence of the gospel as it is daily taught and explained in our wards, back to the old life on the streets he would have drifted.



### MY MEDICINE CHEST.

*(The gift of well-wishers in Gourook Congregation.)*

**D**EAR children, I am sure you'd like  
To hear about my store  
Of medicines, some good folks gave  
E'er leaving Scotland's shore.

A strong, substantial little box  
Guards well its precious ware  
From dust and rust, and damp and dew,  
And even, I think, fresh air.

But to our topic—you must know,  
The children in this place  
Get just the aches and pains you take,  
Despit' their dusky face,

One maid who stays too long at play,  
The rain wets to the skin;  
And if she does not change her gown,  
A little cough comes in.

And one is very hungry,  
She eats her chop too fast;  
Or if her helping's rather big,  
Sore head may come at last.

They often come for "Ibok,"  
To make them well again;  
Their faith is great in white man's stuff  
To cure each ache and pain.

Then, children, would you credit this?  
When castor oil they take,  
They gulp it up, and smack their lips,  
And no wry faces make.

In fact, they look upon the dose  
As you would sweets or cake,  
For often to their native food  
The oil of palm they take.

They never sweets or candy get—  
Dears, how would that suit you?  
The nearest thing is sugar-cane,  
Which they will sometimes chew.

I hear you say, "Poor children,  
How dreadful is their lot!"  
You would not if you only saw  
The splendid teeth they've got.

Whene'er the pearly ones they show,  
(Sad record for my pen),  
One almost feels himself inclined  
To break commandment ten.

The wicked toothache seldom comes,  
To mar their happiness;  
And so the forceps get much rest,  
Within their leathern case.

But when they come for Ibok,  
And take their way to go,  
They mostly always say, "So song,"  
Which is their thanks, you know.

But Nature's medicine is best  
For children who are wise;  
Take "Aqua pura" in and out,  
Fresh air and exercise.

T. G. C.

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