

THE STORY OF
DAVID LIVINGSTONE

THE CHILDREN'S HEROES SERIES

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¹writing as "Mrs Oliver Elton"



DAVID LIVINGSTONE

MARCH 19, 1813 - MAY 1, 1873

THE STORY OF
DAVID LIVINGSTONE

by
VAUTIER GOLDING



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The Story of David Livingstone
Complete and Unabridged

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by John S. Roberts, 1874

Frontispiece portrait taken from *David Livingstone: His
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PROEM²

To little Ardale and all his merry kind

LIGHTS OF LIFE

THE dew stands on the dormer panes,
The cross November sun
Has sent the daylight off to bed
Before the night's begun;

The dull red embers, half aglow,
Are sulking in the grate,
And let the lonely shadows grow
All dark and desolate;

Shadows of things that go awry,
Or waver to and fro;
Shadows of playthings bought so dear
And broken long ago;

Shadows of friends who played till mirth
Grew sad and went in pain:—
Where is the merry light that makes
Old shadows smile again?

Hark! little sandals softly beat
Upon the attic stair,
And truant mischief breathless creeps
With whispered, "Is he there?"

A story? 'Tis a fateful task
To fill the open brow:

²Preface; from the Latin *prooemium*

Who knows what plans of God depend
On all it garners now?

Where shall we lead the clambering limbs,
The big blue fearless eyes?
Down to the gold mine's narrowing drift,
Or to the widening skies

Where, in the space around the stars,
Are countless worlds astray,
Whose peoples call for pioneers
To find the safer way?

Ay, let us tell the generous tale
Of giants real and bold,
Who grew so great they would not stoop
To gather fame and gold;

But hurled the mountains from our path,
And drained our quagmires dry,
And held our foes at bay the while
They bore our weaklings by;

Giants by whose unselfish toil
Our land was first begun,
Where good and useful men and maids
Make merry as they run.

Ah, may you miss the dismal tracks
That aimless feet have trod,
And follow where our pioneers
Make open ways to God.

VAUTIER GOLDING

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I. EARLY LIFE

THE story of this brave and gentle hero, and of his noble toil for the sake of other men, is truly a tale of more than ordinary wonder.

Few men's lives can better show how even the poorest and weakest can gain for themselves the power to do great things, and to make the harder paths of life more easy for those who follow. For David Livingstone began life in a workman's cottage, without knowledge or skill, and without money to obtain them. Yet, when he died, the world was so full of praise and wonder at his work that his body was brought from Africa to rest in Westminster Abbey among the graves of his country's greatest men. He had grown to be a great pioneer, an explorer, a scientist, a doctor, a missionary, and a freer of slaves.

In thirty years he travelled 29,000 miles, through the wild and unknown parts of Africa, exploring rivers, lakes, plains, forests, and mountains. He found out places where white settlers might make farms and plantations in health and safety. He sought

for paths and waterways by which they might bring their cotton, grain, coffee, sugar, ivory, and skins to the seaports for sale. Among the black tribes he made many friends, doctored their sick, and lost no chance of showing them how to do their duty to God and make better use of their lives.

But his last and greatest work was to follow up the slave-hunters, and make known in England all the brutal and wicked horrors of the slave-trade. This was the work that wore him to death, but his noble self-sacrifice roused his countrymen to take possession of Central Africa and put an end to slavery. And if we look into his life, we shall find that the power to do all this came little by little, and day by day, from one simple source, namely, his earnest and unselfish desire to show his love for God by doing good to men. He was always trying to help and befriend others, and this made other men befriend him and give him the means of carrying on his work.

Livingstone's forefathers were Highlanders, and lived in the wild and lonely island of Ulva, till hard times drove the family to settle in the village of Blantyre, among the Lanarkshire cotton-mills, where work was more plentiful.

Here David was born in the year 1813. His father, Neil Livingstone, an honest, steady, and hard-working man, took a great interest in all that was going on in the world. He was a great reader in many subjects, but was especially fond of books on missionary work. From him David inherited his Highland

pluck and hardihood, and also his thirst for every kind of knowledge.

His mother, Agnes Hunter, came of an old family which, in the days of the Covenanter persecution, had been driven from home to the hills, and had risked torture and death rather than do what they believed to be wrong. She gave him her gentle and kindly nature, and taught him to be neat, orderly, and exact. From her tender but firm upbringing also, he gained the brave grip of truth, honour, and justice that makes men do and dare all things for duty's sake.

This was his heritage from his parents, and it proved of more value to him than all the money on earth.

At the village school of Blantyre David soon learnt to read and write. So poor, however, were his parents, that they had to take him away from his lessons at the early age of ten, and set him to work in a cotton-mill. Summer and winter, wet or fine, he had to appear at the factory at six in the morning, and stay there till eight at night, with short spaces allowed him for meals. Fourteen hours a day at the mill might well have broken his pluck and ruined his health, as, indeed, happened to many poor children, but David was made of harder stuff. He was bent on getting knowledge by some means or other. Very quickly he learnt to work the machine called the "spinning jenny," and was then raised to be a spinner with a small wage.

The first half-crown of his earning he took home,

and slipped it into his mother's lap. To him it was a small fortune, and would have bought him many coveted things, but he thought of his mother's wants before his own. Later on, as he earned more wage, he bought himself books, and these he used to fix on the "jenny," snatching a few lines from them whenever he could spare an eye from his work. His hard and tiring day at the mill was long enough for any one, but in spite of this he joined night classes and sat up reading till sometimes his mother took away his books and drove him to bed.

His holidays were spent in ranging over the countryside with his brothers and sisters, and here too nothing escaped his keen eye and love of knowledge. Every animal, bird, insect, and plant was an interest to him, and he studied them closely, trying to find out all he could about their forms and habits. And while he thus began to learn the wonderful science of nature, he never dreamt that one day in the wilds of Africa he would use his knowledge in digging roots for his supper, or in avoiding vicious beasts and poisonous snakes.

As the years went on he grew restless, and was sometimes not very happy, without quite knowing why. In reality his mind was growing very fast, and wanted bigger and better work than watching the mill-wheels. Spinning cotton was useful enough in its way, but he wanted to do for mankind something greater and more lasting than that.

His father had many books and papers on mission work in China and India, and as David read of the wonderful beauty of these countries, and the ignorance and cruelty of their peoples, he sometimes thought he would like to be a missionary. The idea returned to him again and again, but he kept doubting whether he was the right person for the work. One day, however, when he was twenty years old, he happened to read a booklet that told such sad tales about the poor of China that his mind was troubled and stirred. So heavily did the story of human suffering and wrong weigh upon him that he began to take his country walks alone, in order to think the matter over undisturbed. Every morning he asked himself if he could do nothing to help, and every night he went to bed with the question still unanswered.

But at last there came an evening when he found an answer that made his way quite clear. He watched the sunset lights creep off the hills and clouds and die away in the growing starlight. He heard the thrush, all grateful for the joy of life, sing out its evensong till the calm hush of night stole over the tired world. The peace and beauty of it all seemed to make him sadder than ever. In such a lovely world, where there was room for all, food for all, and joy enough for all, it seemed to him so utterly strange that men could ever even want to cheat, rob, bully, and kill each other, and grab for themselves more than they could possibly use. The depth of his own sadness

made him remember how once, in the stillness of the sunset hour, Jesus of Nazareth had wandered into an olive grove, and there had wept in bitter grief over the troubles of men.

Then suddenly the idea flashed into his mind that at least he could try and imitate the life of Christ as far as lay in his power. In a moment his mind was made up. He walked home with a brisk step and light heart, and told his parents that he was going to college at Glasgow to learn to be a doctor; and then he would go out to the far East to help the sick, and to tell men how they could make the world better and happier by imitating the life of Christ.

David lost no time in carrying out his plan, and at once began to put by all he could from his earnings at the cotton-mill. Want of money was his chief difficulty. Indeed, when at last he went up to Glasgow, he and his father walked all the way, and then had to trudge the streets till they found a lodging for David that cost no more than two shillings a week.

It was a hard struggle for young Livingstone, but still, by spending his savings very carefully, he managed to keep at his studies for a whole winter. Then he was forced to go back to the cotton-mills in order to save more money to pay for another winter's training. He was a quick and thorough learner, and at once it became quite clear to those who taught him that he would soon be fit for the life he had chosen.

Livingstone did not want to be ordained a regular missionary and take the title of "Reverend" before his

name, for he did not wish to teach the special creed and services of any one particular set of Christians. His own idea was to go among the natives as a plain and simple man, trying every hour and minute of his daily life to do as Christ had done; and in this way he hoped to win their love and respect, and to lead them towards a nobler life of duty to God and man. But his family and friends so strongly advised him to be made a missionary in the usual way that he yielded to their wishes, and offered himself to the London Missionary Society. His offer was accepted, and after a short examination in London before the governors of the Society, he was sent to Ongar, in Essex, for a three months' training among the other missionary students.

Here, with his usual care and thoroughness, he quickly learnt all that was set before him, but there was one thing he never could master: do what he would, he never could learn to preach. Once he was sent to a neighbouring parish with a most carefully prepared sermon; but he could get no further than the text, and so with a hasty apology he fled from the pulpit. Probably that was the only time in his life that he ran away from anything, but the event nearly ended his career.

His failure in preaching vexed the soul of his pastor so much, that Livingstone was sent back to the governors at the end of the three months with a bad report of his powers as a missionary. On the strength of this report he was nearly sent away as useless. One

of the governors, however, who was wiser than his fellows, saw that Livingstone could both think well and do well, although he could not talk well. He accordingly took the young student's part, and insisted that he should have a further trial at Ongar. The result of this timely aid was that, after three more months of study, no one doubted Livingstone's fitness, and so in the year 1840 he was formally ordained a missionary.

Meanwhile, war had broken out in China, and no one could go there in safety. This was a disappointment to Livingstone, but while waiting for peace he would not be idle, so he went on with his medical studies at London, and also took his degree as a physician and surgeon at Glasgow. But the war still dragged on, and rather than waste any time, he decided to go to Africa; and accordingly, on 8th December 1840, he set sail for that vast and unknown continent, into which he was one day to bring new light, new hope, and new freedom.