

A S I A

IN THE COUNTRY OF THE TELUGUS

C H A P T E R T W O

FROM THE EDITOR: India—a land of jungles, a land of mystery, a land of tigers and deadly serpents, an ancient land once under the rule of King Darius and the Persians with a history spanning 5,000 years—a land of millions of souls in desperate need of Jesus Christ. Founded in ancient times, then conquered by the Turks and Mongols, and finally incorporated into the British Empire by the early 18th century, India today has the second largest population on earth. Today it is inhabited by Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, numerous pagan tribal groups, and by an estimated 27 million Christians. It is a land of great variety. Christians ventured into India from the time of Jesus' death, when His disciple Thomas first brought the light of the Gospel to this dark land about 50 A.D. Then, from the 1500's until the 1900's American and British missionaries answered the call of Christ to once again spread the Good News there.

To this far off land came Dr. Jacob Chamberlain, a man venturing to risk all for the sake of the Gospel of Christ;

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willing not only to risk all, but ultimately, like so many others, to give his all. Born April 13, 1835 in Connecticut, at an early age he felt the call of God to be a missionary. At first, his service on the field was delayed. That he might honor his father's wishes, he remained on the family farm and cared for his aging parents. After experiencing several narrow escapes from accidents at home, Jacob sensed God was preserving his life in order that he might go to India as a missionary. With his father's release and blessing from filial duties, he attended seminary at Case Western Reserve University, and then earned a medical degree from Cleveland Medical College in Cleveland, Ohio. He married Charlotte Close Birge in September of 1859.

The couple arrived on the mission field in India on April 12, 1860, where Dr. Chamberlain was assigned to work with the Telugu people at Madanapalle. Controlled by a keen interest to minister to both soul and body, Dr. Chamberlain would often see patients in the morning and evening and conduct short preaching tours in the middle of the day. From time to time he would also venture out to remote areas of the jungle to reach native groups and to explore lands never before reached by the Gospel.

During his many years in India, the Doctor worked on a Telugu translation of the Bible; he helped establish numerous Christian schools and dispensaries and later wrote several books on his experiences in India. On one missionary tour, he contracted a jungle fever that in time would ravage his body. By 1902 he was partially paralyzed, though he continued faithfully in his calling for six more years. Dr. Jacob Chamberlain died on March 2, 1908, after 48 years of

service in India. It was to India he felt his calling in life; it was in India that he spent his life, and it was for countless Indian souls that he ultimately gave up his life.

Dr. Jacob Chamberlain (1835–1908)

A part from the Tibeto-Burman tribes scattered along the skirts of the Himalayas, the peoples of India have been commonly divided by ethnologists into three great race groups—the aborigines (often called the Kolarians), the Dravidians, and the Aryans. The aborigines are now found chiefly in the jungles and mountains of the Central Provinces, into which they were driven at a very early period by the Dravidians, the first invaders of India. Mr. Kipling, who has done so much to make India more intelligible to the English, has not forgotten to give us pictures of the aboriginal peoples in his famous *Jungle Book*. In his *The Tomb of His Ancestors* again, we have a vivid sketch of the mountain Bhils, whose combination of superstition, courage, and loyalty reminds us of the Scottish Highlanders in the days of Prince Charlie.

These aborigines of the hills were long neglected by the Church, but much is now being done on their behalf. Doctor Shepherd, for example, a Scotch medical missionary, carried both the Gospel and the healing powers of modern science into the wild country of the Bhils and Rajputana, and could tell tales of his experiences among them as striking and thrilling as any that have come from

the pen of Rudyard Kipling.

The Dravidians, who first overran India and drove the earlier inhabitants into the hills, were afterwards themselves supplanted to a large extent by the more powerful Aryans. These Aryans were members of that same original stock to which the nations of Europe trace their origin, for while one section of the race moved southwards upon India through the Himalayas from the great plains of Central Asia, another flowed to the west and took possession of Europe. Through the Aryan invasion of India the Dravidians were pushed for the most part into the southern portion of the vast peninsula, where they have formed ever since a numerous and powerful group. Five Dravidian peoples are usually distinguished, the Tamils and Telugus being the most important of the five. It is of work among the Telugus that we are to speak in the present chapter.

The country of the Telugus stretches northwards from Madras for some five hundred miles along the shores of the Bay of Bengal, while to the west it extends about halfway across the peninsula, and so includes large parts not only of the Presidency of Madras, but the kingdom of Mysore and the dominions of the Nizam of Hyderabad. It is a region which attracts those who go to India for sport and adventure, for its jungles still abound in tigers and other wild animals. From the point of view of Christian missions, it has this special interest, that there is no part of all Hindustan where the Gospel has been preached with more marked success in the 1900's, or where the people have been gathered more rapidly into the Christian Church. One of the most enterprising of modern Indian

missionaries was Dr. Jacob Chamberlain, of the American Reformed Church, who began his labors as a medical evangelist to the Telugus. He is the author of two books, *The Cobra's Den* and *In the Tiger Jungle*, which give graphic sketches of his experiences in city and village and jungle, on horseback and in bullock-cart, in the surgery with operating knife in hand, and at the busy fair when a crowd has gathered round and the knife that cures the body has been exchanged for the Book that saves the soul. Taking these two delightful volumes as our authorities, we shall first glance at Dr. Chamberlain in the midst of his medical and surgical work, and see how effective such work becomes in opening the way for Christian teaching. Then we shall follow him on one of his longer evangelistic tours through the Telugu country. Let us look in and find where Dr. Chamberlain begins his day and read about one of his missionary journeys.

All morning, ever since sunrise, the doctor has been busy with the patients who have come from far and near to be treated or prescribed for, until about a hundred persons are gathered in front of the little dispensary. The heat of the day is now coming on, but before dismissing them and distributing the medicines they have waited for, he takes down his Telugu Bible, reads and explains a chapter, and then kneels to ask a blessing upon all those who have need of healing.

It is now breakfast time, and after several hours of hard work the doctor is quite ready for a good meal. But just as he is about to go home for the purpose, he hears the familiar chant used by the natives when carrying a heavy burden, and looking out sees four men approaching, two

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in front and two behind, with a long bamboo pole on their shoulders and a blanket slung on it in hammock fashion with a sick man inside. Behind this primitive ambulance, two men are walking, one leading the other by the hand.

In a few minutes the sick man is laid in his blanket on the floor of the veranda, and the little company have told their tale. They have come from a village two days' journey off. They have heard of the foreign doctor that he can work wonderful cures. The young man in the blanket is dying; the old man led by the hand is his uncle, who has recently grown blind. Their friends have brought them to the Doctor Padre to see if he can make them well.

On examination Dr. Chamberlain finds that the young man's case is almost hopeless, but that there is just a chance of saving him by a serious surgical operation—and this he performs the same afternoon. At first the patient seems to be sinking under the shock, but he rallies by and by, and gradually comes back to health and strength again. The old man's blindness is a simpler case. An easy operation and careful treatment are all that are required. So when uncle and nephew have been in the hospital for a few weeks, the doctor is able to send them back to their village—the young man walking on his own feet, and the old man no longer needing to be led by the hand.

But here the story does not end. Every day while in hospital the two patients had heard the doctor read a chapter from the Gospel and make its meaning plain. And when the time for leaving came they begged for a copy of the history of Yesu Kristu, "the Divine Guru" so that they might let all their neighbors know of the glad news they

had heard. They acknowledged that they could not read, for they were poor weavers who had never been to school. "But when the cloth merchant comes to buy our webs," they said, "we will gather the villagers, and put the book into his hand, and say, 'Read us this book, and then we will talk business.' And when the tax gatherer comes we will say, 'Read us this book, and then we will settle our taxes.' Let us have the book therefore, for we want all our village to know about the Divine Guru, Yesu Kristu."

They got the book and went away, and for three years Dr. Chamberlain heard nothing of them. But at last on a wide preaching tour he met them again. They had learned of his approach, and when he entered the village at sunrise the whole population was gathered under the "Council-Tree," while his two patients of three years ago came forward with smiling faces to greet him, and told him that through the reading of the Gospel everyone in the place had agreed to give up his idols if the Doctor Padre would send someone to teach them more about Jesus. Dr. Chamberlain discussed the matter fully with them, and when he saw that they were thoroughly in earnest, promised to send a teacher as soon as possible. But just before leaving to proceed on his journey he noticed, near at hand, the little village temple, with its stone idols standing on their platform at the farther end of the shrine.

"What are you going to do with these idols now?" he asked the people.

"The idols are nothing to us any longer," they replied; "we have renounced them all."

"But are you going to leave them standing there in the

very heart of the village?"

"What would you have us do with them?" they asked.

"Well," said the doctor, wishing to test their sincerity, "I would like to take one of them away with me." He knew the superstitious dread which even converted natives are apt to entertain for the idols of their fathers, and the unwillingness they usually have to lay violent hands on them. He did not expect anything more than that they might permit him to remove one of the images for himself. But at this point Ramudu, the old man whose sight had been restored, stepped forward and said, "I'll bring out the chief Swami for you;" and going into the shrine he shook the biggest idol from the plaster from which it was fastened to the stone platform, and then handed it to the doctor, saying as he did so something like this:

"Well, old fellow, be off with you! We and our ancestors for a thousand years have feared and worshiped you. Now we have found a better God, and are done with you. Be off with you, and a good riddance to us. Jesus is now our God and Savior."

And so the ugly stone Swami that had lorded it so long over the consciences of these Telugu villagers was "dethroned," as Dr. Chamberlain puts it, "by the surgeon's knife," and passed in due course to a missionary museum in the United States. But Yesu Kristu, the Divine Guru, reigned in its stead.

But now let us follow the doctor in some of the more striking episodes of one of his earliest tours. It was a journey of 1,200 miles through the native kingdom of Hyderabad and on into Central India—a region where at

that time no missionary had ever worked before. He rode all the way on a sturdy native pony, but was accompanied by four Indian assistants, with two bullock-carts full of Gospels and other Christian literature which he hoped to sell to the people at low prices.

One of the first and most dangerous adventures was in a walled city of Hyderabad. They had already disposed of a few Gospels and tracts when some Braham priests and Mohammedan fanatics raised the mob against them. It was done in this way. A number of the Gospels were bound in cloth boards of a buff color. The Mohammedan zealots spread a rumor that these books were bound in pigskin—a thing which no true disciple of Mahomet will touch. The Brahmans, on the other hand, told their followers that these yellow boards were made of calfskin—and to a Hindu the cow is a sacred animal. The crowd got thoroughly excited, and soon Dr. Chamberlain and his four helpers were standing in the market place with their backs to a wall, while a howling multitude surged in front, many of whom had already begun to tear up the cobblestones with which the street was paved in order to stone the intruders to death. The doctor saved the situation by getting permission to tell a wonderful story. Nothing catches an Indian crowd like the promise of a story. Their curiosity was aroused from the first, and soon their hearts were touched as they listened to a simple and graphic description of the death of Jesus on the cross. The stones dropped from the hands that clutched them, tears stood in many eyes, and when the speaker had finished, every copy of the Gospel which had been brought into the city from the little camp without the

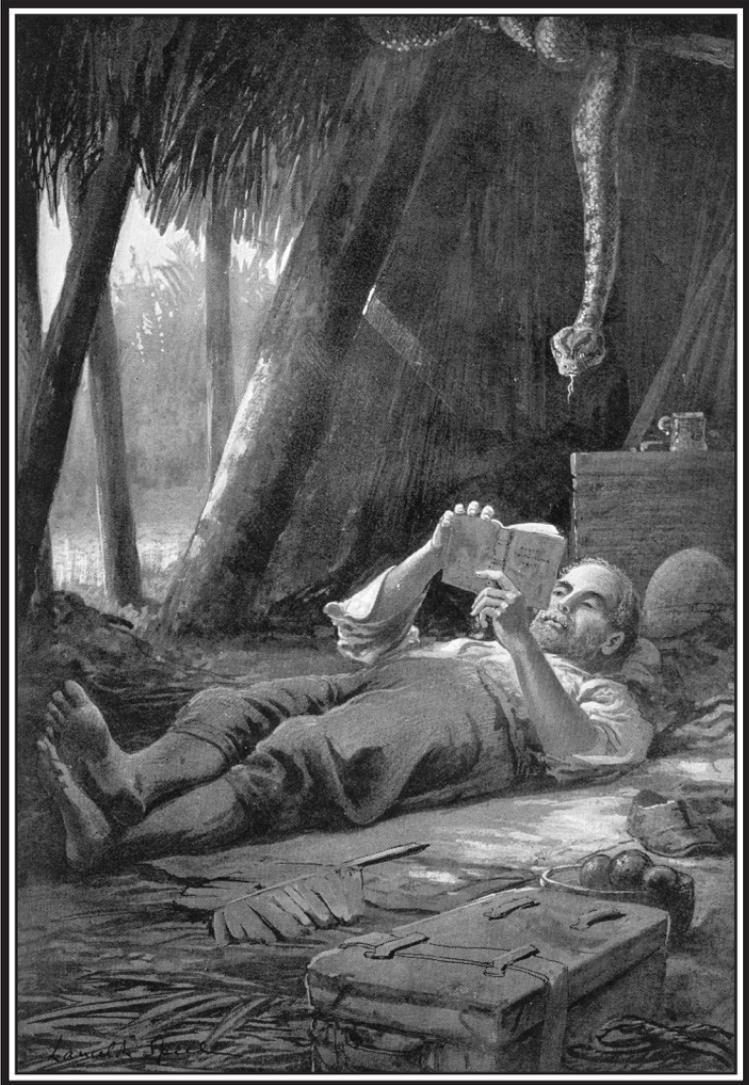
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walls, was eagerly bought up by priests as well as people.

But dangers of this sort were rare. For the most part, both in town and country, the white traveler was welcomed courteously, and gladly listened to as he stood in the busy market place or sat beside the village elders on the stone seat beneath the "Council-tree," and explained the purpose of his coming. Dangers of another kind, however, were common enough, and Dr. Chamberlain tells of some narrow escapes from serpents, tigers, and the other perils of the Indian jungle.

They were passing through the great teak forest, where the trees towered one hundred and fifty feet above their heads, when they came in sight one day of a large village in a forest clearing. As they drew near, the elders of the place came out to salute them. The doctor asked if they could give him a suitable place to pitch his tent, but they did better than that, for they gave him the free use of a newly erected shed.

Somewhat tired out with a long forenoon's march, Dr. Chamberlain lay down to rest his limbs, and took up his Greek Testament meanwhile to read a chapter, holding the book over his face as he lay stretched out on his back. By and by he let his arm fall, and suddenly became aware that a huge serpent was coiled on one of the bamboo rafters just above him, and that it had gradually been letting itself down until some four feet of its body were hanging directly over his head, while its tongue was already forked out—a sure sign that it was just about ready to strike. He says that when studying the anatomy of the human frame he had sometimes wondered whether a person lying on his back



DR. CHAMPERLAIN WAS QUITE UNAWARE THAT
A HUGE SERPENT WAS HANGING OVER HIM

could jump sideways, without first erecting himself, and that he discovered on this occasion that, with a proper incentive, the thing could be done.

Bounding from his dangerous position, he ran to the door of the shed and took from the bullock-cart which was standing there a huge iron spit five or six feet long, which was made for roasting meat in a jungle camp. With this as a spear he attacked the serpent, and was successful at his first thrust in pinning it to the rafter round which it was coiled. Holding the spit firmly in its place to prevent the struggling animal from shaking it out, though he ran the utmost risk of being struck as it shot out its fanged mouth in its efforts to reach his hand, he called loudly to his servant to bring him a bamboo cane. The cane was quickly brought, and then, still holding the spit in position with one hand, he beat the brute about the head till life was extinct. When quite sure that it was dead, he drew the spit out of the rafter and held it at arm's length on a level with his shoulder, the transfixed reptile hanging from it. He found that both the head and the tail touched the ground, thus showing that the serpent was not less than ten feet long.

Just at that moment the village watchman looked in at the door, and then passed on quickly into the village. And immediately it flashed into the doctor's mind that he had got himself into trouble, for he knew that these people worship serpents as gods. They never dared to kill one, and if they saw a stranger trying to do so, would intercede for its life.

He was still considering what to do when he saw the chief men of the village advancing, and noticed, to his surprise, that they were carrying brass trays in their

hands covered with sweetmeats, coconuts, and limes. His surprise was greater still when, as they reached this doorway in which he stood to meet them, they bowed down before him to the ground and presented their simple offerings, hailing him at the same time as the deliverer of their village. That deadly serpent, they told him, had been the terror of the place for several years. It had killed a child and several of their cattle, but they had never ventured to attack it, for they knew that if any of them did so he would be accursed. The kindred of the dead serpent would wage war upon that man and his family, until every one of them was exterminated. But their visitor had killed it without their knowledge or consent, and so they were freed from the pest of their lives, and at the same time were absolutely guiltless of its blood. Their gratitude knew no bounds. They pressed upon the doctor the fattest sheep in their flocks. They sent the village crier with his tom-tom all round the place to summon the people to come and hear the words of "the serpent-destroyer." And when Dr. Chamberlain seized the opportunity to speak to them about "that old serpent called the devil," and One who came to bruise the serpent's head, they listened to him as he had rarely been listened to before.

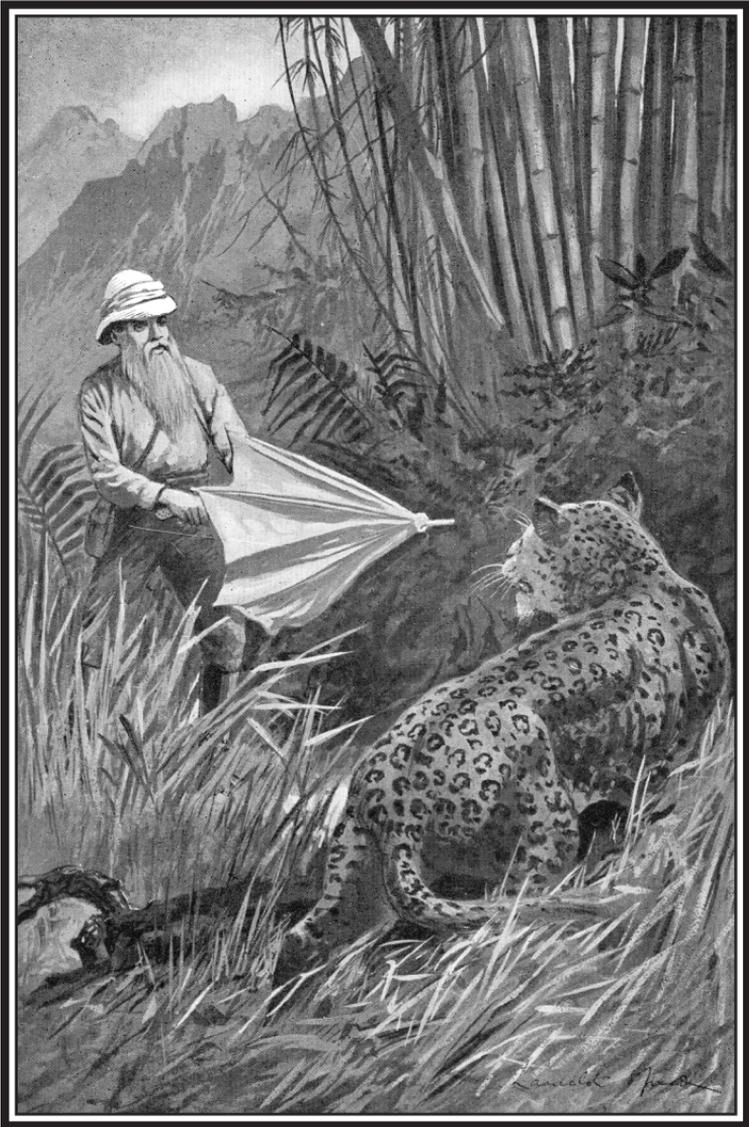
While serpents were, and still are, the most frequent danger of the traveler in the jungle, tigers were very numerous in the Telugu country at this time. Dr. Chamberlain told stories both of the striped tiger, the royal tiger as it is commonly called, and the smaller spotted variety, which is marked like a leopard, but has a tiger's claws and cannot climb trees as a leopard can. On one

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occasion, when all alone and unarmed, he met a spotted tiger face to face on a narrow mountain path, but succeeded in putting the beast to flight by suddenly opening his big white umbrella and letting out a Red Indian war-whoop which he had learned when a boy from a tribe of American Indians in Michigan. An experience with a tiger of the larger sort, however, though less dramatic, was probably a good deal more dangerous.

It was about three weeks after their narrow escape from stoning in that walled city of Hydria, and they were still in the territories of the Nina, but about one hundred miles farther north and in the midst of hill and jungle. The native assistants with the servants and bullock-carts had made an earlier start, and the doctor was riding on to overtake them when he noticed in the path, and side by side with the fresh cart tracks, the footprints of a huge tiger and its cub. He had been warned before plunging into the forest that seven people had recently been killed in this very neighborhood by man-eating tigers; and it seemed evident that this tiger was following the carts with murderous intent. It is not the way of a tiger to attack a group of travelers. It watches and waits until one of them falls behind or gets detached from the rest, and then it makes its spring. Dr. Chamberlain realized the situation at once. The little caravan was safe so long as all kept together, but if any one lagged behind the others, or stopped to quench his thirst at the wayside stream, the tiger would be on him in a moment.

Pulling out a loaded fourteen-inch Navy revolver, the only weapon he carried with him in his expeditions



**ATTACKED BY A TIGER,
WITH NO WEAPON BUT AN UMBRELLA**

Dr. Chamberlain came face to face with a spotted tiger in a lonely mountain path, he had no weapon, but emitting a Red Indian war-whoop and suddenly putting up his umbrella, he put the animal to flight.

through the jungle, and dashing his spurs into his pony, he galloped on through the forest to warn those ahead. As he flew onwards his eye was on the path, and always he saw the cart tracks and the footprints of the tiger side by side. A deadly fear took hold of him that he might be too late. But suddenly there came a turn in the road, and there, not far in front, were the two carts and their attendants moving slowly and peacefully forward. And now the doctor noticed that the tiger tracks were gone. He had seen them last at the very corner round which the carts came into sight. Hearing the sharp tattoo of the pony's hoofs coming up behind, the tiger must have leaped into the bushes at that very point. Probably it was only a few feet from the horseman as he whisked past. But either his sudden appearance on his galloping steed gave it a fright, or else his motion was too rapid to offer the chance of a successful spring.

Not the least of the difficulties of travel in the wild parts of India is caused by the tropical floods. On one occasion Dr. Chamberlain and his little band were swept bodily down a river, usually fordable, but swollen now by recent rains. For a moment or two the doctor and his pony were submerged, but ultimately the whole company managed to swim or scramble to safety to the opposite bank.

But it was a flood on the great Godavery river and its affluents that caused the worst predicament of all. By that time they had reached the extreme point of the expedition, up among the mountain Gonds, and had turned to the southeast to make the return journey by a different route. At a certain point they found that the steamer on which

they had counted had broken down in attempting to stem the furious current, and that there was nothing for it but to march through seventy-five miles of a jungly, fever-haunted swamp in order to reach another steamer lower down. Bullock-carts were of no use, but by the aid of a hookam or firman from Nizam himself which the doctor had got hold of, he succeeded in obtaining a large body of bearers from a native deputy-governor. These men, however, though promised threefold wages, were most unwilling to accompany him, for with the country in flood the jungle becomes a place of special dangers; and it was only by much flourishing of the aforesaid Navy pistol, though without any intention of using it, that the doctor could make his men march at all or keep them from deserting.

But by and by an unforeseen trouble emerged. The constant dripping rain, the steamy heat, the jungle fever, the prowling tigers had all been taken into account. What had not been realized was the exceptional violence of the floods. And so one evening, when they came to a little tributary of the Godavery, which must be crossed if they were to reach a place of safety for the night, they found that the backwater of the main stream, rushing up this channel, had made a passage absolutely impossible.

For a time they were almost at their wit's end, for it would have been almost as much as their lives were worth to spend the night in the midst of the swamp, and it was too late now to get back to the place from which they had started that morning. But guidance came in answer to prayer. Dr. Chamberlain tells us that all at once he seemed to hear a voice saying, "Turn to the left to the

Godavery, and you will find rescue." And though the native guides assured him that to do so would only be a foolish waste of time and strength, as the Godavery was now a swirling flood three miles across, and no boat or raft could possibly be got within a distance of many miles, he made his men turn sharp to the left and march in the direction of the Godavery bank. To his great delight, and to the astonishment of the natives, the first thing they saw as they emerged from the bushes was a large flat boat, just at their feet, fastened to a tree on the shore.

The boatmen told them that early that morning their cables had snapped, and they had been carried away by the flood from a mooring station higher upstream and on the British side of the river. To this precise spot they had been swept, they could not tell how. But to Dr. Chamberlain and his four native evangelists it seemed clear that God had sent this boat expressly for their deliverance. They pitched their tent on the broad deck and kindled a large fire on the shore to keep wild beasts away. And though the tigers scented them, and could be heard growling and snarling in the bushes that fringed the bank, the night was passed in comparative comfort and safety. Next day they floated down the stream towards the steamer that was to carry them southwards.

And so ended the more adventurous part of this long missionary journey through the country of the Telugus.

NOTES AND AUTHORITIES: The material for this chapter is derived from Dr. Chamberlain's two books already referred to, *The Cobra's Den* and *In the Tiger Jungle*, both published by Messrs. Oliphant, Anderson, and Ferrier.