

A decorative border in blue ink surrounds the text. It features a repeating geometric pattern of squares and rectangles, with ornate floral and scrollwork designs at the corners and midpoints of the sides.

**THE STORY**  
OF THE  
**AUSTRALIAN INLAND MISSION**



**“For Christ and the Continent”**

# THE AUSTRALIAN INLAND MISSION.

## 1.—ITS CRADLE.

As long ago as the middle of last century, a devout lady in Scotland was thinking of the destitute religious condition of the out-back settlers of the Colony of South Australia.

In 1853, this lady, Mrs. Smith, of Dunesk, left a legacy of a block of land, the revenue from which was to be devoted to provide religious ordinances for these settlers. For nearly 40 years, knowledge of this legacy was lost. A minister of the South Australian Church was prospecting in the rich quarry of an Assembly Blue Book and discovered it.

The money had accumulated considerably, and after some years of negotiating and arranging, a settlement was reached, whereby the Church was to appoint an itinerating minister and supervise his work in a chosen area.

In 1895 the Rev. Robert Mitchell, then of Port Augusta, inaugurated the "Smith of Dunesk Mission," with Beltana as its centre, about 350 miles north of Adelaide. Mr. Mitchell had three patrols for his itinerating ministry.

There was the long round, which involved a journey of 600 miles, and occupied a month. The second patrol took the nearer places, and required ten days to a fortnight. The third took the navvies' camps and villages along the railway from Hawker to Hergott (now Marree), a distance of 150 miles.

Services were held sometimes in places where the message had not been heard for 10, 15 or even 20 years. Miss Mitchell—not yet 19 years of age—accompanied her father, and her co-operation proved of inestimable value.

A portable organ was taken with them, and was a source of much pleasure to the lonely Inland dwellers. Mr. Mitchell also carried a well-stocked medicine chest and forceps, and ministered healing to the body as well as comfort to the soul.

Along with his personal effects, Mr. Mitchell had as much literature as he could conveniently carry, and distributed it to eager readers along his routes. Thus this ministry in the inland of Australia gave character and direction to the work of the Australian Inland Mission. It has developed and enlarged those ideas of Mr. Mitchell's.

Others followed Mr. Mitchell and went farther afield. Among these were the Rev. F. W. Rolland (now Principal of Geelong College), who was the means of establishing in the Inland the work of deaconess nurses, and the Rev. John

Flynn, who also visited the Northern Territory, and whose report to the Assembly was the inspiration of the A.I.M. Mr. Flynn has been superintendent of the Australian Inland Mission since its inception.

Mr. Rolland first interested some of his own friends with a view to securing the presence of a nurse or a deaconess nurse for work in the Inland, beyond the immediate call of the doctor.

There was an eager and generous response, and at Oodnadatta, at the railway terminus, 688 miles north of Adelaide, the healing ministry for the bodies of the Inland dwellers was inaugurated by the coming of a fully-qualified nurse.

She realised that a hospital was needed, for the only available place in which to nurse patients was a primitive boarding house, and, following quickly upon the appointment of a nurse, came the erection of a Nursing Home or Hostel, which was opened at Oodnadatta in 1911.

This has been a blessing to a sparsely-populated country for a radius of 400 miles in all directions. The Oodnadatta Hostel was taken over by the A.I.M. in 1912.

Such were the beginnings. The seed was planted by a godly woman in Scotland; it has grown into a tree with wide-spreading branches, which are stretching out through the whole continent.

## 2.—WHAT THE A.I.M. STANDS FOR.

“For Christ and the Continent.”

In the year 1912, the Presbyterian Church of Australia made a great venture. It established two-thirds of Australia as a special missionary area, and founded the A.I.M.

On the fringes of the Eastern States, in Central Australia, in the Northern Territory and in the North-West, there are some 200,000 men and women (mostly men).

They are the pioneers who discover the land and reveal its riches. In their interests the A.I.M. was established. There are all sorts and conditions of men amongst them—a number of average folk such as may be found anywhere; some College or University men; men who have travelled far and could not rest; others born on the land who knew and wished for no other life; some from the Old Land, well born; others, again, who had no education and were unable even to sign their own names; men chivalrous and cheerful in spite of loneliness and ill-luck; some almost unapproachable because of the years spent alone; others eager for companionship of any kind; some lonely and introspective, to whom a Padre's visit meant an opportunity of discussing

many well-thought-out problems—often religious ones—by the camp fire; others who had lost heart in their work and faith in a Saviour.

It was these men whom the Church had upon its heart and conscience; men who thought the Church had forgotten them.

The A.I.M., within its vast province, has changed all that. For all these years it has given to the bush folk to feel the warmth and the friendliness and the security of the religion of the Good Samaritan, so that its representatives are everywhere heartily welcomed.

## THREE DEPARTMENTS OF WORK.

### (1)—LITERATURE.

The work and its character to-day arose from the peculiar needs of the Inland men and women and children, and from the broadmindedness and vision of its representatives. Nearly all the folks in the Inland are readers. One tells how she had been down to reading through the advertisements when a merciful parcel of books arrived.

“But,” said her companion, a young man, “there is a lower stage than that, when you are down to reading the labels on jam tins!”

The A.I.M. has changed this, too! No more jam-tin labels! Nor are old, coverless magazines or war-time magazines sent out, or books minus a few pages at the beginning or the end. The A.I.M. representatives carried with them books and magazines of the best, with the result that the dwellers in the Inland expect the best literature, “and know a good thing when they see it,” and surely have a right to expect it, since they are so shut off from what town dwellers regard as necessities.

The book work has become quite a feature of the A.I.M. In the various States a band of devoted women assemble every week and assort (alas! sometimes there is much sorting to be done), and select and make into suitable parcels books and magazines which have come to hand from the friends of the Inland folks. Parcels are despatched to the Inland centres, and thence distributed to shearing sheds, sheep and cattle stations, along the East-West railway, and to police camps and telegraph linesmen in Central, North and West Australia. The Hostels are also distributing centres.

Where there are children, school books are sent, and for lonely women there is the provision of the Mail-bag League, whereby friendly fellowship is established between the bush folk and their more favoured sisters in the more settled areas.

## (2)—THE HOSPITALS.

Each year since 1912 the A.I.M. has shown a record of increasing service for those who live on the frontiers of settlement in our vast continent. It cares not only for the intellectual, but also for the physical and spiritual well-being of our isolated citizens.

It has established fully-equipped Inland hospitals at the following strategic points:—Oodnadatta and Beltana (S.A.), Marranboy and Victoria River (N.T.), Port Hedland and Hall's Creek (W.A.), and Birdsville (Q.), and is represented by a patrol nurse in the district round Innamincka (S.A.). Alice Springs (C.A.), Marble Bar and Lake Grace (W.A.) are the latest additions to the A.I.M. responsibilities, and several other bush centres are patiently waiting for a hostel.

The words spoken by Rev. R. Mitchell at the opening of the Oodnadatta Hostel in 1911 tell of the spirit and quality of this work for the Inland folk:—"In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, the great Healer and Redeemer of men . . . I declare this medical hostel open. . . This building is dedicated to suffering humanity and to Him Who took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses. Nurse Bett is Sister-in-charge of the Hostel. She is also a fully-qualified deaconess of the Presbyterian Church, and will exercise her high office in the interests of all, without preference for nationality or creed. . . . I trust every person entering this medical home will go out cured of his infirmity and be blessed in soul as in body."

## (3)—A PATROL OF MINISTERS.

All the A.I.M. representatives go to their work as Christ's messengers. Their presence with the bush folk is itself "the implicit Gospel," as someone has called it. They are there, the comrades of the bush folk, under the constraint of the love of Christ. They share their lonely vigils; they hear the long pent-up story of many an exile, and give to them friendship and a new grip upon life and the things that matter. They carry with them the assurance of the Gospel of the second chance, and have persuaded many a man to make a fresh start, and to begin, this time, with God.

For within it all are the Saviour-work and the comradeship of Jesus Christ, which are for healing and comfort and hope.

## 3.—ASPECTS OF HOSPITAL LIFE.

### (a)—The Healing Ministry.

Various duties fall to the lot of an A.I.M. nurse. An Inland Mission Hostel can be a very busy place, even with

no patients in residence. There is always the every-day round of duties to be attended to; work which has had to stand aside during a rush of nursing has to be overtaken; dressings and lotions have to be prepared for future use. Besides these, there is the repairing of sheets, towels, pillow slips, gowns, etc. Requests for advice or medicine by post have to be answered; out-patients have to be treated or visited in their own homes, and there are the hundred and one interruptions that affect every household. House work, washing and cooking, and, in some Hostels, bread-making, are part of the ordinary routine.

A good deal of dispensing is also necessary, and the nurses are proud of being able to perform painless teeth extractions!

Calls sometimes reach the nurses from long distances—a broken limb has to be set, and a long ride must be taken on horseback to reach the patient; or a mother's and a baby's life must be fought for in a primitive bush hut, with, perhaps, the other children ill with fever at the same time.

One of the Sisters was sent for in haste, 58 miles to a case of poisoning, and a whole day's journey by buggy over rough tracks had to be made, without even a halt for a midday meal. After the patient was relieved, there was the long, tedious journey back to the little Hostel, this time with another patient to be cared for. Meantime, the work had been carried on single-handed by the other Sister, who had to be prepared for any emergency.

The Brisbane Home, which was transformed from a hotel into a Hostel, was opened at Birdsville in September, 1923. From then until the beginning of July, 1924, the attendances of out-patients numbered 2000.

Dust and flies cause much eye trouble in some parts of the Inland, especially among the children, and the Nurses, by constant and careful treatment, are seeking to prevent serious eye trouble later on.

The bushmen greatly appreciate having a "Home" to which they can go when ill with fever. Even if an attack only lasts two or three days, they are sometimes too ill to make a cup of tea for themselves, and a man who has been ill with fever never forgets that he has been waited on, and his food cooked for him, when he was unable to prepare it for himself.

Others have not known the comfort of a bed or the luxury of sheets for many a long day. One old bushman had been for so many years accustomed to his swag that he found a bed uncomfortable, and, wrapping himself in his blankets, he lay on the floor beside the bed!

Some of the out-patients at the Hostels are aborigines. They feel the cold keenly, and sit close to their fires, with the

result that their arms and legs are sometimes burnt. Occasionally, too, an epidemic of measles or influenza breaks out among them, and in their fever they rush to the nearest water-hole to seek relief. Limbs are broken in fights, and other ailments have to be attended to.

### (b)—The Social Aspect.

The Hostels stand for social service as well as for the healing of the body. All who come—and they are many—know that a welcome awaits them, and a cup of tea. Books and magazines are in the Hostels, and a parcel or sackful is packed for anyone returning to a camp or station.

Hospitals 300 or 400 miles from the railway or coast must be provisioned months ahead. No heavy transport can be done during the "Wet" (from October to February or March) in the Territory or Kimberley district, and, even with careful thinking and planning, provisions sometimes fail. Storms on the coast may cause delay to steamers; the teams do not arrive when expected, and emergency rations have had to be used. In such cases, it is often difficult to provide suitable food for patients.

Most Hostels suffer, too, from shortage of water. Marranboy has iron tanks, but the water supply is not always sufficient. At Oodnadatta, the water for the Hostel is laid on from an artesian bore, and comes hot from the taps. At Birdsville, the drought was so prolonged one year that water became scarce, and had all to be boiled; and at Hall's Creek, during the exceptionally long, hot summer of 1923, everything was parched and dry, and the garden quite bare. "Tommy," the black boy, had as much as he could do, with his other work, to carry water up the steep hill from the well, for washing and household purposes. Scarcity of water in hot weather, and in a hospital, is no light trial.

### (c)—The Spiritual Side.

In addition to nursing and social duties, there is, in some Hostels, a Sabbath School to prepare for, and a Sunday evening service.

In most cases, the nurses are completely cut off from any Sunday services, except those held by themselves. Is it difficult for us to realise the spiritual loneliness felt in some of the most remote hospitals? "We had no Communion Service during the whole time we were away, and it was so difficult to maintain our own spiritual life," said a returned A.I.M. Sister. "We are downright lonely for Christian fellowship," wrote another. "On Sunday we usually play all the sacred music on the gramophone in the morning, and have our singing of hymns in the evening. Each morning, after break-

fast, we have our little family worship, taking it in turns to read and pray."

The spiritual atmosphere is different from that in our large cities, where one can attend service and keep in touch with church life. "North of Alice Springs there is no Sunday"—so runs the local proverb. A man arrived at a small township to attend to some business, and came along to the Hostel for some books. He had forgotten it was Sunday, and his business had to wait. And the Hostel proved a good place in which to wait. There is little to mark the Sabbath in the bush, except that in some places less work is done. In others it is the day kept for sport.

Our nurses go forth seeking to uphold the honour of the Church, and are often weighed down by the feeling that, after all, perhaps their influence does not count for much in such circumstances. Does it count? A man came to an A.I.M. minister, asking for baptism. On being questioned by the minister, he said that he had been watching the lives of the nurses, with the result that he wished to be baptised into the Church.

Are we asking too much from our nurses in the Hostels? What do they say themselves? "Our work in the Inland has been more than worth while." Are we upholding them in prayer? Again, what do they say? "We are grateful to all who remember us in prayer, for, oh! we do need it."

"Quite recently a poor old man died in this Hostel, twelve hours after admission. Though he had been in the district for many years, nobody knew a living soul belonging to him. How sad we felt, while we ministered to him, as, with the passing of midnight, his soul was released! In the great stillness of the 'Never-Never' moonlit night, as we wrapped his now lifeless form in his blanket, and sewed it up in his bush rug—his only coffin—we thanked our loving Heavenly Father for such a Mission as the A.I.M., and for the high privilege bestowed on us in having been called by Him into its service."

### 4.—NURSING WITHOUT A HOSPITAL.

Nursing without a hospital may be simple enough in any city where private homes are fitted up with telephones, electric light, and where hot and cold water is laid on throughout the house, but nursing without a hospital or a ward, with the nearest doctor 500 miles away, and no telegraph or railway within 400 miles, is a different matter. Drugs must be ordered four or five months in advance, as all goods come up three or four hundred miles from the railway by camel team. Camels cannot travel in wet country, so time must be allowed for delay in transit.

A few months ago, during the heaviest epidemic of sickness which this district has ever known, the supply of medicines was soon exhausted. Patent medicines were used till they, too, failed. Then homely cough remedies were prepared, and proved once more that faith is a strong element in effecting a cure.

On another occasion, a patient, on fluid diet, craved for lemons and oranges. A message was sent to the nearest store, 250 miles away. None were obtainable there, and the order was sent on 400 miles further south. Five weeks elapsed before the patient received the fruit by parcel post!

In a hospital or nursing home, the most suitable room is secured for the patient—one with plenty of light, plenty of fresh air, and one as quiet as possible. It is not so in a private house, where there is very little room to spare, and where sickness upsets all the household arrangements. The nurse has to make the best of whatever accommodation is given her. If the patient be one of the men from the men's "quarters," other men have to sleep there also, or sleep out under the open sky. In summer, it is the custom to do so, but in winter the nights are cold and frosty. There is no fireplace to warm or prepare food for the patient. How many nurses have tried to make broth or prepare a hot drink over a fire of sticks stuck in an old can? The men light the fire, and it flares a few feet in the breeze, and then, when the wood burns down, the billy or the saucepan must be balanced on the sticks. All goes well for a time, until the broth is ready to be carried to the patient, when a stick breaks, and "over goes the soup," and a fresh start must be made. Perhaps next time a "willy willy" or a gust of wind comes along, and the dust gets into everything.

Another difficulty is how to reach the nurse when an emergency arises. On one occasion a man was thrown from his horse, and brought into the head station in the early morning. The Sister was at another station, over 100 miles away. Two men left at 5 a.m., and travelled all day, over very rough country, to reach her. They arrived at 5 p.m., and set out at 5.30 to bring her to the sufferer. It was 2 p.m. next day when the party returned, so that two and a half days were lost in travelling.

At times, patients who are convalescent are still needing much care and careful dieting, when a messenger arrives for the nurse to go to another patient, and it is hard to know, which is the more urgent case to treat; whereas in a nursing home all the patients could be treated with less effort and greater benefit to all concerned.

There are few children in most Inland places, but bush babies are just as precious and lovable as city babies, and it would mean much to mothers of little children if they knew

there was a Home where trained help was always available in time of illness. Even in cases of serious illness or accidents, that will happen wherever there are children, the "out-back" mother can only turn up a medical book for guidance; and, with the only nursing Sister 100 or 200 miles away, the delay of getting to her may be serious.

The nurses in an Inland community bring with them a new atmosphere. One of the A.I.M. Sisters arrived unexpectedly, towards the end of December, at a sheep run, very far out in the back country. While attending to one sick man, another man came up and said, "Well, I'm glad to see you here for Christmas, Sister." In answer to the Sister's "Why?" he replied, "Oh, it will be much quieter here, now you have come; there won't be so much drinking."

It is difficult to realise why the presence of one woman passing in and out of the men's quarters could have so marked an effect, but a woman's presence recalls memories of home, and a mother's influence, and helps to uplift. How can men break off bad habits and "make good" when there is nothing to lift them up, but very much to keep them down?

## 5.—EDUCATION IN THE INLAND.

Education—or the lack of it—is one of the great problems of the Inland. At Oodnadatta, the terminus of the South Australian railway line, there is a State school, and again at Alice Springs, 300 miles further north, there is a State school, with a teacher in charge of the pupils. **In between there is no school.**

If parents living east or west of Alice Springs wish their children to have other than a State school education, and send them to Adelaide, it means good-bye to the children till their schooldays are over, for no school holiday is long enough for the children to go home and return to school! The journey from Oodnadatta to Alice Springs must be made by camel mail or private buggy and horses—a long, tedious and expensive journey. The alternative is to secure a tutor or governess who will face the long journey and the exile, and in a few cases this has been done. Recently one or two hire motors have been available, and in time will improve conditions.

Failing this, the mother must teach her own children, having had perhaps a State school education herself, years before, much of which has been forgotten. School books may be scarce; the mother's time is sadly interrupted with household duties—bread-baking, cooking, sewing, goat-milking, and, in some cases, keeping the station books for her husband, who has had less education than herself. What chance have the children to learn book lore?

An essay on "My Ambition" was set for some Inland

children, and the highest ambition given was to be a donkey-driver or a buckjumper, or to work on a station.

Some parents cannot read or write. One woman, self-taught, is now trying to teach what she learnt to her children. All honour to such pioneer women! A few of the men cannot read or sign their own names, and are content to remain as they are. Some girls of 15 or 16 cannot read or write. There are children growing up who have never seen another white woman except their mother. Other children have only seen their own white brothers and sisters, and in their education they miss the spirit of friendly rivalry which comes from intercourse with children of their own age, and the competition which games bring. Is it possible for children to be educated under these conditions? Here is one answer:—

A smart young Lancer, in barracks in London, wooed and married a refined young woman of his acquaintance. His period of service ending, they came out to Australia, and a relative in the bush provided the first work. Later on, a position on the Overland Telegraph Line, in the Postal Department, was secured, and the parents, with their small son, moved into the tiny village, with its telegraph station, and years of steady saving enabled them to secure a few horses and cattle. By this time a third child, a daughter, was of school age, but no school had been held in that township for years. There were now sufficient children to justify a school, and volunteers were called for. A woman of mature age and true spirit answered the call, and, leaving home and friends, travelled 1000 miles inland to teach the children of that little school. Later on still, the family set off further north, to make more money in mining, and now a bush home stands, for the first time in history, 65 miles nearer the frontier than ever before. A letter from one of the girls, who had only had two years' schooling, was written to a friend down south. On this letter being shown to the principal of a large private school in Melbourne, she gladly acknowledged that it was as well written and expressed as any letter written by a girl of 15 or 16 in her own college.

One or two schemes to further Inland education have been proposed, but, so far, it has not been possible to carry them out.

Some of the residents in the outlying district of Carnarvon asked our first A.I.M. representative to remain and start a Presbyterian boarding school, promising to support it financially.

Another suggestion was that there should be a Home or boarding-house at Oodnadatta, for girls and boys, in charge of a Christian matron. The children would attend the State school, be nursed at the Hostel if ill, and be

taught some handicraft which would be of use or interest later on. Meantime, the atmosphere of the Home would be such as would influence the children for good. So far, there are too many difficulties in the way of this scheme being carried out.

But, while we think of parts of the Inland as lacking much in the way of education, we must remember the many men who live and work there who have received a first-class education. Some are "younger sons," who have come out from the Old Land to seek a fortune. Others graduated from college and the University. Some are steady, well-intentioned, and easy to become acquainted with. Others have been for years in the bush, in mining camps or in pearling centres, away from the company of men brought up as they were, and habits are hard to change. Many have seen active service. Some are in Government positions. Others are "on the road" with travelling cattle for perhaps six or twelve months.

Through its book work, the A.I.M. gets into touch with many of these, and, as long as one can read, education is continued. "Except a living man, there is nothing more wonderful than a book." Men who care for the classics have revelled in the books that have been sent to them. Those who delight in biography, travel or science, and who, because of their roving life, have been cut off from such things for years, have had their love of literature satisfied.

The Victorian Education Department has sent in a supply of bound volumes of the School Papers, and these are read as eagerly by the adults as by the Inland children. Where it is possible, school books are posted to mothers to help them in the teaching of their children. A more wholesome atmosphere has been created through the literature sent out. The strain on the nerves is lessened—men and women have other things than themselves and their work to think about—and future generations will benefit. "No man can be called friendless when he has God and the companionship of good books."

"Many of your books have passed through this camp," writes one man, "and it is the pleasant hours that they have brought with them that prompts me to send this letter in appreciation. I have been here about 18 months now, and know what the isolation of the Never-Never is. At the time of writing, our last letters and papers received from civilisation are three and a half months old! Let Mr. Suburbia think of this when he grumbles at not finding the morning paper on the lawn." A cheque for £5/5/- towards the A.I.M. accompanied the letter.

#### 6.—A PADRE'S PATROL: PAST AND PRESENT.

"Here, there and everywhere" might almost be the motto of A.I.M. Padres. In season and out of season, they travel

and preach the Gospel wherever there is an opportunity. One of the Padres arrived at a station where the owner was a self-made man. He explained that he was the A.I.M. representative, and the station-owner called the hands together, and addressed them somewhat in this fashion:—"Well, chaps, the parson's here, and he's going to do some Bible-punching to-night, and I should like youse all to be there to hear him. Yer knows I ain't of his religion, being a Roman Catholic; but I intends to be there, and if I can, so can the rest of youse. So, now, see that youse all roll up and give him a good show." They did roll up, and the Padre said that he never had a more attentive audience.

At another centre, where he had gone for a fortnight's visit, intending to hold services on the Sundays, to his surprise, the inhabitants invited him to give two more services on a week-night during each of the two weeks. "We don't get a parson along so very often," they urged, "so we mean to make the most of him whilst he is here." And the week-night services proved to be as well attended, and the audience as enthusiastic, as on the Sundays.

Creeds do not count for much away out in the inland parts of Australia, and people of all shades of belief attend the meetings held by a minister, without regard to the Church he represents. He is a Padre, and is going to preach—to give them something they have not had for months or years—and that is enough for them. None but those who live there and those who have laboured there know just what the visit of a Padre really means. He is the connecting link with the civilisation they have almost forgotten, and his visit breaks the monotony of their existence. "He himself is esteemed for his personal worth, rather than for the institute he represents. He is the distributor of current literature to the news-hungry, a friend to all generally, and the solemniser of religious services, as opportunity or as necessity occasions; but his first qualification is that he is a man."

When Sister Bett was appointed Matron to the first A.I.M. Hostel, at Oodnadatta, in 1912, she realised that more than a nursing home was needed in this vast district, which was seemingly forgotten by the Church. A man was required to undertake the spiritual side of the work, to visit the men in their camps, and to travel with the Gospel message north and south. And so our first Missioner, who had already spent two years in the Beltana district, was appointed to Oodnadatta and Beyond—Beyond being as far north as Tennant's Creek, a parish about 750 miles from north to south, and 250 from east to west. This meant facing 124 miles of uninhabited country with camels and a black boy. "What firm are you travelling for? Aren't you a commercial traveller?" The people, so long neglected by the Church, could not under-

stand a man going out to these distant places without some real business at the back of him. Little wonder they had forgotten that the first business of life is the cure of souls.

Our Padre has many opportunities of personal talks on religion. Perhaps he arrives at a camp late in the evening, after a long, weary day in a car, over rough, waterless tracks, or a still longer day on the back of a jogging camel, over stony plains, or across seemingly endless sandhills. The easiest thing to do is to boil the quart pot, unload the camels, and turn in. "But what a man does for the love of God he does differently," and the Padre's business is to get into touch with the men, whom he may never meet again. So, though spiritually and physically tired, he must somehow deliver his message. Perhaps in a song round the camp fire, before turning in; perhaps through sympathy shown in a talk with a man who discusses his future with the Padre, the opportunity comes.

Very often, during the small hours of the morning, when sleep would have been welcome, men who had had much time to think of their past life opened their hearts to the Padre. One who had been unsettled by agnostic literature talked for several hours, and the Padre was able, "not of himself," to restore to that man the confidence he once had in his Bible.

At a mining camp, the Padre was voted to the chair at a meeting held to consider the necessity of sinking a well for a permanent water supply! Outside working hours, men would quietly slip along to have a talk with the Padre, for here was a man who was really interested in them.

Mr. Rolland, to whom the A.I.M. owes so much, and who first suggested a deaconess nurse for the Inland, spoke of the sense of isolation that is felt by many bushmen. There were times, especially in sickness, when one might be hundreds of miles from a doctor, and not know what was the matter, when this sense of loneliness became a kind of melancholia, and was apt to upset the balance of the mind.

One summer night a Padre spent at an old-fashioned, thatched house, near a creek. A big hill at one side sheltered the home. It was a hot, airless night; no moon was showing, but the stars shone brilliantly out of a clear sky. On the verandah was a litter of bushman's tools. Beside the open door a lamp burned, and in the doorway stood the preacher, his coat off, his sleeves rolled up, as he spoke to his audience of three—father, mother and grown-up son. It was a most sacred service, long remembered.

Another service was held in a shed of saplings, with a row of boxes and kerosene cases for seats. The lamp was acetylene, and the audience—fourteen this time—were miners. One of them made his camp fire just outside the

shed, cooked his flap-jacks and his chops while the preacher read the Scripture and prayed; then boiled his quart pot and had his tea while he listened to the preacher telling the old, old story.

Here is a sample of a Padre's itinerary and experiences:—  
“Getting an early start from Oodnadatta, after many delays, on Monday, I managed to cover 32 miles. I was cordially welcomed to the camp at nightfall, and had tea in a hut occupied by an old man, his dogs, cats, fowls and galah. Tuesday I set out with a buckboard and a pair of horses, and visited a station 17 miles away. Next day I went to a well, seven miles out, where there was a mother and eight children. None of the children have had any education, except a few days that I have given them. I baptised seven of them last visit, and this time gave them an address on the raising of Jairus' daughter. They listened most attentively, and the tears were in their eyes when I finished. When our little service was over, they wanted more Bible stories, and, as I told them of David and Goliath, Samuel, and the Wise Men from the East and the Shepherds at Christ's birth, they listened with intense interest all through, and did not want to go to bed when the time came. The mother told me afterwards it was one of the happiest nights they had spent.

“On Friday afternoon I rode out on my camel to an artesian boring party's camp. I could not hold service, as the men were working till 9 o'clock, but had a long personal talk with one of the young fellows, in whose tent I camped for the night. We talked till nearly 2 a.m. about the best things, having read a chapter of Scripture together earlier.

“As to my work this last year of wandering, it can be summed up in a few words. As far as health and travelling conditions were concerned, it was the worst and most difficult round of visits. But as far as work, it was undoubtedly the best and most heartening of all my periods of work.

“It is most fascinating employment for one's talents, this A.I.M. work, and the satisfaction of having been the instrument of God's Holy Spirit in the doing of His work is more abundant compensation for the seeming hardship and loneliness.

“It's all so unconventional and natural. A man in ordinary conversation raises a difficulty, and then for an hour, or even six hours, you talk over the difficulty with him, discover a solution, and at the end of the conversation find that he has not in the least resented what under other circumstances he would have called your 'preaching' at him.”

### 7.—A PADRE'S PATROL: THE FUTURE.

In the early years of the A.I.M. the Padre procured a camel team for his long Inland journey. He was himself in

charge of the team, and took with him a black boy. The black boy was familiar with all the bush tracks, helped with the loading and unloading, mustered the camels in the morning from their over-night wandering; for food, made the camp fire and boiled the “quart pots.” He was also an intermediary with the wild tribes through whose areas the Padre might be travelling.

But camels are out of date for patrol work. Their rate of progress—on an average about 15 miles a day—is too slow in these days of motors and aeroplanes. They are not easy beasts to manage; even bushmen who have travelled with them have declined to undertake the responsibility of managing a camel team. The strain upon one's patience and endurance is too great, and “one cannot make friends with a camel.”

In the great heat of an Australian midsummer, camel travelling is very exhausting to men unaccustomed to the work, and, added to the other disadvantages, there is the utter loneliness of travelling mile after mile and day after day, with only a black boy for company. “Camels are slow and sure,” says one who knows—“90 per cent. slow!”

The area of the A.I.M. is 2,000,000 square miles, and it has never yet been covered by our Padres. It was possible in Central Australia to visit many of the isolated homesteads only once or twice a year at the most, and for some years this district has had no minister.

How is the work of the Padres in this vast area to be overtaken? Are they still to continue on their lonely “treks,” without the inspiration which comes from the company of one in complete sympathy with their work and aspirations, or to share the hardships of the road and the anxieties and sorrows of the Inland folk?

The Inland folk are scattered over this wide area in little townships, at lonely police and telegraph stations, in small mining camps, on sheep and cattle stations, while many are “bushmen” or drovers, on the road for eight or twelve months at a time. These are the Padre's “parishioners”—a needy people who have learnt to welcome the A.I.M. representatives in the home or by the wayside camp or in the shearing shed. But he can see them far too rarely, and he is on occasions teacher and doctor as well as minister of the Gospel.

It is borne in upon the A.I.M. that it must needs enable the Padre to multiply his opportunities of service. Hence has come the idea of the motor patrol. It is intended that the Padre shall have with him a companion who is a skilled mechanic, or a doctor or a dentist.

He will be a welcome comrade so long as his skill is consecrated to the service of Jesus Christ. He, too, will be a messenger of the Gospel, and, besides providing comradeship

for the Padre, will bring his expert knowledge to the service of the people, who otherwise would have to depend on crazy makeshifts or travel hundreds of miles for help.

Together these servants of Christ will visit through their Parish for nine months of the year. In the summer months they will return to headquarters for repair, refit and recuperation. It is thus hoped to enable the A.I.M. workers better to endure the rigours of Inland service and to overtake work that has been impossible in the past.

A rough estimate sets down the cost per annum of each motor patrol at £1500. It is hoped to cover the whole of the A.I.M. Parish by four such patrols, together with two settled ministers—one at Carnarvon, Western Australia, and one at Cloncurry, Queensland.

These patrols would probably be geographically distributed as follows:—One to cover the Gulf country, a second to serve Central Australia, a third in North-West of Western Australia, and a fourth in Northern Australia.

Further developments are sure to come. Wireless and aeroplanes will be brought into the service of the A.I.M., and will provide richer opportunities for those who love the people of the Inland of Australia.

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“ There are glorious years lying ahead of you if you choose to make them glorious. God's in His heaven still. So forward, brave hearts. To what adventures I cannot tell, but I know that your God is watching to see whether you are adventurous. I know that the great partnership is only a first step, but I do not know what are to be the next and the next. The partnership is but a tool ; what are you to do with it ? ”

From “ Courage,” by J. M. Barrie.