

*Flying Visit: A Tour of the C.M.S. Front in Africa and the Near East, Harold G Anderson, London, 1946*

Uganda and Rwanda

Ng'ara, June 20, 1944. I left Nairobi yesterday evening after a final very interesting interview with the educational advisor whom we share with other missions in East Africa. He had much to say about the new Mass Education plans, to which the Government have committed themselves (and us) in the immediate future. Already some of our missionary educationists have been working on simple primers adapted for its purpose, but it is not going to be easy to get volunteer teachers who will be essential if literacy on any really wide scale is to be created. National feeling has hardly reached the point in Africa which has made such schemes so successful in China and India – for the average African the Government is a mysterious organisation which in some way atones for the taxation it levies by paying fat wages for services rendered. Issues such as 'no taxation without representation' are but faint glimmerings beyond the horizon.

The train climbed the tortuous way over the mountains which separate Nairobi from the Great Rift Valley to the west, and the only change since my previous journey in the opposite direction was that as we descended into the valley we passed through mile upon mile of locust swarms which are threatening the whole food production of the country.

We climbed to over 9000 feet before dropping down again on to the great Ugandan plateau with its relatively close cultivation. Two cars met us in Tororo to take us first to a big C.M.S. educational centre thirty-five miles away for breakfast and a look around. Another forty miles brought us to one of the out-station dispensaries of Ng'ora Hospital, set in a neat little compound with church and school all working alongside each other, and co-operating very happily.

We found our woman doctor hard at work wither team of dressers, on her weekly visit, and everything seemed to be running like clockwork at the little school and in the church, where a little crowd of 'learners' had just finished a religious instruction class. They looked more interested than many cinema crowds in England. We are obviously giving people here what they want.

We covered the remaining seventeen miles to the hospital itself in good time for lunch, and found as our fellow-guests a government doctor and nurse who, it seems, had had instructions from headquarters to facilitate my visit to the district in every way possible. They seemed on the pleasantness of terms with our missionaries and there was much co-operation in both directions.

Round the great rounded granite outcrop at Ng'ora lie ranged in a great horseshow a spread of trees and lawns and buildings where thirty years before there was just bush. Boys' and girls' primary schools, a secondary school, and a teacher training college together with the pro-cathedral and the hospital make up a little Christian outpost which serves the needs of an area of over 500 square miles.

Climate has demanded a high price in sickness from our missionaries here, and the achievement, viewed only in material terms of buildings, or X-ray plant, or the best operating theatre in this part of Africa, is a fine monument to effort unceasing year in and year out. Many of the more recent buildings are the token of the Government's appreciation of the quality of the work being done.

I think what most impressed the newcomer is the fact that all that exists is looked upon as a mere first stepping stone to a plan far grander and more comprehensive than what has already been achieved. In a greater and lesser degree I think the apt remark about all mission stations I have visited would be "Here is not routine but life".

I have spent the last twenty-four hours at our children's leper home in Kumi, twelve miles away from Ng'ora. At this and the adjoining adult settlement at Ongino, more than a thousand lepers, including the uninfected children of lepers, are cared for. The work receives substantial grants towards building and maintenance from the Mission to Lepers, the B.E.L.R.A. and the native administration and is managed by two C.M.S. sisters. The whole institution buzzes with activity; most of the lepers become self-supporting on their little farms very soon after admission; the helpless cases and the children have to be otherwise provided for. Two of the African workers have been decorated by the Government, one of them twice. Vigorous Scout and Guide work is done. The whole place is spotlessly clean and tidy. The recovery rate is well up to the average. There is a constant stream of visitors, as the authorities regard it as somewhat of a show institution. Here is leprosy with its sting removed.

Buwalasi, June 23<sup>rd</sup>, To-day bags have to be packed again and I have another journey to make; this time to our teacher-training college and divinity school at Buwalasi, on the lovely wooded foothills of Mount Elgon about 5000 feet up. We did the forty odd miles, including a stop to have a look at one of the Ng'ora Hospital dispensaries, by about ten o'clock, in time for a meeting with the Bishop on the Upper Nile, the mission secretary, and a local government medical officer to discuss better integration of the work between the Church and the government medical services. Apparently wherever I have gone in East Africa the government officers have had instructions to help me in every way possible.

The country was lovely though rather dry. It is one of the most thickly populated parts of the whole Protectorate; in spite of well-cultivated land, semi-famine conditions prevailed and we passed crowds at various centres receiving relief.

Before going down to speak at the weekly missionaries' meeting at the provincial capital, Mbale, the Bishop took me round the fine new training college buildings which lie near his house, and I had a chance of meeting most of the staff and students – a very fine body of men. The high spot I think is the chapel, a perfect, simple, lovely place, with two beautiful stained-glass windows, one representing Worship, typified by Balthazar, and the other Service, represented by Canon Apolo, the famous Muganda missionary to the Pygmies.

While there I had a chance of going over the government hospital and meeting a number of our African ex-students and wives, and also of seeing our central schools. The district includes forty C.M.S. schools and 450 African churches all at present supervised by our missionary!

Kampala, June 24<sup>th</sup>. Another day's travelling, with a picnic breakfast on the punt ferry which took our car across the valley papyrus swamp dividing the Upper Nile from the Uganda Diocese. Soon after this boundary is passed the country changes more and more from the flat plain of the north to the little hills and cultivated valleys of the south.

We were met at Iganga Maternity Centre by the medical superintendent of our great hospital at Mengo and the head of the maternity training. After looking over the beautifully-kept centre we met our

missionaries in charge of the adjoining girls' school and teacher training school before pushing on for lunch at Jinja with the superintendent of our work in that district; and afterwards I crossed the Victoria Nile for the second time, this time not by aeroplane but by car. The river before it narrows at Ripon Falls looks much like a bit of the Trossachs in Scotland.

Two maternity centres were visited, one almost a small hospital. At each the staff and building were spotlessly clean, and everything neat and in good order, so it was obviously not a case of last-minute window-dressing.

At one of the centres the local chief had sent his representative to greet me; our mission secretary tell me that on instructions from England the Government have notified all chiefs and officials concerned to give me every facility, and my way has certainly been smooth.

Our car arrived at Kampala, that African city set like Rome on its several hills, at about five o'clock, and it was not very long before we reached Namirembe Hill, our great C.M.S. station with its many medical and educational and residential buildings, capped at its summit by a magnificent cathedral church built to a somewhat Byzantine model and towering over the whole countryside.

As we passed the hospital we found the road lined on both sides by the nurses and midwives of the famous hospital and maternity training school who gave us a great welcome. The car stopped and I was introduced to the staff before going on to the mission secretary's house where I am staying. I got a warm but unofficial welcome from the African equivalent of a pair of kookaburras who were making their comments from a tree just outside my window.

One little point of African psychology, equally evident in West Africa as East, was instanced on the roads today. People, whether on foot or on bicycle, were all travelling in groups. In church the late comer will make a bee-line for the full pew rather than for the empty. Community seems for the African to be instinctive.

This morning was spent in going over our C.M.S. hospital and the maternity training school attached to it. Marvels have been done with the scanty funds available, but a lot of rebuilding and re-equipping remains to be done if the health of the missionary staff is not to be frittered away on unessential effort. No praise could be high enough for the services rendered; the institution is the very shrine of both the nursing and midwifery services of the country, and past traditions are being steadily improved upon. It is in this training function that the future of the hospital lies, and the Government is most ready to promise to leave us a clear field *as long as we do not lower our standard*. They recognise the character training which makes our nursing and midwifery graduates not only efficient but reliable and concerned for the patients whom they treat. It has been a great thrill to meet these graduates in all sorts of responsible positions.

The hospital was full but not overcrowded, and this in contrast to the government hospital with double the number of beds but so crowded out that as many patients were sleeping on the floor as on the beds. I went over this government hospital in the afternoon and in spite of the gross overcrowding in it one envied its immensely better facilities. The war alone is delaying expansion into new buildings with at least four times the accommodation of the present temporary ones. My visit was rather cut short because of a tea invitation to the royal palace. The King, or Kabaka as he is called, turned out to be a very pleasant

intelligent young man of nineteen, speaking quite perfect English, of country tastes but interested in a variety of things. What I had to say on China and Japan seemed to interest him most.

I was taken off to see the royal mausoleum after tea – a huge African hut where his three immediate predecessors are buried. Two royal ‘widows’ were on guard. There are ten of them who take it in turns to be in attendance on the spirits of the dead kings. When true widows are not available, others from the royal clan are appointed. They all live in a sort of African Hampton Court round the tomb. At the entrance are kept the ceremonial drums, each of which is beaten on appropriate occasions, and each has its own name and is credited almost with its own personality.

Tomorrow I have to start off on a trip to Toro and Ruanda of about one thousand odd miles.

Kabarole, June 28<sup>th</sup>. I have travelled about two hundred miles to-day through most picturesque and often very wild country, made up of hill bush gradually giving way to open grass country, with valleys choked by thick forest as we approached Mount Ruwenzori. Almost all the Africans we passed were carrying spears or other weapons, but the only wildlife that we saw was a mongoose and some monkeys, though at one point in the road there were recent elephant droppings. The Africans in this country are often very good looking, with delicate hands and feet, fine features and straight noses and stately carriage. How one longs that the art of writing had come to the people even a thousand years ago, so that some account of African history could have been preserved.

We got there in time for tea, and then I went round our hospital with the sister-in-charge. The doctor was away on military service, but had just been released on government request, and is on his way back again. In the meantime, the government doctor, who is most friendly and helpful, calls in whenever required. The African staff are many of them very senior and practically efficient whatever they lack in theoretical training. One male orderly has given over forty years’ service. One interesting patient used to be one of H M Stanley’s servants, perhaps the sole survivor of his entourage.

The hospital grows all its own food and keeps a staff of women gardeners who do all the necessary cultivation. It is simply built but very well planned; it has a well-equipped operating theatre, and before the doctor joined up it had a most impressive total of major operations and its mighty beds were often insufficient for the crowd of in-patients who came to it. The work has naturally had to be cut down, but the sister-in-charge is most heroically and efficiently keeping things going. There were three out-stations before the war, but they have had to be closed until the missionary staff situation can be restored. The whole work has a flavour about it which is most attractive, and one feels that here sick *men and women* are being treated, and not mere diseases.

June 29<sup>th</sup>. A bit of an earthquake last night, but no harm done – we are within a few miles of an extinct volcano crater.

After ward prayers this morning, taken by the African staff, I had a visit from the King of Toro. He had been educated at Makerere College, and had been to England and spoke good English. He was exceedingly anxious for a doctor to be stationed here again and for our work to expand, and he said he would be willing to give bursaries to Toro girls to go to Mengo to get training. I pressed him for a promise that he would get his chit to build dispensaries for us to staff – he pressed me for a promise that we would provide the staff – all something of a game of ping-pong!

Then followed a visit to the government hospital and a very pleasant time with the English doctor there who had been most friendly and co-operative. He had many good things to say of our C.M.S. sister here who had been keeping things going since the doctor left.

After tea, we motored out five miles past another couple of craters to one of our schools run somewhat on public school lines, and situated with an adjoin teacher-training college in rather wild country nearer the Ruwenzori Range – they had lion and buffalo through their grounds recently.

The school was developed largely by an ex-naval commander with a flair for a number of things. He had built, for example, the pipe organ in the school chapel, apart from the actual pipes. He had fitted up a turbine at a nearby waterfall to provide the school with electric light; the kitchen and other offices were dotted with cunning contrivances of his own invention and construction. Finally, he had hit on the happy idea of a school uniform of shirt and grey kilts with a goatskin sporran, which was most effective to look at. Cricket and soccer were going on in the playing fields as we arrived.

Africa looks such an empty place, whether from air or from rail or road, and yet one is constantly coming across such institutions as this (most of the education here has been entrusted to missions by the Government) or mission or government hospitals and dispensaries set down, apparently, at the back of beyond, and nevertheless as a rule full to bursting. Moreover, one soon loses one's first impression of a never ending succession of black people, and realizes that Africa is peopled by literally many hundreds of nations speaking their own languages, and with their own customs and social organisation and physical characteristics.

Kabale, June 30<sup>th</sup>. Just before I left Toro this morning, the local African pastor came in to appeal for more medical help, and I parried as gently as possible by asking for more help from the church for out medical work – a new idea to him. He was an exceptionally fine-looking man with greying hair and natural good manners. He had been as a young man one of the group who translated the Bible into the Toro language.

We passed through wilder and wilder volcano country until the road reached the rolling hills and plains of the Lake George Game Reserve. Eland, waterbuck, buffalo, and elephant all showed up, as well as a goodly collection of cranes and eagles that I had only seen in a Zoo before. It seemed a little incongruous after passing a perfectly enormous elephant a few hundred yards from the road, to see the familiar "Bus stop – by request"! The foothills of Ruwenzori and the Ankole Mountains on the other side of the game reserves were obviously the site of the old volcanoes, and in the latter mountains were some perfectly beautiful crater lakes.

We got to Mbarara, where my escort from Ruanda was to pick me up, and while waiting for him I had the chance to see something of the art and craft work being done in our schools there. What interested me most was the painting class where, in the absence of all supplies, local colouring material, material, vegetable or mineral, was being made up and used instead.

When my Ruanda missionary escort finally did turn up, it was already beginning to get dark, and the last hour of the drive had to be done in complete darkness – perhaps just as well after the riot of different kinds of scenery I had already seen that day.

Lest it may have seemed that I have been making overmuch of the C.M.S. contribution to these young natives of Africa and their young Churches and educational systems, I think it might be well to say that to

the best of my knowledge, in the over 4000 miles that I have so far travelled by road and rail in Africa, I have rarely been more than fifty miles away from a C.M.S. school or church, and often I have passed them at intervals of only a few miles. Most of this enormous growth is of the last half century, and the bulk of it is self-supporting. In this district where twenty-five years ago there were no churches, to-day there are 350, most of them with some sort of school attached – over a thousand people were confirmed on the Bishop's last visit, and numbers are steadily increasing still. We ought to have heard more of these mass movements in Africa.

July 1<sup>st</sup>. Today I spent looking over what remains of the big hospital that was once here, and the leper settlement six miles away. The latter occupies an island in the lovely Lake of Bunyoni, which has resulted from the blocking of a river in prehistoric times by a stream of lava which now forms the causeway for the road into Belgian Ruanda. The settlement is run by a solitary woman worker who lives on the island, with the part-time help of a missionary doctor, whose home is on another nearby island. The place is more or less self-running with its own chief and African administration, schools and hospital, etc., but, as everywhere else, the key person is a missionary with a gift for this special type of work and responsibility. Would-be martyrs, do not apply; you'll probably make a mess of a job which above all demands a lively humanity, a good sense of humour and the right 'flair'.

The hospital at Kabale is now functioning, with the exception of one well-equipped little block of sixteen beds, as a big boys' secondary school. It was the centre from which the vast C.M.S. medical mission system of Ruanda was launched and where the early medical assistants were trained. Medical missions have been an agency chiefly responsible in Ruanda for the growth of the Church.

Shyira, July 9<sup>th</sup>. These last two days have felt a bit floaty, thanks perhaps to a febrile cold resulting from the appalling dust of the previous day's journey, and the nights, too, have not been easy. Yesterday morning I was asked to give a short talk in church, a huge and rather gaunt building. The place was crowded, the congregation was reverent, and the singing hearty. I found it something of a thrill to see quite a sprinkling of natives clad in skins and yet able to read and each provided with Bible, etc., so that they could follow the service by eye as well as by ear.

Two of the young African products of the revival movement who speak good English were kind enough to guide me to an evening appointment with the Secretary of Sudan who happened to be on holiday in the local hotel. An old schoolfellow of mine is Governor of the Blue Nile area, but as it is problematic whether I will be able to meet him I was very glad to have some chance of a background account of things in the Sudan from someone who has been a very good friend and kind critic of our missionaries up there.

But to return to my guides – my walk with them was very pleasant. Both of them seem to have won through to real beauty of personality and to a genuine Christian experience. One remark interested me: "We had thought of Christian morals as anything but a qualification for being a pastor or school teacher, something which was natural to missionaries but foreign to us. The revival showed us that we too could live just like that, and now we know a happiness and power we had never even thought remotely possible." I urged them to get together others who had been through the same experience to write down what had happened and let us at home get the benefit of it all.

My luck is out as far as scenery goes – it is the dry season and everything is surmounted by a fine dust haze. Actually Ruanda is one of the chief beauty spots of Africa, a sort of minor Switzerland, but with heights not reaching to snow level. The journey, however, was interesting enough, two thirds of it was a crazy series of hairpin bends winding up and down steep mountainsides – one pass at over 8000 feet gave a wonderful view of the Kivu Plain, named after Lake Kivu, lying to its westward. Kivu Plain is a south-west extension of the Rift Valley, and its floor is dotted by a series of old craters; from the pass we could just make out also the outlines of three volcanoes rising out of the plain – all at present quiet though some of their more distant neighbours are active. In the bamboo forest of the third of these, Mt Sabino, is the famous gorilla sanctuary.

Both the Uganda and Ruanda Customs were very kind, and we got to Shyra in good time to see this Christian community with its hospital and schools set on a mountain 1000 feet above the plateau. At its foot we passed thousands of people coming away from the hospital where they had been having anti-dysentery injections, and further along the road other thousands were lining up for their famine rations, for the Government had asked the hospital to be the district centre of distribution.

I had to-day my first sight of the Batutsi, the aristocrats and former rulers of the country. They are a tall, very handsome people with the features of an ancient Pharaoh; their hair, which is halfway between the Negro and European type, is a very gracefully arranged in sweeping curves. A Batutsi holds the unofficial world's record for the high jump, well over seven feet. They are cattle owning people, and like the Fulani in Northern Nigeria, are thought by some to be the descendants of the Hykos or Shepherd Kings of ancient Egypt. Relationships between our missionaries and the Belgian Government seem to be growing steadily more friendly.

Kigeme, July 5<sup>th</sup>. My febrile cold turns out to be after all an attack of malignant malaria presumably caught in Kampala, which was suffering from an epidemic, affecting even many older foreigners who had never before had it, as well as the Africans. I have had a couple of injections and am feeling well on the road to fitness again, though I must confess that yesterday afternoon's incredible whirligig of a journey through a country which seemed to have set when the earth's surface was boiling, was not easy. These very trifling hardships give one some idea of what the early missionaries and travellers went through, knowing little about the proper treatment of malaria and plodding along through country which can be trying enough by car or even a train. Going as fast as was safe it took us more than eight hours to do 120 miles.

We had some African Christians with us, and were sent on their way by a group of their friends singing *God be with you*. When we got near our destination I heard them praying and found they were returning thanks for being kept safe on a very dangerous journey. Here and there we stopped to greet other Christians and it was most delightful to see the tremendous warmth of their greetings. They are still a small and often persecuted part of the Ruanda people – a modern parallel, perhaps, to the Christian Church at the end of the first century.

My day in bed has ended with a very entertaining time with a bunch of Batutsi children, who came in to sing and dance and do their stunts. Two of them were only about twelve or thirteen, but very nearly six feet, and the others proportionately tall for their ages.

Ibuye, July 6<sup>th</sup>. I was well enough to make the sixty-five-mile trip here, and as usual, had a great send-off. Among the crowd was a Batwa, a man of a pygmy tribe which is probably aboriginal to the country. They are all potters by trade, and at the same time hereditary jesters to all the chiefs, to whom (as to anybody else) they are allowed to be as rude as they please.

This is such a country of hills that people are all grouped in 'hills' rather than in districts for government purposes. Ibuye is such a hill, with our station set at the top of it. In a way it was the high spot of my trip, for the hospital is still in the original dark and cramped native huts, while the new brick buildings are being built. The pioneer days are just over, and one thinks back to the days when our great hospital in Kampala was a similar humble little collection of huts, half a century ago. This too is planned to be a great healing centre some day.

This part of the country is called Urundi, and has in it two more of our stations which I have no time to visit. On the whole, the Africans here are a lower type, but judging by their crops seemed better off than those in Ruanda proper.

Gahini, July 7<sup>th</sup>. Another 175 miles today and none the worse. The text over my bedroom door at Ibuye was: "Step by step as thou goest thy way shall open up before thee". It has. I should rightly be on my back at the present moment wondering where to convalesce when the doctor allowed me up! Actually my malaria is licked,

The last of the Ruanda stations I am visiting, and tomorrow I have a 330-mile drive over the border and on to Kampala. It is, I think, the most beautifully placed and the most developed of them all. It lies on a hill sloping gently down to a very lovely lake.

Kampala, July 9<sup>th</sup>. Thirteen hundred miles of terrific roads, malaria, and glare, packed into less than ten days have made me quite ready to spend a quiet morning in my room in preparation for a packed programme, which still has to be got through before I leave here in five days' time for the Sudan. I do not regret the effort one bit,

The road itself is always full of interest quite apart from the scenery. Yesterday, for example, I saw a couple of small animals crossing just ahead of the car, which seemed to be as outside the ken of any local people as they are of my own patchy knowledge of natural history. I think, however, the most constant surprise is what the African gets out of his bicycle. He takes, of course, his wife; she balances without apparent effort or hold on the carrier. He also takes on his carrier bundles which quite hide him from the rear. I have seen on that long-suffering rear-carrier treadle sewing machines, bicycles, tables, wooden beds; and local folk tell me that they have often seen corpses being taken off for burial in just the same way. Motorists give cycles an even wider berth in Africa than they do in England!

July 11<sup>th</sup>. This morning I went up to see King's School, Budo, the public school of Uganda, which was founded by the C.M.S. in 1906. Neither in numbers nor buildings nor equipment does it come up to English standards, but even so the atmosphere is quite authentic, except for the fact that for some years past now the school has become co-educational. There have been some nationalistic disturbances here, chiefly at the time of the young king's coronation, but the wave now seems to have passed over. The school is built on the traditional coronation hill of the kings; the present king was himself a student there, so it is not unnatural that youngsters should feel its national appeal.

The Head confirmed what many educationalists have already told me as to the potentiality of the African to rise to the intellectual level of the European under adequate opportunities. The difficulty is that the school of African life has not reached a development which by a moral training from infancy upwards provides the character to buttress intellectual achievement. And it seems that only the Church can bring about the necessary changes, for what reforms have already been brought about are directly due to the Church. Effective public opinion to-day is church opinion.

July 13<sup>th</sup>. To-day is my last day in East Africa. To-morrow I go on to Sudan just exactly two months after leaving England. This morning began with a visit to one of our girls' schools where there had been a rather unaccountable missionary death-rate from blackwater fever. As in most such cases the difficulty was that of patient endurance in tiresome anti-malarial methods. One of the attractive features of the school was a series of model cottages, run by groups of girls in turn with the idea of teaching them dainty and efficient housekeeping. They also had a model crèche where they learnt model infant welfare methods.

Then on to lunch at the central theological and teacher-training college, which proved to be a most extensive and well-built layout. Those who are married bring their wives along with them, and there are special classes for them, to fit them to be better helpers and companions to their husbands. Nearby stands the huge parish church, every brick of which was either made, or carried, or put in place, or paid for, by the African congregation. Of course the churches in Africa, as elsewhere, are all provided by the Africans themselves, and the buildings are not consecrated by the Bishop until every penny has been paid off! Moreover the salaries of the clergy and church-workers are also met by the congregation – our Church in England seems to me to suffer by comparison.