The Island Heritage / El Patrimonio de la Isla

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THE ISLAND HERITAGE

EPISODES FROM THE MISSIONARY HISTORY OF FERNANDO POO, WEST AFRICA

A PLAY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

BY

PHIL J. FISHER.

Author of The Opening of the Door, etc.

LONDON, THE HOLBORN PUBLISHING HOUSE.

1926.

Direction, Translation, Critical Edition:
Susana Castillo-Rodríguez

Co-direction, Critical Edition:
Kerry Kautzman

islandheritage.pubpub.org
This document represents a snapshot of the critical edition of The Island Heritage in October 2022; while the transcription and the translation of the play is a static document, the annotations, seen here in the form of footnotes, are still being developed. The most recent version can be accessed online at islandheritage.pubpub.org.

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Introduction to the Critical Edition

In 1926, Philip. J. Fisher published “The Island Heritage. Episodes from the Missionary History of Fernando Poo, West Africa. A Play for Young People”. This book has remained unknown until present. There is one copy at Archives and Special Collections, SOAS Library (London),¹ and to our knowledge, it has been studied and cited only by Susana Castillo-Rodríguez (2016)². This play is of enormous interest not just for it has been mentioned above but also because:

1. It is a vivid narration of the settlement of Protestant missionaries in Clarence, based on historical facts and personal experience collected first hand by Philip. J. Fisher as he interviewed some of the protagonists in the play.

2. It is the first document with paragraph-length documented in Pichi, the Pidgin English (acrolect) originated in Clarence upon the arrival of liberated slaves who arrived with British colonizers in 1827, called Fernandinos (Sundiata 1975, 1996).

3. It adopts the format of a play, something unusual until recent years, to the point that it can be considered the first work of this genre in the Equatoguinean colonial letters.

The play tells the History of the Baptist Church work in Fernando Po and the missionaries’ vision to expand their proselytizing project in the mainland, which was achieved later on in Igumale, Nigeria. It is a piece of the British colonial archive, as we learn what was at stake on foreign policy between Spain—the official colonial power—and Great Britain regarding the African territories of Fernando Po (present day Bioko Island).

Historical facts are divided into three periods: 1) the pioneering work of the British Church in Fernando Po, when the British Government occupied the island in 1827 to be used as a base by the British for the suppression of the slave traffic. In this period missionary work was done from 1842 until 1858 when the Spanish returned to Fernando Po and brought Roman Catholic missionaries. As a result, Baptist missionaries were compelled to withdraw by the Spanish authorities who had now taken possession. 2) the work done from 1870 until 1893 when missionaries were allowed to return to Santa Isabel and were hosted by freed slaves, widows called “Mammies”—the first ones converted by the Rev. John Clarke and Dr. Prince—when in 1842 they commenced work at Clarence (later Santa Isabel, now Malabo). 3) the

¹ According to our findings, copyright last held by Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes.
life at the Mission House in 1923 at Igumale, Nigeria, amongst the Okpotos, and the work in progress by Reverend Norcross and his wife.

The Equatoguinean colonial archive from that period was composed mainly by Church reports from missionaries, travel books written by adventurers, and word list. An exceptional case is Robert Hamill Nassau’s work (1835-1921), a Presbyterian pioneer from Pennsylvania (USA) who worked in Corisco island from 1861 until 1870 and then in a mission on the Ogowe River. He wrote essays about fetishism and spirituality, tales, books about the history of the Mission and grammar books, to name a few. Nevertheless, a piece like this finding is rare because it is a play for young people, based on historical facts, and it covers almost a century of Britain missionary work in Africa and West Indian. *The Island Heritage* can be considered the first play in the Equatorial Guinea letters written in English, being *Cuando los combes luchaban* from Leoncio Evita, the first work of the Equatoguinean letters written in Spanish by an Equatoguinean. *The Island Heritage* is divided in five scenes and tells us about real stories with some imagined dialogues between characters from real life as they appeared in reports from the Primitive Methodist Missionary Society Publication found at SOAS library.³ As a literary genre, this play has a clear set of scenes, characters, annotations, notes

³ For example, parts of some extract from the Popular report of the Primitive Methodist Missionary Society. 5 vols. George Ayre. 1928-1932, The adventure of the road. IV. The Fernando Poo Mission reads:

“The island of Fernando Poo lies in the Gulf of Guinea, some twenty—five miles from the mainland. It is about twice the size for the Isle of Wright. Discovered in the fifteenth century by the Portuguese, it was acquired from them by Spain, which, however, made little or no use of it for many years. For some time, it was used as a base by the British men-o-war engaged in putting down the slave traffic. A considerable member of slaves captured in the trading ships were liberated and set ashore on the island. These were found by the pioneers of the Baptist Mission, the Rev. John Clarke and Dr. Prince, when in 1842 they commenced work at Clarence. By 1858 the Baptists had built up a church there and had carried on evangelization in the interior. In that year they were compelled to withdraw by the Spanish authorities who had now taken possession. A large proportion of the African Christians accompanied the missionaries to the mainland, where they built the town of Victoria in Cameroons.

Eleven years later (1869) the barque Elgiva touched at Fernando Poo. Both her captain and carpenter were Primitive Methodists. They found a Sunday school being conducted in the house of an old Negress, named Mammy Job. Mr. Hands, the carpenter, preached to a “splendid congregation of blacks;
Philip J. Fisher was born in Maidenhead in 1883 and died on July 6, 1961 (www.myprimitivemethodists.org.uk). Fisher studied at Hartley College, Manchester, and from 1905 onwards he worked as a chaplain. His service as chaplain is linked to the foundation of 'The United Army Board'. In 1915, 13 chaplains from the Primitive Methodist Church were assigned. Fisher left his memories from that epoch in Khaki Vignettes, a book with sketches handmade with a pencil and stories about the troops deployed during the First World War. Khaki Vignettes was published by the Primitive Methodist Publishing House, Joseph Johnson, Holborn Hall, in 1917 with the subtitle “Six Months Chaplain to the Troops in England and Fifteen Months in France.” In Khaki Vignettes there is a chapter “Cheerfulness of the lads” in which Fisher wrote: “If you, my chance reader, can gather from it some lively impression of the joys, the toils, the deeds and sufferings, the heroism and the amazing cheerfulness of the British lads in khaki—the lads from our Churches and congregations—your own lads, maybe—then I shall feel that this book, imperfect as it is, was worth the making.” Apart from this information, there is no other trace about this author or his publications.

4 We were able to document the following years and places of service: 1905 Hull VII, 1909 Docking, 1910 Tarporley, 1914 Liverpool IV, 1915 Chaplain in HM Forces, 1919 Liverpool IV, 1925 Kingston, 1930 Kingston wpc, 1933 per M Times, 1937 Middlesborough, 1940 N Shields, 1941 Crewe, 1945 Teddington, 1950 Woking.

The translation from English to Spanish has been made by Susana Castillo-Rodríguez keeping in mind the historical context, the language change and the potential reader today. Because it is a direct speech, the meaning is condensed in one or two sentences. This led to make decisions about choosing the precise words to convey the message. Therefore, I had to implement some translation strategies such as transposition (for example, adding formality or informality to the translation in the target language), modulation (changing the speaker point of view), reducing information, adding information, or adaptation, when necessary to maintain the meaning instead of doing a literal translation. In several passages when Pidgin English is spoken, the strategy we follow is to provide 1) the original Pidgin English, 2) the current Pichi translation (Pichi is the Equatoguinean Pidgin English spoken in Malabo), 3) the Spanish translation.

This is a live project. Our intention is to create an educational resource that can serve not only to study the play itself but also to learn about the missionary colonial history in West Central Africa and the West India Islands. Because African colonial history has multiple imbrications with slave trade, cocoa farming, European power relations, migration and race, this project can be instrumental to scholars, students and readers interested in this historical period, theme and region.

The ongoing second phase of this project is the English Critical Edition in which anyone with credentials will be able to add information or comments. Comments will be supervised to make sure that follow ethical principles before being posted.

In a third phase, Bocamandja, a theater company based in Malabo, adapted this play to be represented in Equatorial Guinea. A recording of the play is uploaded on the project website: islandheritage.pubpub.org

As an open resource and live project, we hope to serve and educate the community, to grow with the feedbacks from anyone who wants to collaborate and, ultimately, to put this play into young Equatoguineans hands because it belongs to their social and historical memory.

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6 The Popular report of the Primitive Methodist Missionary Society, The Adventure of the Road. Vol. 1928. Pg. 71: “The variety of tongues spoken by these different tribes obliges the use of “Kroo-English”—a kind of pidgin, which is the lingua franca of the West Coast — in the services.

Some of the characters, such as Dr. Prince and others mentioned in this play as “helpers” to the translations made by the missionaries (for the grammars and Hymnals they were preparing for their congregations), are called “linguists”: “For the better understanding of this I must observe here, that these Linguists are natives and freemen of the country, whom we hire on account of their speaking good English, during the time we remain trading on the Coast: and they are like wife Brokers between us and the black merchants.” A New Account of Some Parts of Guinea and the Slave-Trade. Captain William Snelgrave, Frank Cass and company. Ltd. 1971. First impression. 1734: 72.
Characters in the Play

SCENE I.

REV. JOS. MERRICK, Minister of Jericho Baptist Church, Jamaica.

MRS. MERRICK, his wife

REV. JOHN CLARKE Pioneer (Baptist) Missionaries to Fernando Poo, late of Jamaica.

DR. G. K. PRINCE (same above).

SCENE II.

CAPT. WM. ROBINSON. Master of the barque Elgiva.

JAMES HANDS, Ship’s Carpenter.

T. R. PRINCE, a Native Trader of Fernando Poo.

SCENE III.

REV. HENRY ROE, first P.M. Missionary to the Island.

MRS. ROE, his wife.

REV. R. W. BURNETT, colleague of Mr. ROE.

MRS. BURNETT, his wife.

WILLIE BURNETT, their infant son.

T. R. PRINCE, as in scene II.

MAMMA NICOLLS, a Native Widow.

MAMMA JOB, a Native Widow.

ROSA, Native maid to Mamma NICOLLS.

‘RIA, Native maid to Mamma NICOLLS.

SCENE IV.

REV. ROBERT FAIRLEY, Missionary at Santa Isabel.

REV. J. MARCUS BROWN, Missionary-designated to Archibong.

TIM, a Native House-boy.

YELLOW WILL, a Krooman.
SCENE V.

REV. W. NORCROSS, Missionary at Igumale, Nigeria.

MRS. NORCROSS, his wife.

JESSIE, a Native Girl.

JERRY, a Native interpreter.

NOTE: as no characters except T.R. PRINCE appear in more than one scene, the whole can be rendered by about a dozen performers, if desired, by duplication of parts. The following suggestion for distribution may be helpful:

MALE PARTS

A. MERRICK, ROE, FAIRLEY.

B. CLARKE, HANDS, BROWN.

C. DR. PRINCE, ROBINSON, BURNETT.

D. T.R. PRINCE, YELLOW WILL. (Black).

E. TIM, JERRY. (Black).

FEMALE PARTS

A. Mrs. MERRICK, Mrs. ROE.

B. Mrs. BURNETT.

C. Mamma NICOLLS. (Black).

D. Mamma JOB. (Black).

E. ROSA, JESSIE. (Black).

F. ‘RIA. (Black).

It will be noticed that Scene III is so arranged that ROSA and ‘RIA can be used for the group in the doorway. The person taking TIM and JERRY can supply a third. The child (WILLIE) merely accompanies the elder players in Scene III and is only a short time on the stage.
Introduction

Having formed the intention sometime to attempt a little play on our Mission work of Fernando Poo, I began to read and gather material, and found no lack of distinctive interest. There is the cocoa-farming, for instance, and the education struggle, and the ministry to the polyglot indentured labourers by means of the quaint Kroo-English. From the first, however, it was the historical line which fascinated me, particularly the persistence of the vision of extension to the West Coast, of which the recent advance into Okpoto is the latest fruit. But this seemed a big thing to present dramatically in a single short play. I decided at last, to attempt its presentation in five key episodes. This meant, to my regret, putting aside a good deal of material of characteristic interest, and also leaving out much of the story of noble and fruitful labour on the Island itself, particularly in respect of later years. But having chosen my theme it was necessary to be economically faithful to it. I hope this will explain what might appear to be a failure to do justice to work accomplished in Fernando Poo during the last thirty years. The full story of the Island toil and achievement is not told here, but some exposition of what our Nigerian triumphs owe to the Island initiators is attempted.

To the facts of the history I have been at pains to be as just as possible. Clarke and Prince did visit Jericho under the circumstances narrated, and Merrick and his wife did accompany them on their return to Fernando Poo, together with a number of native families. The details in Scene II follow closely the records and the evidence of the historic letters. Scene III. takes a little liberty with the accounts given by Henry Roe, for sake of dramatic effectiveness, as Mr. Burnett appears to have “tarried by the stuff” at the beach until later in the day. Thus I have but given him his Biblical portion! The dialogue in Scene IV. is of course entirely imaginary, but the facts are according to the history, and Mr. Fairley has kindly read the MS. and passed it for publication. For the final scene I have drawn on some personal letters from my friend, Mr. Norcross.

The whole play is of sufficient length to provide an evening’s programme,¹ and fairly full directions are given for the sake of those who want to do it thoroughly. But matters of costume and scenery can be quite simply devised, and if necessary one or two scenes can be abridged for shorter performance, though this should be judiciously done. Those who have attempted previous plays will know how to “make-up” the black characters. The use of old black stocking-tops, jerseys, etc., reduces the necessary use of grease-paint or burnt cork to the minimum.

The parts are best suited to young people of 16 or 17 and upwards. There are opportunities of good acting in some of the characters. Care should be taken not to burlesque the honouree native characters in Scene III. The speech is quaint, but the emotions are sacred. A portrait of

¹ According to the records, the play was shown at the Holborn Hall, Gray’s Inn Road, W.C., Saturday May 8th 1926 at 5.30 p.m. during a young people’s rally to celebrate the Primitive Methodist Church metropolitan missionary anniversary on 1926.

Primitive Methodist Church, and P. J. Fisher. Primitive Methodist Church Metropolitan Missionary Anniversary 1926. Souvenir Programme of the Young People’s Rally and Missionary Play, The Island Heritage, At the Holborn Hall, Gray’s Inn Road, W.C., Saturday May 8th 1926 At 5.30 P.m. Reading (Britain): Lord & Blandy ... Kingston, 1926.
Capt. Robinson appeared in the Liverpool Conference Handbook; others—as of Mamma Job² and T.R. Prince³—may be found in some of our missionary publications (e.g. Rev. N. Boocock’s Our Fernandian Missions⁴).

The musical prologues should be practised well; the intoned verses need clear enunciation and should not be hurried, keeping time and rhythm with the accompaniment. They are intended for a small choir, a selected portion (or a strong solo voice) taking the recitative, the rest supplying the softly-hummed accompaniment. The first programmes, giving the scene settings, is again recommended. Otherwise, a brief introductory talk explaining the historical scheme is desirable.

My grateful acknowledgements are due to a number of generous helpers—to the Rev. R. W. Burnett (the infant of Scene III) for the loan of valuable books, now out of print, by Henry Roe, some Baptist Missionary publications, the first volume of our Missionary Records, etc. and for much information; to the Rev. Fairley for the use of his scrap-books and other useful help; to the Rev. W. H. Collins, who generously handed over to me all his notebooks, and to whom I am chiefly indebted for the “principles” of Kroo-English; and once again to my ever-responsive friend Clement Gerrard for revising the musical pages.

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² See figure 1 of Mamma Job


Pronunciation and Notes

Scene I

Fernao = Fer-nah-o.

Adeyas = A-day-aHS. A name at first given to the Bubis, now regarded as incorrect.

Bubis = Boo-bees.

Ibos = Ee-boes.

Scene III

“Pass I sarbe,” i.e., “unless I serve.”


“lib,” i.e., “live.”

“so-tee-ee-eh.” This is long-drawn out. A graphic Kroo expression for “until” conveying the idea of a very long time.

“ober dey-dey,” i.e., “over there.”

“catch me house,” i.e., “arrive at my house.”

Scene IV.

Rio del Rey = Ree-o del Ray. (King’s River).

“Mr. Buckenham and the Luddingtons.” The former was buried at Calabar. Mr. and Mrs. Luddington returned to England to die from the effects of their service in Fernando Poo. Since the date of this scene the Rev. M. H. Barron and Mrs. Boocock have filled other graves.

Santa Isabel = Sant-a Is-a-bél.


Bielo = Bee-ay-lo.

Biappa = Bee-ap-pah.

Banni = Bann-ee.

Menes = May-nays. Henry Hodge Mene and his family.

Opobo = Ö-po-bo
“God-palavar” i.e., religion. (pa-lah-ver).

Scene V.

\( lh = \) eeh (“yes”).

\( Okpotos = \) Ok-po-toes.

\( Oron = \) Ö-ron

\( Efik = \) Ef-ik
Prologue to Scene I

We show you a story
To stir your remembrance,
To bring you a challenge!
Behold the beginnings:

In far-off Jamaica
The pioneers storm-driven
Narrate to old comrades
Their Island adventure.

In far-off Jamaica—
Where, freed from their slave-chains,
Dark African exiles
Speed thoughts to their homeland.

And long that the Gospel
Their own hearts rejoicing
Shall dawn on their kinsmen
And lighten their darkness.

O greet, then, with honour
These true sons of Carey
By whom God has destined
A heritage for us!
Scene I. The Baptist Pioneers

[The scene is in JOSEPH MERRICK'S manse at Jericho, Jamaica.\(^5\) Time, June 1842. Room simply furnished with chairs, a table, a picture or two on the walls, etc. Mr. and Mrs. MERRICK are just receiving as guests the Rev. JOHN CLARKE and Dr. G. K. PRINCE, at one time workers in Jamaica, but now returning from pioneer missionary labours in Fernando Poo. Dress suitable to the period. Door on Right. Fireplace occupies centre of wall at back. CLARKE and PRINCE are to Left of scene, MERRICK Left centre, and Mrs. MERRICK near door, all standing.]

CLARKE\(^6\) [looking round]: Ah, Merrick, it brings back old times to be in this house again.

MERRICK: It welcomes you very heartily, my dear Mr. Clarke, and you will have a great welcome from your old flock at the meeting to-night. Your labours here will never be forgotten.

Mrs. M.: We have been besieged with enquiries about you.

CLARKE: Thank you, thank you! God Blessed us very graciously in Jericho, my friends, and I rejoice that His blessing abides still.

Mrs. M.: Well, I must leave you for a few moments—I have duties to attend to. You can have a good talk, but leave something to tell me. I shall join you shortly.

MERRICK: As soon as you can, dear. [Mrs. M. goes out, R.] A few weeks ago we had no anticipation of this happy re-union, Doctor.

PRINCE: Nor had we. We had thought to have been in England by this time, but the more we think about it the more we see the hand of God in this matter. He knew the

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6 Clarke worked in Jamaica from 1829 till 1840 when he and G. K. Prince were sent by the Baptist Missionary Society to West Africa. They recommended establishing a mission on Fernando Po and in Cameroon rather than the Niger. Clarke and Prince visited Jamaica twice and England once in order to recruit volunteers. In 1844 Clarke returned to Fernando Po with 42 Jamaicans. However, in 1847 Clarke and the settlers returned to Jamaica. The Cameroon mission survived. (The Missionary Register for M DCCC XLIV Containing the Principal Transactions of the Various Institutions for Propagating the Gospel with the Proceedings, at large, of the Church Missionary Society, vol 32. Seeley, Jackson, and Halliday, London, 1844. pp. 22. Google book. play.google.com/books/reader?id=NcwoAAAAAAYAA-J&hl=en&pg=GBS.PP7


solicitude of His people in Jamaica for their African brothers, and designed that we should first come and tell the story of our work to them.

CLARKE [quoting quietly]:

“God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea
And rides upon the storm.”

MERRICK: Ah, yes! But come, sit down and let me hear something more of it. I am eager to have it from your lips. [They take chairs.] You were really in great peril, I believe.

CLARKE: We were safe in the Divine care, but to human sense matters were for a time very precarious. We left Fernando Poo by the barque Mary on the third of February, and all went well for a week or two, but when we got well out into the Atlantic we encountered storm after storm. Lightning struck us and carried away one of the masts, and for two days, the barque was practically a wreck, driven helplessly at the mercy of the tempest. We hailed two ships bound for England in the hope that they would take us on board, but they refused. At length with great difficulty a jury-mast was rigged, and the master, running before the wind made the port of Demerara. We could not but see in this a providential detection, and proceeding to St. Thomas we found another barque going to Jamaica, and arrived at Kingston, as you know, on the 27th of May.

MERRICK: God be praised for His preserving mercy!

PRINCE: Amen! and that all these things turn out for the furtherance of the Gospel. For our visitation of the churches here is certainly going to produce rich fruits. We have had enthusiastic meetings at Kingston, Spanish Town and Falmouth, and already some have been moved to offer their lives for service in Africa.

MERRICK: We shall have a great meeting here to-night.

CLARKE: And to-morrow we are due at Salter’s Hall, where they are most eager to receive us.

MERRICK: Much, indeed, may come of this visitation, under god. [Re-enter Mrs. M. Right.] Ah! here is my wife again. She is as impatient as I am to hear the news of Africa. [MERRICK rises as he says this and places a chair for Mrs. M., who sits.]

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9 In a meeting, assembled at Kettering, Rev. Dr. Cox looked back to the formation of the formation of the Missionary Society and reported on Clarke’s voyage. The Baptist Magazine. series IV. vol.V. Houlston and Stoneman, London, 1842.p 389-91. https://books.google.com/books?id=v-VIEAAAQAAJ&pg=PP9&dq=The+Baptist+Magazine.+series+IV.+vol.V.+Houlston+and+Stoneman,+London,+1842&source=bl&ots=ZTE4inyzNW&sig=ACfU3U3zvxxQQVhruHrXvp2Us-ku0mk8uw8&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiZirvZ66vAhXxFVkJdfLAoQ6Q6A

Mrs. M.: Indeed, I am longing to know more. You have been so much in our prayers, and Africa has become of such intense interest to us. For, you know, whatever one prays about earnestly is bound to mean increasingly more to one’s mind. After all, isn’t this our work? Over three years ago now, you remember, we in Jamaica sent a memorial to the Committee at home, urging them to mission Africa.\footnote{Englishman Thomas F. Buxton’s principles of “native agency” influenced Baptist Mission thinking. 1841 failed mission to Niger. (Ifemesia, C. C. “The ‘Civilizing’ Mission of 1841: Aspects of an Episode in Anglo-Nigerian Relations.” Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria. vol. 2, no. 3, 1962, pp. 291-310. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/41856734.}

CLARKE: Yes, we shall always be proud to remember that—and it was our own coloured folk, stirred by the Spirit of God to a passionate concern for the land from which they were unrighteously torn, who cried out for it. Let that honour be theirs, whatever the future may bring.

PRINCE: Yes, it has been born of the patriotism of the Cross! And may its portent be realised—the evangelisation of Africa by Africans!\footnote{“The recognition on the part of metropolitan abolitionists’ interests, such as Buxton’s Anti-Slavery Movement, that ‘native agency’ was the key to the success of rooting Christianity in the African soil, as a necessary means of civilizing’ the African away from trading in slaves, gave added impetus to the growing vision of sending out missionaries from the West Indies”. Las Newman. “A West Indian Contribution to Christian Mission in Africa: The career of Joseph Jackson Fuller (1845-1888)” Transformation 18/4 October 2001.}

MERRICK: Amen to that! But now to Fernando Poo. We were rather disappointed that you did not actually get to the mainland, as no doubt you were yourselves. You had always talked of the Niger.

CLARKE: Yes, it was a disappointment, but our full design proved impracticable, at least for the time. We visited and explored the Niger coast and further along to the Cameroons, and we tried to get passage up the Niger, but failed. Any hope of working up to the interior by the river seems impossible at present, and the marshy condition of the coast renders it extremely unhealthy. Altogether, the best course seemed to be to make Fernando Poo our base of operations for a commencement.

Mrs. M.: You were no doubt wisely led. And what is the Island like?

CLARKE: It is of great natural beauty; not large—only 36 miles long and an average of about 24 in breadth. Inland it is mountainous, the highest point, Clarence Peak, rising to 10,000 feet. It is well wooded, and there is good supply of spring water. The soil is fertile and the climatic conditions better in many ways than on the coast of the mainland.

Mrs. M.: And it is under British administration, isn’t it?—in spite of its foreign name?

CLARKE: Yes; it has had a changeful history. It was discovered by a Portuguese, Fernao da Po, but the Portuguese exchanged it to Spain for some other islands. The Spaniards tried to settle, but they aroused the enmity of the natives by their cruelty, until, the wells being poisoned, they fled, and for many years the Island was abandoned. But in 1827 the British Government took occupation, mainly to use it as a base for the suppres-
sion of slave ships, and to land the freed slaves from captured vessels. There is still a
British Governor, though no longer a naval station.

MERRICK: It is certainly good to be under the protection of the British flag. And what of the
people?

CLARKE: The natives are called Adeyas, or some call them Bubis. They are a simple and
good-natured tribe, of friendly disposition, but their condition is very pitiable. They
are almost naked and live in miserable huts, while their religion seems to be a kind
of devil-worship, full of the most horrible superstition. Besides the Bubis, however,
there are in Clarence, which is where our mission station is located, a number of
people from various coast tribes. Many of these were slaves, rescued by our navy
from the slave-traders. Dr. Prince made a census of their tribes last April.

PRINCE: They represent 26 different tribes from the mainland or other islands. There are
a good number of them Ibos, who belong to the Niger country, and still more are
Kroos. This is particularly interesting because we have so many of these tribes in
Jamaica. I believe at Salter's Hill alone we have about 130 of the Ibo tribe and quite a
few Kroos.

MERRICK: A most interesting link—and surely an opportunity, for if these can be won for
Christ they can become messengers to their own people on the mainland.

PRINCE: We have had our difficulties—we have even had to endure some hardship, but the
missionary counts on this. And it is worth it all to bring light to dark Africa. And oh!
the joy of the labourer's reward! We have had classes of between 60 and 70 people,
and that Sunday in November, ten months after our landing, filled our cup full. That
was a day never to be forgotten, eh, Prince?

MERRICK: Praise God! It is His seal! Oh, that Fernando Poo may become all His -- and then a
wider field! You haven't given up all hopes of the Niger, Mr. Clarke?

CLARKE: We dare not! There are people there, and all along that coast, ready for the gospel. In
one town we gathered a congregation of five hundred.

PRINCE: No, no; the continent is on our hearts and its call is ever in our ears. The Island is
itself yielding fruits—we have established a school of 70 scholars at Clarence. But
we must ever regard it also as an observation post for the dawn of opportunity on
the mainland.

CLARKE: What we want meanwhile is a small sloop or cutter: this would make it possible for
us to keep in touch with the mainland and even, perhaps, to navigate the Niger river.
We are hoping, in fact, that some vessel will be forthcoming through the Baptist Jubilee Fund.

MERRICK: That is good news. Now that the enterprise has actually started, the watchword must be “Forward!”

CLARKE: Forward it shall be, God helping us. Africa must be Christ’s. We must have more workers, and in this matter I believe Jamaica will do her part. [A pause.]

MERRICK: [rising and taking his wife’s hand, who looks up at him and rises also]: Mr. Clarke—Doctor—my wife and I have talked this over and prayed mucho about it, and we feel that the call of Africa has come to us. If more workers are needed, we are ready to go. Will you have us?

[CLARKE rises and takes MERRICK’S hand: then PRINCE also follows suit, taking Mrs. MERRICK’S hand.]

CLARKE: Joseph, I have always regarded you as my son in the Gospel. I am proud that you should be moved to this.

PRINCE: The Lord bless you, dear lady! You are doing a brave thing. But it is a great ordination. All for Africa means Africa for Christ.

CURTAIN.
Prologue to Scene II

We show you a story
to stir your remembrance,
to bring you a challenge!
Now mark the next chapter:

On board the Elgiva
Moored fast by the Island,
Three men sit in council
And write fateful letters:

The rugged sea-captain,
The carpenter-preacher,
The dark-skinned Fernandian
In one faith accordant.

They plead for the Island,
The flock long untended,
The door that stands open,
the distant horizon.

Oh, you to whose fathers
Came ringing the summons,
To-day in your hearts may
The call be re-echoed!
Scene II. The Treasure-finders

Phil J. Fisher

[The cabin of the barque Elgiva, anchored off Santa Isabel (formerly Clarence), Fernando Poo, August, 1869. Cabin table in centre, with benches. Open porthole in back scene. A chart or map pinned on wall to right of porthole. Pegs to left with oilskin coat and sou'-wester, and captain's pilot coat. Door of cabin, RIGHT. Chest or box against wall LEFT. Capt. Wm. ROBINSON is seated at table (L) in shirt-sleeves, for it is hot, writing. A knock comes at the door, which stands open.]

ROBINSON: Come in! [Enter Ship's Carpenter JAMES HANDS, followed by T.R. PRINCE, a native, in loose European dress.] Ah, it's you, James—and friend Prince, I see. [PRINCE inclines his head.] Come and sit down. It's about the mission work, I suppose. You want me to write a letter, don't you? [They sit, HANDS at back, PRINCE on R. of table.]

HANDS: Yes, Cap'n, if you would be so good, I think it would help. I have written to Brother Crook at Liverpool, as I mentioned to you, telling him about the work here, and what an opportunity there is.

ROBINSON: Yes. That's good.

HANDS: I hope he will stir up the Boundary Street Society, perhaps with the advice of Mr. Wilkinson, the minister, to take some steps in the matter. But I fear I didn't put it very well—I'm a rambling sort of hand at a letter—and I thought if you would write and explain things too, seeing we are both members there, it might have more weight. And Brother Prince, here, is willing to draw up a letter to the General Secretary at London, Mr. Antliff, and get some of the main Christian folk here to sign it; and so, going three-fold, so to say, the appeal may be surer of getting considered.

ROBINSON: I think that's not a bad idea. Let me see, now: what, roughly, did you tell Brother Cooke?

HANDS: I told him how we came here, three weeks ago, and how going on shore in the way of my work I was asked to go and see a sick man, and how I found he was a coloured man, but knew the Lord. Then how I had preached, and discovered other coloured folk who had received the Gospel. I told him a bit about what I had been able to do for the Lord whilst you were across at Bonny, Cap'n, and said I was sure we could found a society here for Primitive Methodism if the Connexion was willing to take it up.

ROBINSON: Ay, ay. Good! Didn't you tell me there used to be a Baptist mission here at one time?

HANDS: That's right, Cap'n. Brother Prince will be able to tell you about that.

PRINCE: Yes, Cap'n. Baptists came 1842 and did good work for the Lord for 16 years. Fernando Poo was under British Government then, but in 1858 the Spanish come back and
bring Roman Catholic faith, and hinder the work so bad that Baptists was have to
go. For ten years we have no missionary, no shepherd for the sheep. We shall be too
glad to have missionaries once more, and there is great deal of work to do.

[PRINCE is a trader, a native of Sierra Leone, where he received some education. He speaks
almost correct English, very different from the “pidgin” spoken by some of the later charac-
ters—unless he is speaking to some of these, when he sometimes adopts their idiom.]

ROBINSON: Yes, friend, the need is very plain. Where did the Baptists go to? Did they return
home?

PRINCE: No, suh. Mr. Saker, who was missionary here when the trouble come, went over to
mainland—to Congo country. He took all the things of the mission there.

ROBINSON: I see. They would not be likely to come back, I suppose?

PRINCE: No, suh, I not think so. We have talk about sending to Dr. Crowther, the black Bish-
op on the Niger, to ask his Church to send missionaries. But now God sent Mr. Hands
to preach to us and we have much blessing, so we like to ask his Church.

ROBINSON: What about the Spanish? I suppose there wouldn't be likelihood of trouble with
them again?

HANDS: I think not, sir, since the revolution in Spain. You see, they have ordered liberty of
worship in all Spanish dominions. And the Popish priests are not doing much here
now.

ROBINSON: That's a good thing, though I don't trust these Papists overmuch. Anyhow, I'm
glad of the work you have been able to do, James, and I earnestly hope good will
follow from it.

PRINCE: We should be glad if Mr. Hands stay and do God's work with us, Cap'n.

ROBINSON: Yes, I know, and he would be willing to do so, and I should be glad too if it could
be managed; but I dare not spare him from my ship in these troublous waters. May-
be he has already done the work God wanted him to do among you, and if I can help
in any way to further the Lord's interests here I shall feel it a privilege. It seems to
me there's a real opening for Primitive Methodism here.

HANDS: I am sure, Cap'n, that Providence has prepared the way, and if our Connexion makes
a beginning God alone knows where it may lead to.

ROBINSON: I'm of the same opinion, James. Now then, let me see. [Making notes.] I shall
explain about freedom of worship. And that some amount of English is spoken .. But
better, I think, that anyone sent here should know Spanish.

HANDS: It would give a better chance of work amongst them—and they need! We've had
several attending the meetings.

ROBINSON: Good! I'll note it. Then I'll mention the success of your work, James, and how
you would gladly continue if you might.

PRINCE: Tell them, suh, a house will be found for the missionary, and a church. We's been
making a collection for a church.
ROBINSON: Yes, I’ll say that. But books, Bibles, etc., must be sent, of course.

HANDS: School-books too, sir, because there's no schoolmaster here.

ROBINSON [still taking notes]: School-books. Right! ... And I shall point out, too, that there's a vast field for future development within reach of this Island. I have seen, myself, miles of coast across there where there is no sort of a missionary.

HANDS: Ay, sir. Give them the full view. If God blesses the work it's bound to get across the Gulf.

ROBINSON: Very good; I will put the letter together to-night, and may God further our designs! [Rises, on which others rise also.] Friend Prince, you will bring me your letter to-morrow, then all can go by the mail together. And now I must be seeing after that cargo. I'm hoping to sail in a few days.

HANDS: We are having a meeting at Mamma Job's to-night, Cap'n.

ROBINSON: All right, James. Go by all means, and the Lord bless your gathering. I'm afraid I have too much to do to-night. That is a remarkable woman—Mamma Job! Ask her to remember me in her prayers. [Walking about them to the cabin door, RIGHT.]

HANDS: I will, sir, and thank you for your help and interest.

CURTAIN as they go out.
Prologue to Scene III

We show you a story
To stir your remembrance
To bring you a challenge!
See now the call answered:

In Sant’ Isabel, lo!
A plain native dwelling
Where lives with her maidens
An African widow.

With full heart and joyous
She welcomes the strangers,
And tells how she trusted
The love of the Saviour.

And now comes that other
Dark Mother in Israel,
And blesses their coming
With prayer-fragrant fervour.

Oh, shall we not render
To God acclamation
Who gave us a treasure
So rich to inherit?
Scene III. The Inheritors

[The house of Mammy NICOLLS, on the Calle de Nicholas, Santa Isabel, February, 1870. It is a wooden house, elevated from the ground and entered by a wooden stepladder, RIGHT. Door on LEFT to inner apartment. Window at back without glass, but wooden shutters. Plain furniture: chairs round walls, small table with coloured cloth. A swiss cuckoo-clock on wall LEFT. It is 11 a.m. The party have just entered the house, Widow NICOLLS, in gay print dress and turban, having come up with them from the beach. She stands back CENTRE, by the window, manifestly excited. As she speaks she looks towards the inner door. Rev. and Mrs. HENRY ROE, Rev. and Mrs. R. W. BURNETT and little WILLIE BURNETT (2 years old) are occupying the RIGHT half of the stage, with T. R. PRINCE behind them, just as they have come in at the door, RIGHT. Mr. BURNETT has been carrying WILLIE, and sets him down as soon as the curtain rises.]

Mammy N.: ‘Ria! Rosa! [These, Mammy N.’s native maids, come running from inner room, through door LEFT. They are shy, but curious and smiling. They bob curtseys as they face the new-comers.] Set de chairs fo’ the Lor’s sarbants! [They bring chairs from around the walls and set them forward. Smiling their thanks, Mr. and Mrs. ROE sit facing front, the BURNETTS on RIGHT, facing inward. Mrs. B. takes WILLIE. PRINCE stands between these two groups towards the back. As conversation continues, Mammy N. moves about, chiefly occupying LEFT of stage. Girls retire into background, LEFT.]

ROE [wiping his face]: Ha! Quite a little climb from the shore. Well, Mrs. Nicolls, you all gave us a good welcome down there.

Mammy N: Bress de Lor’ O my soul! Dis a mighty big mussy fo’ us po’ people. De good Lor’ no forget F’nando Poo! He no forsake Him fait’ful chil’ren.

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13 For more information about Mamma Nicolls and Mamma Job, watch this short video on “The Spanish colonial power and the English missions in Fernando Poo in the late 19th century” by Jürg Schneider (minute 00:09) https://canal.uned.es/video/5b433aa3b111f0b1e8b4568

14 In the Spanish version, Mamma Nicolls and Mamma Job speeches appear as the current Pichi which is spoken in Equatorial Guinea with the Spanish translation as a footnote.

15 This whole scene is based on Roe’s narration “West African scenes” (1874) pages 18-20.

16 Roe describes Mamma Nicolls as a little taller than the average; “her colour a bright black, her hair turning grey with age and her voice deep but at times musical” (Roe, West African Scenes. 1874: 19)


18 In this historical narrative, Fisher uses a stylized literary imitation of the broken English spoken by the black characters. Looking back to the middle of the sixteen century, in the Iberian Peninsula we found Portuguese and Spanish authors that “embellished” their poems and plays with the fala de preto/habla de negros, that’s to say, the broken Spanish or broken Portuguese spoken by blacks. (John Lipski. A History of Afro-Hispanic Language. Five centuries, five continents. Cambridge University Press. 2005: 52)
ROE: It is a great joy to us to be here, Mrs. Nicolls. We believe truly that God has sent us. Our hearts burn with desire for the people of Africa, and we come gladly to spend and be spent for you.

[Mr. ROE has an exuberant manner, free gesture, rather rhetorical utterance, but he is very earnest. Mr. BURNETT is quieter, less expressive, speaking in measured voice.]

Mammy N.: Me heart berry full. Lor’ Jesus do so much fo’ me. Me lib ober dey-dey in big country. Me young gall. Bad men come, kill plenty people, take me away fo’ slabe-ship, fo’ sell me fo’ slabe. Me sad, sad, sad too much. Den de good English ship come, bring me here F’nando Poo, make me fo’ go free. Me lub de English fo’ make me free woman. Me plenty glad fo’ see you sarbants o’ Jesus. Praise de Lor’! me be berry good o’ you—do ebberry-ting fo’ sarbe you. Oh, me no fit lib pass I lub de Lor’, pass I sarbe Him!

[All this very passionately, movingly spoken. Missionaries—to whom this broken English is strange, listen very intently, with puzzled expressions, but trying to look as if they understand. Mrs. ROE really does catch the drift of it.]

Mrs. ROE: So you were actually rescued from slavery! Oh, no wonder you are thankful! We had heard that some who were freed from the slavers were amongst the Lord’s followers here. Was not Mamma Job also brought here in that way?

Mammy N.: Mammy Job, yas’m, t’ank Him name! She dun come here all same like me—she took fo’ slabe-ship.

Mrs. BURNETT: What a fine-looking old lady she is! We have heard a great deal of the good work she has done.

Mammy N.: Yas’m. praise de Lor’! Mammy Job be good, good too much!

ROE [deprecatingly]: Oh, not too much—we won’t say that!

PRINCE [interposing]: Mammy Nicolls mean, suh, she is a very good woman.

Mammy N: Yassah! Plenty good woman—good too much.

ROE [smiling]: Ah, I see! I beg your pardon.

BURNETT: She wants us to have our first meeting in her house to-night, I believe.

PRINCE: Yes, suh. From the time the church has been close’ we have many prayer meetings in Mamma Job’s house. She have much pleasure to think that you preach the Word of God there for the first time after you come.

Mrs. ROE: She is coming here presently, isn’t she? I thought I understood her to say so on the beach.

PRINCE: Yes, ma’am. She went to see a person who is sick, to take the news that you are come. She is coming here on her way for home.

ROE: That is good! [To Mammy N.] And you came to know the Lord through the Baptist missionaries, I suppose Mrs. Nicolls?
Mammy N. [*nodding and smiling*]: Yassah! Massa Clarke, he dun tell de lub ob Jesus, how He die on de cross fo' me. Ah, massa, me feel bad too much—no sabby how fo' do! But Massa Clarke he say, “Trus’ Jesus! Believe on Him name! He fit fo’ take all de bad what be inside away, make me heart white.” An’ bress de Lor’, I trus’ Him an’ He dun gib me a new heart. I lib fo’ praise Him, lib fo’ sing, me heart be gladdy too much. Den Massa Clarke say I be baptise’.

ROE [*smiling*]: That is a splendid testimony, my sister. Praise the Lord for it! [*Aside, to wife*] One will soon get to understand this quaint speech.

Mrs. BURNETT [*to BURNETT*]: Dear, do you think I might put Willie to bed? It is very hot, and I think he is tired.

BURNETT: Oh, yes, I’m sure Mrs. Nicolls will be able to oblige us.

PRINCE [*who has heard this*]: Surely, Mrs. Burnett. Mammy, the little boy very tired. Mrs. Burnett like fo’ make him lie down.

Mammy N. [*starting forward*]: Ah! de po’ deah li’l chile! [*Turning to girls*] Rosa! ‘Ria! Go fo’ make fit dat li’l bed! Make you go quick-quick! [*To Mrs. B. again, as girls go LEFT.*] Come fo’ this side, Missy Bawnett. Me put ‘um fo’ bye-bye, de bressed chile!

[Leads the way through door, LEFT, Mrs. B. following with WILLIE. As they disappear ROE rises and walks about, clasping his hands, etc. Meanwhile several natives have gathered in the doorway, R.]

ROE: Friend Burnett! to think we are actually in Africa! How I have dreamed of this day! What a call is ours! What a work to put our hands to! How I burn to be at it! To hear an African woman’s testimony to the Divine grace! To see Brother Prince here [going and clapping him on the shoulder] a trophy of the Gospel! Do you not rejoice that we have been chosen for such a work?

BURNETT [*soberly*] I am deeply sensible of the privilege, Friend Roe. I trust we and ours will be given strength to discharge our mission.

ROE [*still moving restlessly about, faces natives at door*]: Welcome, my friends! We have come to Fernando Poo to give you the good news of the Gospel. We hope soon to have the opportunity of telling the story of Jesus to you. We invite you all to come to Mamma Job’s house to-night to hear what we have to say to you in God’s name. [*To B. and Mrs. R.*] Let us sing a verse to them! [Strikes up]

“We are marching on with shield and banner bright,” [*S.S.H. 226. One verse and chorus.*]

[**Mammy N. re-enters as the verse is commenced, and beats time to the song with great delight. Mrs. R. and BURNETT stand and join in singing. As chorus concludes, there is a stir at door, RIGHT, and enter Mamma JOB, dressed similarly to Mammy NICOLLS.**]

Mamma JOB: Ah, dey you is! [*laughs musically*] Dis am de Day of Jubilee. Ebberybody glad dat de messengers ob de Gospel dun come to F’nando Poo!

Mammy N: Ah, Bessy! Praise de Lor’! I sabby fo’ true you be plenty glad dis time...
Mammy Job: Oh, yas [with a sigh of deep content] I t’ank me Fader I lib fo’ see dis day! Oh, massas an’ missy we bin pray long, long time dat de Lor’ send Him sarbants f’ Him work. De harbest be plenteous, it be all white fo’ be gadered in, but oh, dem labor’rs be few! Dis ting be de Lor’s doin’s. He sabby we pray all time, we ax in fait’ believin’, so-tee-ee-eh He send dem labor’rs! Ah, we t’ank you, we t’ank you fo’ come!

[Seeing the missionaries somewhat bewildered, PRINCE explains.]

PRINCE: Mammy Job say, God know they go on praying and believing until he send His labourers.

ROE: Indeed, Mrs. Job, God answers prayer, and we are come at His behest to do His will. Your welcome has touched all our hearts, and we are made stronger by the knowledge of your prayers. We know there is much to do, and with God’s help and your continued prayers we are resolved to attempt it, and to win Fernando Poo for Him.

Mamma Job: Yas, F’nando Poo, yas! And plenty, plenty more place in Africa no sabby de true word about Jesus. [With hands on her breast.] Me Ibo—me took for slabe, all same like Mammy Nicolls. But de English sabe me. Yas, t’ank de Lor’ fo’ de English! Me English subjec’ Massa Roe [very proudly]—me no Spanish! Ober dey-dey [pointing towards window] plenty, plenty me peoples no sabby not’ing ’bout dere Sabiour. S’pose bime-bye more missionaries come, den dey go fo’ me Ibo people—change dem hearts from bad fashion? Dat be plenty fine t’ing, Massa Bawnett!

BURNETT: We hope truly, Mrs. Job, that the work won’t end here. Nay, if God blesses our work we may even be able to send African evangelists from this Island to your people over yonder.

ROE: We dare set no bounds to God’s purposes. We claim Africa as our heritage in His name!

Mamma Job: Praise de Heabenly Father for all Him mussies! Now me go ‘bout me doin’s. You all come catch me house21 fo’ prayer-meetin’ tonight! We muss t’ank de Lor’ good fashion for dem big blessin’s dis day. Good mawnin’ and de Lor’ strenken you!

[Figure 4. House of Mamma Job. Sketched by Henry Roe.]

19 Here is another prayer from Mamma Job: “Tis dy wor (word) and I believe it Fader, honor dat wor for dy nam sake, fo dy church, and dy Son’s sake. De harbest be plenteous, but war’s de labor? It be white, all ready to be gader’d in, but labor’rs be few. And 0, my Fader, if labourer go die, de enemy say ‘ wars ‘ dar God? ’ Satan-he be glad too much; dy church go weep. To our God, we pray long, long time, for de send dy sarbants, and what we do ‘spose now he go die. 0 Lor (Lord) my Master, what we do? Dy wor stand fast for ever, and dat wor say—’ Prayer of de faith shall sabe de sick, and de Lor shall raise him up again.’ Lor dhou must sabe dy sarbant, and I believe dhou will do it, and heal him.” (Boocock, 1912: 46-47)

20 Boocock (1912) pages 32 and 33 describes Mamma Job’s service to the community, her personality and her tragic death.

[They bid her good morning, and she goes, RIGHT. During this last dialogue PRINCE has been talking apart. LEFT, with Mammy N. He now comes across to missionaries.]

PRINCE: I must go too; I have some work to do. I think you will be all right here, dear suhs. Mammy Nicolls will do all she can to make you comfortable. There is three rooms for you yourselves, and I will send you a boy for cook. And you no need to be troubled for food. I will send supply each day.

ROE: Thank you, thank you, brother Prince! We shall never forget your kindness.

BURNETT: It has been a great cheer to us. The Lord reward you, friend!

PRINCE: It is nothing, I am too glad. [To Mammy N.] You lib for take dem Mammy Job’s for prayer-meeting, Mammy?

Mammy N.: Yas, me do dat fo’ sure, Daddy Prince.

PRINCE: Then I go now. Good morning, ma’am! Good morning, suhs! I see you to-night at the meeting.

[They respond, and PRINCE goes, R. Mammy N. follows, making as if to say something further to him. Mrs. ROE goes to find Mrs. BURNETT, through door LEFT.]

ROE: Surely God has met us here! The work is His; His presence is with us. O for grace to labour for Him!

[Quotes]

“I would the precious time redeem,  
And longer live for this alone,  
To spend, and to be spent for them  
Who have not yet my Saviour known;  
Fully on these my mission prove,  
And only breathe to breathe Thy love.  
The United Methodist Hymnal #650

BURNETT [continuing]

Enlarge, inflame and fill my heart  
With boundless charity divine!  
So shall I all my strength exert,  
And love them with a love like Thine;  
And lead them to Thy open side,  
The sheep for who their shepherd died.”

[They clasp hands.]

CURTAIN.
Prologue to Scene IV

We show you a story
To stir your remembrance
To bring you a challenge!
The larger field opens.

A score and three years pass,
And now from the Island
Two seek on the morrow
A greater adventure.

From lips of the veteran
The young man unseasoned
Hears tales of the conflict
Which kindle his ardour.

For Africa’s ransom
He pledges devotion,
And braces his courage
To dare and to suffer.

Oh, hail with thanksgiving
This hour long awaited,
And spare them a tribute
Who toiled for its advent!
Scene IV. The Farther Adventure

Phil J. Fisher

[The verandah of the Mission House at Santa Isabel, December, 1893. One or two basket chairs, and a small cane table beside one of these, LEFT. On the table a basket of oranges. Background representing wall of house, with two shuttered windows—or hanging blinds. Entrance is on RIGHT. As curtain rises, Revs. ROBERT FAIRLEY and J. MARCUS BROWN—the latter lately out from England—walk on. They are dress in whites. They drop into chair, BROWN mopping his brow. FAIRLEY takes chair by the table.]

FAIRLEY: Well, that’s settled. We go by the S.S. Fernando Poo. Rather good, that! We leave Fernando Poo but Fernando Poo takes us to Rio del Rey and the doorstep of the continent. What do you say to that?

BROWN [still employing the handkerchief]: I should say it is a good augury.

FAIRLEY: I hope so, with all my heart. Warm, eh?—for December! [laughing]

BROWN [laughing in response]: It is rather warm—for an unseasoned Englander!

FAIRLEY [reaching towards basket]: Try an orange! [throwing one]. You want to come to Africa to appreciate an orange. I’ll have one myself. [Taking another.] I confess I was a bit staggered when you landed here with all that cargo, and it came home to me that I had to get you and it across to Archibong. The mission boat’s a useful little craft for yourself and a lunch-bag, but she isn’t a pantechnicon! However, Fernando Poo will see us to Rio, and if we take the boat in tow we can go up the river to Archibong in her, and after I’ve seen you settled I can return in her. So that’s another difficulty solved—though I shouldn’t wonder if there are a few more lying in ambush for us before we part company. You won’t be long finding out, my dear Brown, that difficulties fill up a good part of the missionary’s programme, and the getting over ‘em is his desperate delight.

BROWN: Yes, one rather expects that. I shall do my best.

FAIRLEY [heartily]: That I’m sure you will, my boy, and come out on top! Why, think of the story of this little island! If ever it should come to be written it will be an epic of triumph over difficulties. There was the Baptist start—and then they had to clear out. All finished, apparently—but the brave little company of black Christians carried on, until Hands found them out, and stirred up Primitive Methodism. And since Burnett and Roe came out, 23 years ago, what a tale of dogged perseverance in face of all sorts of obstacles! We’ve made but slow progress, perhaps, but what it has cost to hold our ground and gain what headway we have done, only those who have been through it can know.

BROWN: It has been a chequered history, I know. You have had such handicaps here—the uncertain attitude of a foreign government—the Roman antagonism—all that!
FAIRLEY: Yes, that accounts for a great deal. Holland banished, Welford imprisoned and banished, Nicol—our native worker—put in chains—those were some bad passages. Barleycorn\textsuperscript{22} bravely carrying on for two periods without a white missionary on the island—he and old Daddy MacFoy. Then, you know, Harvey Roe was shipwrecked on his way out and had to return—that helped to account for the island being left shepherdless the second time, Buckenham having broken down with repeated attacks of malaria.

BROWN: There are graves, too!

FAIRLEY: Yes, there are graves: Blackburn, Mrs. Maylott—and you can count Mrs. Buckenham and the Luddingtons as well, though their graves aren't actually here. These, besides the babes.... But it has been uphill all the way—no grateful relief of a sudden breakdown of barriers and a great leap forward. Every inch has been won (ha sido ganado) by hard fighting. And so I love this little island, for there's nothing so dear as what you've had to fight for.

BROWN: True! And you've had a good share in it, Mr. Fairley.

FAIRLEY: Over ten years—getting on for half the period, but not half the conflict: there are a good many more to share in that. Just take the three main centres. Santa Isabel here has been hampered all through by trouble with the authorities, and I've seen a bit of that, though not the worst, perhaps. You see, we're right under their noses here, and they have done their worst to prevent us carrying on any schools—which goes right to the root of any work of development, of course.

BROWN: The priests, I suppose, are at the bottom of that.

FAIRLEY: Partly, but partly I think they are jealous of Anglicising influences. That's been the case with some Governors, anyhow. We sent Barleycorn to Spain to learn Spanish and qualify as a teacher, you know, to meet that difficulty, but it didn't end the trouble. Then look at San Carlos—or George's Bay, as we used to call it.

BROWN: Yes, you have had something to do with that.

FAIRLEY: A bit. But Burnett and Roe spotted it from the first, and it was Maylott, who did the pioneering, and then Luddington followed him up. Theophilus Parr, too did yeoman work there—linguistic amongst the rest. Our converts there were hard won. There was stiff persecution from old King Sopo—but God broke down Sopo's heart at last. He died a Christian about two years ago, and was buried on the Mission, instead of

\textsuperscript{22} Native of Santa Isabel, was born in 1848. After his conversion in January, 1873, he was sent to San Carlos to take charge of the Day school, and assist in the mission generally. He was an interpreter both of the Spanish and Bubi languages, schoolmaster, native assistant, and ordained missionary. In 1881 he was received by the Conference in Hull as a probationer for the Ministry, and after having passed all his examinations with credit, he was placed on the list of regular ministers in 1884, his pledge dating from 1880. In order to comply with the regulations of Spain respecting the qualifications of schoolmasters, Mr. Barleycorn was sent in 1887 to the University at Barcelona, where he passed, with credit, all the necessary examinations.

General Governor authorized him to teach at the school under the condition of using Spanish as the language of instruction. He was highly respected by all his fellow-countrymen, and by Spaniards and Englishmen alike. His quiet, unassuming piety, his genuine unaffected simplicity, his transparency of character, his intelligence, his courtesy and gentlemanly demeanour, touched and won the hearts of all with whom he had been associated. (adapted from Boocock 1912: 79-80).
with his heathen fathers. And we've got one of his sons, Ben Twajo, who, one day, may do better than his father. Death took two of our most promising converts—Samuel Antliff Hooree and James Reading Bielo.

BROWN: Those providences are hard to understand.

FAIRLEY: They are. Hooree was our first Bubi convert, and I had great hopes of James.... There were attempts at further extension, too. First Luddington, then Parr and Griffiths, made great efforts to get an entry into Biappa, over on the south-east of the Island, but could not make headway with the king.

BROWN: We have never got any footing on that side.

FAIRLEY: No; and the people that way are said to be of a sturdier type, too. Apparently the old king was a bit too sturdy an obstacle. It was like trying to draw a badger. But the Bubis are not easy to rouse. Now take Banni. I know a bit about Bannie, too [chuckling]. It was Holland who prospected there first, about 188—went over two or three times. I know I went with Buckenham and William Barleycorn in ‘84. My word! we did, and had a palaver and got consent for a site for a mission house, but [laughing] it was the journey back at night that put the cap on. Our torches gave out and it rained a deluge, and for three hours we had to wait in the pitch-black forest for the moon to rise and show us our way. I remember we sang “Leader of faithful souls and Guide” to keep our courage up!

BROWN: Let me see—

“We've no abiding city here,
But seek a city out of sight;
Thither our steady course we steer,
Aspiring to the plains of light.”

Isn't that how it goes on?

FAIRLEY [delightedly]: That's right! Oh, there's a lot in it that was very appropriate. Well, we put Barleycorn at Banni for a start. Then the disturbances came at Isabel, and he had to come here, and poor Banni was left abandoned. He returned later, and then when he went to Spain young W.F. Nicol, another native, was put in charge. Jabez Bell was the first white they got. He came and took over in ‘87, and what a tale of heroic work is his! They talk about “working like a nigger”—[a laugh] that saying doesn't sort with Bell's experiences at Banni. He's had to do it all—couldn't even get any help from the people to build his church unless they were paid for it, and then it depended on their mood; the chiefs hindering as much as they could. He has tried in vain to get the sympathies of the adult population so far, but he won't give in. He is bent on laying foundations, so he has taken nearly a score of children into the Mission House, and is determined by a combination of education and industrial work—cocoa farming—to create something to build on.

BROWN: It's a wonderful story altogether.

FAIRLEY: It is a wonderful story—wonderful for the faith and persistence that have gone into the making of it.
BROWN: And not without fruit.

FAIRLEY: Thank God! no. Fernando Poo has had its trophies of grace—men like Peter Bull and William Barleycorn and the Menes, and John Petty Sogo; women like Mamma Job, Mamma Macaulay and others.

BROWN: Surely work with such a history can never die. It will go on, in spite of all that wars against it. And now that we have got a footing on the mainland as well -.

FAIRLEY [breaking in]: Ah! and that's part of the history, Brown, painted in the same colours. It belongs to the heritage of the Island. The Baptists, Hands, and Robinson, Burnett and Roe—all saw that vision. Buckenham, going across to Bonny to meet his wife in '84, had a trip to Opobo in the Ibo country, and was impressed with its possibilities. When he got back here—I was on the Island at the time—we conferred and reported home about it. Well, you know how the tale goes on: the Burnettts, father and son, were sent there two years later, found the country upset and King Ja-Ja turned unfriendly, so had to come away. In '91 Holland paid another visit, but got no further. Then last year I was given a sort of general commission. I was stationed to Africa! Think of that!—a continental circuit with a vengeance. I went across to Opobo but found were now forestalled—the Anglicans had got established. So then I turned east and fixed on Rio del Rey, and we proceeded to settle there. But, as you know, after three months it was declared German territory, so we had to move, selecting Archibong as our spot. There we have placed our native worker, Mr. Knox—Mrs. Knox goes with us to-morrow—and there you take on, my boy. The ground has been prepared; it's your honour to put in the foundations and see the structure rise.

BROWN: Yes, it is a great honour; I feel that. I hope I shall have grace and health and strength to discharge it.

FAIRLEY: Well my boy, it will be a lonely job for you. Your nearest white neighbour, a Swede, is 30 miles away—no other Englishman for 70 miles. But “put a cheerful courage on.” I shan't forget you, and distance can't divide spirit. If in need, let me know, and I will come to you if at all possible. [They rise, and BROWN grips FAIRLEY'S hand.]

TIM: Massa, I come for tell you tiffin be fit.

FAIRLEY: Ah, tea's ready. Right you are, Tim!

TIM: Please, Massa, Yellow Will come to you for palaver.

FAIRLEY: Yellow Will? Very well, send him up. [TIM goes.] This is one of the Kroo-boys I've engaged for the boat to-morrow. Something gone wrong, I suppose. [Enter YELLOW WILL] Well, what palaver, Yellow Will?

YELLOW WILL: Please, Massa, me no fit for go for dem big water in dem small boat. S'pose tornado go catch we, I go die.

FAIRLEY: Suppose you go die; it be all same for all other man, and Massa too go die.
YELLOW WILL: Massa, dat no be all same. Massa sabby God-palaver good, and s'pose he go
die he go for up [with gesture]. Me no sabby God-palaver, and s'pose I go die, me no
go for down! [pointing again]. [BROWN is visibly amused. FAIRLEY listens gravely.]

FAIRLEY: Very well. I make for get other person. [YELLOW WILL goes, relieved. When he is
gone both break into laughter.]

FAIRLEY: Well, he's got a good idea of the difference between up and down, anyhow! Howev-
er, it happens there are two boys who want to go with us, so we can fill the gap.

BROWN: It was very funny.

FAIRLEY: Oh, these Kroomen are only like overgrown children. Well, come along; we'll have
that cup of tea. Then there will be a few things to see to. “To-morrow to fresh woods
and pastures new.” [They go off, RIGHT.]

CURTAIN.
Prologue to Scene V

We show you a story
To stir your remembrance,
To bring you a challenge!
And this is our climax:

To-day in Okpoto,
The heart of Nigeria,
Two brave hearts are toiling
In hope of the future.

Far, Far from their kindred,
In lone isolation,
They build the foundations
With manifold labour.

And watching the sunset
They’re praying and yearning
That we may remember
And aid their endeavours.

Oh, let not this pleading
Go by you unanswered,
But meeting the challenge.
Praise God for the story!
Scene V. The Fulfilling of the Dream

Phil J. Fisher

[Under a tree near the temporary Mission House, Igumale, Nigeria, September, 1925. It is late afternoon. Mrs. NORCROSS sits in a chair, sewing, LEFT. JESSIE, native girl, sits on ground beside her, threading needles. Mrs. NORCROSS pauses in her work and looks up, her eyes fixed on distance, and sighs. Then she speaks aloud.]

Mrs. NORCROSS: Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday—four days to the mail! … That needle ready, Jessie?

JESSIE: Ih, Ma. [offering it]. [Enter Mr. NORCROSS, RIGHT. He is dressed in shirt and trousers, with sun helmet.]


Mrs. N.: [looking at hers]: Half-past five! So it is! Jessie, run and put the kettle on. I will come in a few minutes.

JESSIE: Ih, Ma. [Gets up and goes, RIGHT.]

NORCROSS [stretches his arms and yawns]: O-ho-ho! Well, there’s another day’s work done—outside, at any rate. I must do a bit more at the translation to-night. [Throws himself down on ground beside Mrs. N.] Lonely, old girl?

Mrs. N.: [evasively]: Oh, there’s plenty to do.

NORCROSS [laughing]: We certainly don’t lack for that! Now, what have I done to-day? [Ticking off on his fingers] Sawed up and planed various lengths of plank and scantling; prepared a hundredweight or two of cement (and wondered how far I could make it go!); attended to a dozen sick folk; sold two primers to aspiring scholars; mended the water-tank of a promising leak; settled two heated palavers; captured … let me see [consults note-book] seven new words and one fresh idiom, and …. oh, I forget the rest! What is your husband, Mrs. Norcross?

Mrs. N.: Oh, he’s a pretty useful and frightfully busy man—and the husband of a fairly useful wife, who is also sometimes busy!

NORCROSS: Thank you, kindly, ma’am, and I beg your pardon! …. Well, it’s all got to be done, and it’s good fun enough. Only you want to be getting at the real thing. When you know that there are sixty to eighty thousand Okpotos more in need of a New Testament than anything else in the whole world, all this business of purlins and scantlings, nuts and bolts and cement, rather gets on your nerves.

Mrs. N.: We’ll be able to get on with the main thing all the better, my lad, when the house is finished.
NORCROSS: True for you! And so I’m all the more anxious to get on with it. Our term’s wearing away, and we’ll be glad enough to have a look at the old England again—but the break in the work is a nuisance. If only we could keep going!

Mrs. N.: Yes, it’s slow work for few hands. I often wonder whether they can realise at home what it is really like. It looks romantic from a distance, but there are days and weeks of unbroken toil and drudgery.

NORCROSS: And yet there are thrills—even in the thick of it. I got one the other day when we stopped the work on the house for that dedication prayer. One felt, here’s another foundation stone planted for the Church of God in Africa—another claim pegged out.

Mrs. N.: I felt that, too, and even the native boys were impressed, I think.

NORCROSS: Yes, the dead silence was eloquent. [Laughs] I fancy I mystified them a bit by sticking that *P.M. Leader* in a bottle and burying it in the foundation. Anyhow, it all helped to produce the effect on them of something very solemn and important. And, after all, it is a great romance—the whole business—that we should be here, nearly 200 miles up-country, establishing the outpost of Primitive Methodism. Just over thirty years it has taken to get here, from the first commencement at Archibongville. There was the strategic move across the river to Jamestown and Oron, which brought us to the open door of Nigeria. From there our Efik evangelisation developed; then we advanced into Ibo country, and a wonderful chapter that has been. And now here we are amongst the Okpotos.

Mrs. N.: And all from the beginning in Fernando Poo!23

NORCROSS: All from the little island. Yes, this heritage has come down to us from the first adventure. We are helping to fulfil a dream which was cherished by a long succession of toilers.

Mrs. N.: Is a great vision ever lost?

NORCROSS: Not if God can help it, nor so long as His Spirit can find men and women willing to pursue it. [Rising to his feet] My word! it’s a chain of wonderful links, when you think of it! Clarke and his Jamaica congregations—Mamma Job (herself an Ibo)—Hands—Burnett and Roe and all their successors to Fairley and Brown—then the rest, including the girls, and the growing native agency. John Enang Gill, Efik-born, the Training Institutes and all their products, and their further promise.

Mrs. N.: “Ours is a goodly heritage.”

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23 See figure 5. In the Reformed Methodist Church, Malabo (Equatorial Guinea) a memorial plaque is erected in the memory of the British explorer Richard L. Lander who discovered the lower Niger river and died in Fernando Po (today Malabo).
NORCROSS: Yes, you and I may be only humble specimens, my dear, but we are privileged to be the advance guard of all this great story. We—we must keep the charge...[Changing his tone] That is, of course, I'm the humble specimen—journeyman-jack-of-all-trades. You [taking off his hat to her]—you are the most wonderful—

Mrs. N.: [breaking in]: Now, don't be silly!

NORCROSS: You should let me finish!—the most wonderful provider a tired and hungry man ever had!

Mrs. N.: Yes, it's nearly dark. I will go and help Jessie [gathering up her things.]

[Enter JERRY, native interpreter, RIGHT. He wears an indelible broad smile.]

NORCROSS: Well, Jerry! still smiling! You'd brighten up the wettest of wet weeks. What is it now?

JERRY: You want me for book-palaver to-night sah?

NORCROSS: Yes, Jerry. We must get on with the translation again to-night. Make you ready for I call.

JERRY: Yes, sah. [Departs, RIGHT, still smiling.]

NORCROSS: Don't know what I'd do without old Jerry. He's useful as an interpreter, but as a smiler he's beyond price.

Mrs. N.: Poor Jerry! And he has something to put up with, with that bush wife of his. [Making as if to go] Are you coming now?

NORCROSS: Yes. [She starts to go, but N. detains her, looking out towards audience, and they stand together arm-in-arm.] Wait a second! Let us watch the sunset. Isn't it gorgeous! One never gets tired of them. ... And so another day is done. ... and so much waits on to-morrow! Oh, surely the Church at home will not fail us! They won't let the story come to an end and make us lose our heritage! They will never cause our labour to be in vain! They must rise to the occasion and answer the call, and ensure an even more glorious to-morrow!

Mrs. N. [slowly] I think they will stand by us. ... I am sure they will!

[They stand silent for a moment, then turn and walk slowly off, RIGHT.]

CURTAIN.