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landing-place, as the boat arrived almost immediately and we left. The boat was larger than the one we came up on, so that we slept on it even though there was not much room. It suited the girls better than lying on the beach and they were able to sleep.

On my arrival at Bolivar City I found a quantity of mail waiting which the colporter had sent by some Indians that he knew lived in San Isidro. In one of my letters was a clipping from a religious paper about a woman missionary in Colon, Republic of Panama, who was going to the Panamanians, asking prayers for her. On the margin of the paper the sender had written: "This may be of interest to you." I wrote at once to the missionary and also made preparations to go back to Barbadoes, for my girls were not willing to go through any more experiences among Indians. We left Bolivar City May 1st, 1909, having been in Venezuela exactly six months. I went first to Trinidad, where I labored two months in the Christian Mission, and then returned to Barbadoes.

excerpts from Anna Coope, Sky Pilot of  
the Sah Blas Indians

CHAPTER VI

MY ADVENTURES IN A LAUNCH

**A**FTER two months at Barbadoes I started for the Isthmus of Panama, and not having received any answer to my letter to the missionary inquiring about the Panamanians, I wrote to some of the members of the Christian Mission inquiring if they knew of any Indians around there to whom the gospel had not been preached, and they replied that they had seen some walking along the streets of Colon, barefoot and poor looking, who evidently had not been reached by any missionary.

When I reached Colon I found that the woman to whom I had first written had been sent to Jamaica for her health, which probably accounted for my not hearing from her. Inquiring further, I found a Methodist minister in Panama City who said that he had had six men in his house from the San Blas

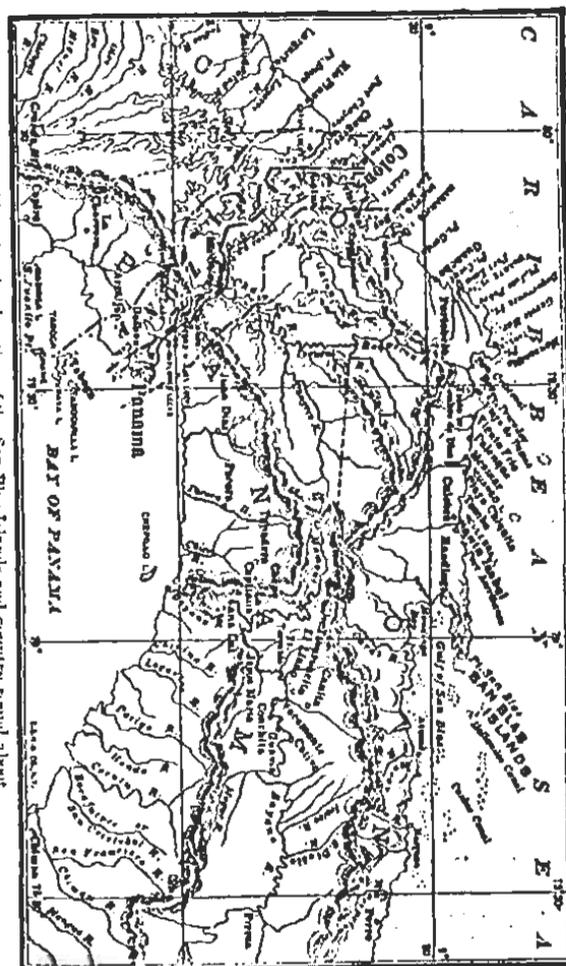
coast, one a chief and the other an ex-chief, who had pleaded with him to send a teacher to them, a woman, because no white man was allowed to stay on their islands over night. The ex-chief, John Davis, had left his boy of eleven with the minister, and as he brought him to me I spoke to my first San Blas Indian.

At last I had found Indians who wanted a teacher, and more than that a woman teacher! I was ready to go at once, but there was still a delay. I had difficulty in getting a passage on any of the traders' vessels. Their plea was that their boats were not fitted for passengers. One man said that the missionaries would spoil his trade.

"Spoil your trade!" I exclaimed. "We are not traders; what could we do to hurt your trade?" As he did not answer I added: "Of course if you sell rum to the Indians I shall certainly do my best to spoil that trade."

He made no answer again, because he was guilty. He took it by barrels to sell to those people. That trade has been stopped now, however, I am thankful to say.

I finally secured passage to Nombre-de-



Map showing location of the San Blas Islands and country round about.

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Dios on the American tug that went there daily for sand for the foundation of the Gatun Locks. While waiting there for further transportation I preached Jesus and scattered tracts to a few who could read. This roused the ire of the Roman Catholic priest, who stood afar off one day when I was holding an open-air meeting. Some of his flock were in danger! He took the tracts and tore them up, scattering them along the street.

At the end of a fortnight a small gasoline launch going up the coast stopped at Nombre-de-Dios and I secured passage on it. When the priest found that I, a Protestant, was going to the Indians with that dreadful book, the Bible, going where some of his brethren had tried in vain to enter, he was furious. He tried to persuade the captain not to take me, but as my things were already aboard the launch and several were there to see me off, I said to the captain: "You'd better not touch my baggage! Those people around us are Americans; and Americans can do things!"

He laughed and said: "Well, the padre does not want you to go up to the Indians."

"Never mind the padre;" I said decidedly. "I am going up on your launch to those people because God wants me to!"

There was much palavering between him and the priest, but I kept quiet and prayed, going aboard the launch and taking my seat next to the priest because there was no other place to sit. Still the boat did not go; they were waiting for me to change my mind. But there was no prospect of that! The Americans who had watched the proceedings thus far came up to the launch and said: "So you are going!"

"Yes, I'm off."

"It really doesn't seem safe:" "Look out for that man; he is very angry." "That priest will harm you if he can." These were some of the comments; but as they were in English, which the priest did not understand, he did not get their meaning unless he judged by actions and looks; while as for me, my mind was made up and there was no turning back, whatever the danger might be. Finally they started, with me on board!

We stopped at several small villages on the mainland and slept that night on the

launch. The next forenoon we arrived in the vicinity of two islands near the mouth of Rio Diablo, the Devil River, in the Department of Colon. The chief of the smaller island came on board the launch. He could speak a little English and asked me where I was going. I told him to Mona, which is about forty miles farther west in the Department of Panama.

"Why will you not stay here and teach us? We want to learn English;" he said.

"But you have the priests here;" I reminded him.

He said that the priests did no good, and yet he bowed to my fellow-passenger and kissed his hand. He said that the priests had been on the island for several years, but none of their children could read or write; they only taught them to pray to the saints.

I told this chief that John Davis wanted me to come to Mona, and I asked him about the chief on the other island as we lay anchored in the bay between the two islands. He said that he was his nephew, that his name was Charles J. Robinson, and that he was away on the mainland working on his plantation,

so I did not meet him. The chief with whom I talked was Joe Harding.

The priest who had come up the coast thus far with us remained at Harding's Island, but he engaged two Indian men to go on with us to Mona, giving them rifles from a box of twelve which he had with him. The last words which he said to them as he rowed away from the launch were: "Pelear por mi," "Fight for me," and some of the men said: "These Indians will kill you;" telling me what they had heard him say. I said: "Never mind; I trust in God and He will keep me safely." The captain swore and said that I was going to get him into trouble; he wished he had not brought me.

We left the bay in the afternoon and arrived at Mona about five o'clock the same day. The Indians of course got a boat and were taken to shore before I was, and as soon as I could get a man that understood Spanish or English—I used either language as the case demanded—I inquired for John Davis. One of the men pointed him out on the beach and rowed me to him. As John could speak good English we were soon chatting eagerly. I

gave him the photograph of his son which the Methodist minister in Panama had sent by me, and he seemed glad to see it and asked about him.

While John Davis and I were talking the two Indians who came up on the launch had called the people into the chief's house and we were summoned to come there too. There was a great crowd; it looked as though the whole island was there. I was seated by the side of the chief, while John Davis, being an ex-chief—now second chief—sat at my left. The crowd was in front of us, the two messengers, each with a rifle, at the front looking very important and trying to impress me with their importance. But I was very busy looking at the women and babies and refused to be properly impressed. There seemed to be an endless chain of women and girls, each with a baby on her hip.

When everybody came to order John Davis spoke. He told the chief that I had come to teach them the Bible and how to read and write in English, as they wanted that language. With every few words the chief grunted, as did everybody after him, and

finally the tension was getting so great that I grunted too and felt better! I do not know whether the whole story was told, for it seemed to me that in the middle of it there was a sudden break, the two men jumping to their feet and crying: "Pelearl pelear! pelear!" Every one took up the cry, and I felt like doing the same, so great was the excitement, only I felt that I must watch proceedings, so I sat still, as did also the two chiefs. When the confusion stopped I asked John what it all meant.

"Oh, white lady," he said, "I am sorry, but you cannot stay here. The padre has told these two men that you are a bad woman and we must not let you stay."

I had no thought of being sent away in this peremptory fashion without at least a protest. I understood the influence at work and how these simple-minded people had been influenced against me, but I would not go without a plea for them to hear me, so I asked John Davis if he could not quiet the people so that they would listen to what he had to say about me. The Indians were gathered in clusters and were all talking at once, here, there, and yonder. It was very interesting and exciting.

The women were talking too, of course, though what their attitude was I did not find out until later.

While waiting for the decision I was restful regarding the whole matter and prayed to God to overrule. Finally John said: "You had better go! These two men will kill you if you do not."

He had hardly spoken the words when one of the willing-to-be murderers caught me by the wrist and pulled me from my seat and pushed me forward. Then I found out without any questioning what the women's attitude toward me was. They screamed when I passed them, pulled the children out of my way as if I would contaminate them, spit at me and made faces. I could not help thinking of the way many so-called Christians treat a woman of the street, shrinking from even the touch of her clothing. These Indian women are made up of the same sinful tendencies and can show them when they are under provocation. They were not going to be contaminated by the touch of such a one as I!

In the midst of all this turmoil, instead of

having fear I was very conscious of the presence of God, and said to myself: "This must be one of the 'all things' that I can bear through Jesus' help. I did not understand, but I could trust God and I did.

As the man who was leading me put me into the canoe he was so excited that he tipped it in such a way that it filled half full of water, so there I sat up to my shoe-tops in water. As there was no accommodation on the launch except to sit in one place day and night, I could do nothing but sit still and let my clothing dry as it could. But there are worse things than that, and I did not catch cold or have the fever, as some of the crew said I would. The captain frankly said he hoped I would die from the exposure; but the sinner's hopes are vain. My hope was in God, and He did not fail me.

## CHAPTER VII

## BACK TO COLON

THE launch which had brought me thus far had to go up the coast three days' journey, and as there was no other boat by which I could return to Colon I had to go on also. When I went aboard at Nombre-de-Dios I had carried only a little luncheon in my bag, for I expected to be at my destination in a few hours, but it took the better part of two days. The second day I had asked for some of the rice and freshly caught fish that the crew were cooking only a few feet from me, but they would neither give nor sell any of the food, so I was hungry yet not suffering. I had part of what my Father had promised me to keep up my strength, namely, water, so I drank that and thanked Him, feeling sure that the bread would come later, because God has said: "His bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure." Not having had the

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(several pages skipped describing Coope's trip back to Colon)

at Nargana, Padre Gasso gets aboard...

Indians, little dreaming that in both of them there would some day be Bible schools and that I would write this story in the room in one of the houses which the padre used for his bedroom. It never entered my thoughts that the houses built by the enemies of the truth would one day be under my control and be used for spreading God's truth; but we walk by faith, not seeing the path ahead but trusting all to our Heavenly Father. I did have faith that I should come back there again, but God in bringing me back has done the "exceeding abundantly" above all that I asked or thought.

We had not sailed more than three hours, cramped up in the launch so closely that our knees touched, when the padre spoke to me. I had been sitting all this time with my Bible in English and Spanish open on my lap, and the priest could not help seeing it and reading it if he cared to.

"Do you speak Spanish?" he asked, and I replied courteously: "Yes, sir," not of course using the title "father."

Then he opened the battery of his abuse. He said that I was no good; that I had no

faith, no religion; that I did not eat the body of the Lord Jesus, so I had no life. He said that I had no business to come up to the Indians; that he and his associates had come to give them the true religion and that I must not interfere. He was so excited, so angry evidently to find me alive after my trip up the coast, that he went over and over his statements and denunciations, not knowing how to stop.

Finally I asked the priest if he had finished; that if he had I had something to say; and then I lifted up my heart to God in prayer to help me to speak wisely, to wield the Sword of the Spirit so that my listener might feel its power. Holding the Book out toward him, I said: "Sir, I come to these Indians to teach them to read God's Word, whose entrance bringeth light." As I held it out I gripped it tightly, fearing that he would lift his hand to throw it into the water. He did throw out his hand toward it, exclaiming scornfully, "El Protestante!"

"Yes," I said, "this Book does protest! It protests against many of the doctrines of your Church. It forbids the making and worship-

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ing of graven images. You lift up the Virgin, the Pope, scapulars, rosaries, holy water and a wafer god. We preach Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the whole world. Jesus himself said: 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Myself.' He did not say that His Mother would do this, or Saint Peter or Saint John. They are dead, but Jesus is alive forevermore. His blood cleanseth from all sin. He says: 'I am the way and the truth and the life: no one cometh unto the Father but by Me.'

"Now, sir, if you would read God's Word and obey it you would have this life in you. You say that I do not eat the body of Jesus. It is true that I do not put a wafer in my mouth, nor let any man deceive me by doing it, and then call that a god. It may be your god, but my God is in heaven, and by faith in the atoning blood of Jesus shed on the cross for me I have the life of God now in my soul. And this news is too good to keep to myself; I have for years been telling to Englishmen, Spaniards and Indians that Jesus only can save. No Church, no creed, no ceremony, no saint, no water, no wafer, can do it; it is

## BACK TO COLON

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Jesus only. I came to these Indians to tell them this, and you have done your best to prevent me. But, sir, mark my words, because I believe God I shall be back here again, with this Book, to teach this people. I shall be in and you will be out!" Truly this was a prophetic utterance, for it has been fulfilled to the letter, with more added. Now I am in and he is out.

The padre squirmed and twisted, but there was no chance to get away. He did stand up as if to pass me, and I would have had to move sideways in order to let him, but I did not; I stood up too, and with the Word of God open in my hand I quoted passage after passage. I felt a special unction in my soul; this was my hour to glorify God, to lift up Jesus to this man; he had a chance to receive the light if he would. He tried to get by me to go to the hold, but I kept on quoting Scripture to him, and when he did sidle by me and peer down into the dark hole as if very anxious about his luggage, I followed and talked earnestly. My soul seemed to be on fire for God, and I gave him a clear, straight exhortation; he could not get away from it. I

heard that he afterward returned to Spain and died there. God's word does not return to Him void, so that the seed sown on that launch may have borne fruit to his saving; I do not know.

*Mendoza*  
I told the padre that I should report his treatment of me to the President of Panama, and I did when I reached the city, and had his sympathy. I did not go to him for sympathy, however, but to get a letter as an official passport which would let me go into any part of the Republic in safety. The President—who is now dead—said that the padre did not do right in threatening me and sending the men to thwart my plans, and that he would be glad to give me a letter of commendation, but that I needed no passport; the Republic was free.

"I know that," I replied, "but some other people do not seem to know the rights and privileges that belong to a free republic, and I want a letter to teach them."

He smiled and said: "Brave little woman! But why do you want to go among the Indians? They are very treacherous; I would not go up there for anything."

"I want to go and tell them of Jesus who died for them," I answered; and though I had told him the whole story of my desire to teach the Indians, he seemed so interested that it had to be re-told. Then I preached Jesus to him and told him how God's Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. "We all need it. You need it as President in guiding the affairs of this Republic. God wants to save you; if you read His Word and obey it He will save you now."

He seemed interested, and I just praised God for this privilege of being brought before rulers for the truth's sake. He told me that if a certain official would write such a letter as I wanted he would sign it, and I was ushered into the presence of one of Rome's emissaries, I felt sure. The President sent one of his servants to tell this important person my errand, so I was invited to tell him the whole story.

"Do you not know," he said as I finished, "that the education of Panama is under the Roman Catholic Bishop?"

"Oh, then I see!" This was an explanation in a few words of a power I had to combat.

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"Yes, and if you want a letter you must go to him."

"Indeed! Then Rome has its foot on the neck of the Panama Republic so that it is not free after all!"

"Religiously, no. The religion of Panama is Roman Catholic."

"Then do you think the Bishop would give me a letter?"

"No."

"Then why do you send me to a man who you know will refuse my request when it is in your power to grant it, and the President said that he would indorse the letter if you wrote it?"

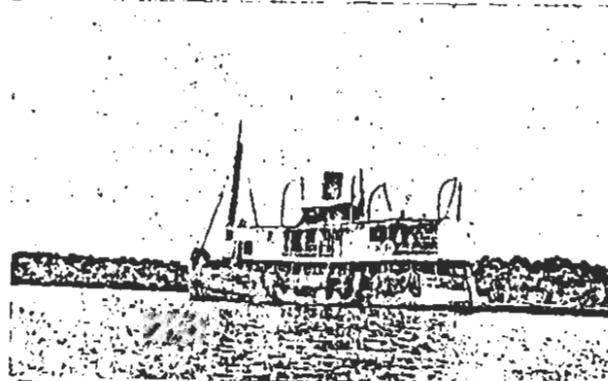
I felt that it was a plan on the part of both to put me off, but it gave me an opportunity to speak to them about Jesus and to magnify the Word of God.

"We will neither help you nor hinder you officially," was his answer. "If you want to go to the Indians you must fight your way through."

"Thank you, sir, I will," I replied; "but I won't carry rifles or pistols, but the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."



Chief Robinson's House. Open door leads to store. The American as well as the Panama flag forms part of the decorations.



The "San Blas"—the Panama government steamer which plys up and down the north coast.

(Coope works in an urban mission for a few months. She then travels to Mexico and the U.S. In 1912 she returns and arranges for people to inform her if Charly Robinson visits the city.)

While I was waiting for news I gathered in my room a class of young lads who wanted to learn English, one of whom could speak it very well and acted as interpreter; his home was only six miles from Chief Robinson's island, and he was watching for the chief. I talked of Jesus, and the young man said, "The Indians have their own religion; they do not want to learn about yours; they only want you to teach them to read and speak English so that they can make plenty of money like the Americans."

"Is that so indeed?" I replied. "Well, if they will listen to me and learn about Jesus, some day they will walk on golden streets and have more than any Americans can give them." I talked earnestly to the lads every time they came; that was my business for my King.

In January, 1913, I was told that Chief Robinson would be in on the 17th, so in the morning I was down at the wharf, and I saw him and two other men just going across to the Government Building to get a pass on the railroad to visit Panama City. My heart beat fast for joy; this was my hour! Going

up to the leader, for they walked single file, I asked if he were Chief Robinson of Rio Diablo.

"Yes, I am."

"Do you want a teacher to come to your island and teach your people the Bible and English?" I asked.

"Yes, I do. When can you come?" was the prompt reply.

That was business and rejoiced my heart, and I answered: "Now." He smiled and said that would be all right.

"I will go back with you if you say so," I suggested, anxious to seize the opportunity.

"You could not very well, for my canoe will be so loaded," he answered. "You had better come on one of the large schooners."

I said that would be quite satisfactory to me, and we talked together for a few minutes. He said that he been taken by the captain of one of the trading vessels when he was nine years old to a place called Old Providence, near Jamaica. The captain's name was Robinson, so he named the boy Charles Julius Robinson. He sent him to school for three years, so that he learned to read, write and

speak English, and at the age of twelve he went to sea, traveling on the schooners to New York, Nova Scotia and other places. When about twenty-five he returned to his home, was married, settled down, and was soon afterward appointed second chief, then chief at the death of the old chief, Henry Clay.

During the reign of Chief Clay the Roman Catholic priest came and somehow got in. Many were against him, but Chief Robinson was one who was in favor of having him stay because he wanted his children to be educated. The people helped him to build the very house that I now occupy, the priest supplying the galvanized iron for the roof and sides and the Indians cutting down trees and hauling most of the wood, each helping a little in gifts and in free labor.

"We are sorry that we ever let the priest in, however," said the chief. "Our children have not learned anything but to chant to images, saints and the Virgin. I was taught to read the Bible and I want my children to learn to read it. I am glad that you will come."

We parted then and I went to my room to

begin packing, my heart singing for joy. One morning a week later I was awakened early by a knock, and on opening the door I saw three Indians, one of whom pushed an envelope into my hand. I opened it and read:

San Jose Nargana, Feb. 2nd, 1913.

Dear lady I sent my 3 Indians to Bring you up to San Blas Coas to my country My people like to see you Dear lady if you can By A B C Book Engles and Bring your Piano up with you no more for Present. Mr. Charles J. Robinson.

How much that letter meant to me! and here were the three living red Indians waiting for me to speak the word! Had not our God answered prayer?

I hastily strapped and roped things with the aid of the Indians, then to the canoe we went. It was the largest canoe the chief had, but was very small for us to weather heavy seas in, and I had heard much about the roughness of the sea at this season. But I believed that God would overrule the sea and everything else. However, my friend in Colon came down to the wharf just as we started out and called to the men not to take me, the wind

was so changeable. So we put back to shore and the men put off one of my trunks, a deck chair and a box of canned foods, then they went on. I waited two weeks and then secured passage on the two-masted schooner the "Agnes E."

We were nine days getting from Colon to the first group of the San Blas Islands, and as the captain had business to attend to of course I had to wait until it was finished. But I was quite comfortable and simply felt that I could rest for a little. We were now about fifteen miles from Rio Diablo. During the day the Indians came aboard, and I opened my "piano"—the folding baby organ—and played. The captain and crew who could speak English sang the Moody and Sankey hymns and we spent a pleasant time. But the news spread that a white woman was on board who was going to Chief Robinson's island, and early on the morning of the tenth day out we were awakened by the splash of oars and a voice calling: "Ai es the Missi ar?"

"Yes," I answered in Spanish; "I am here," for I was quite sure that I was the Missi who was meant. One of the men could speak Eng-

lish (I have since found that he was one of the two who dragged me off from Mona Island), and he said, "Chief Robinson sent us for you; come now," so I just stepped off of the schooner into the canoe and we were off like a shot. A few hours' sailing and we landed safely at home!

Of course the whole village was out, and I was graciously received by the chief and his brother Alfred, who also could speak English. I sat in the store, for, by the way, Chief Robinson had and still has quite a grocery and dry-goods store, and for two hours was, I might say, on exhibition. The chief had an old iron stove in which he burned logs when he wanted to cook after the white man's style, and here my dinner was prepared, or rather my breakfast, for although it was now afternoon I had not eaten. But then I must suffer some inconveniences, even as these people were doing to have me there in their home. After a meal of something fried in grease and soup of some kind, and some eggs fried till they resembled sole leather, and some kind of black liquid to drink, all of which I took, "asking no questions for conscience' sake," I

felt better able to walk, as I was expected to do after that feast, to see the sights of the town. Then I was taken to my new home, a native house with palm-leaf roof and bamboo walls. The chief had said to me, "We have no house for you to live in," and I had answered, "Oh, the same kind of house that the natives live in will do for me."

So this was my home! One corner was arranged for my sleeping room, and there the Indians hung my hammock. They cooked for me until the schooner came up four days after bringing my household effects.

I arrived on the island on Friday, February 28th, and started school the next morning. Before sunrise I was awakened by voices calling my name. Here were my scholars ready for school so we began at once and continued for eight hours; then the chief said that they wanted night school, so for another four hours we recited and sang A, B, C, and went through all kinds of exercises, until I dreamed of hands and feet and faces all mixed up with letters and red Indians.

The next day being Sunday, I taught them John 3: 16. That, and: "Onward, Christian

Soldiers," was the order of exercises that first Sunday in San Blas. We marched and counter-marched around the schoolroom; the earthen floor was humpy, but it did not matter! My school was composed of all ages. There were tottering old men; Olibebeh, the chief's grandfather, was said to be over a hundred; and wrinkled grandmothers, and middle aged and young married women also, each with a child straddled on her hip. Logs were brought in, and they sat on these when they were not marching; but I kept them pretty lively, and they were equal to the occasion. Shirtless boys came in to march; we had great times in those early days! A parrot came every day and learned to sing, "Onward, Christian Soldiers." After he had sung he would laugh at his own smartness, and of course we laughed too. I used him to spur the boys on by saying, "Dear me, the parrot has beaten all of you!"

The chief came to the school every day to tell the scholars what I wanted them to do, and I learned a few Indian words so that I could make them understand some things, and so for three months we had school three

times a day seven days in the week. On Sunday night it was different. Then I had the chief interpret the stories in the Gospels of Jesus and His love, and the people learned many hymns. The organ was a great attraction. I only played it on Sunday nights, partly to help make the service interesting, and partly because when I was teaching there was no room to move my arms, the space was so limited.

During the first three months of my stay the house which the priests had formerly used was occupied by a man whom they call a Christian Brother, not a priest, but a member of one of their orders who teaches. He had a few boys every day, but as my school grew in popularity his twelve boys left and came to me, and before long the Brother left the island.

In June I went down to Colon on a new gasoline launch that had just begun to run up this coast. The captain very kindly offered to take me down and bring me back in ten days, and this was too good an offer to be refused. The chief asked me to take his eldest boy, Charles, who was about seven years old,

with me, that he might see the city and hear English spoken all the time. I bought many things for school use and also a new three-burner oil-stove with an oven.

This oil-stove created a sensation on the island. Again and again I had to demonstrate the lighting of that wonderful fire-box. Chiefs and their body-guards came from far and near to see the stove—and the lady who owned it, perhaps!—to hear the children sing in English, and to listen to the organ. If I had had a moving picture machine I certainly could have gotten some interesting scenes.

In a couple of weeks the chief had sent for an oil-stove just like mine. He told me that all the women said the evil was in it. They were afraid of it and preferred to sit on one end of a log while the other end cooked the fish, regardless of the smoke and dirt. All my dishes, forks especially, were carefully examined; they wondered what a fork could be for. When I was cooking they would come in and smell around the pan, and if it was so that they could dip a finger into the concoction they would do so, and in every case they were disgusted with the white woman's food.

Two months after the Roman Catholic teacher had left, as the house was standing empty, the chief said that they would pull it down. I went in to look it over. It was a large building about twenty-five feet by thirty. There were three rooms downstairs and five rooms above. The largest room downstairs had been used for religious services only; its walls were hung with pictures of saints and the Virgin, and there were wooden statues. The confessional box was there, which I have found very useful as a library, and the baptismal font.

About this time a Panamanian official came up to see my school, and was so well pleased with it that he advised me to leave the grass hut and go into the large house. I told him that the priests had built it and I wanted no trouble with them by occupying their property. He said that it would be all right; that they would not return, and that it would be better for me to go into it at once, adding: "This house is no fit place for a woman." I told him that I was very happy and felt that God who led me here was keeping watch over

me continually, and to have His approval satisfied me; that I was never lonely or afraid.

When the rainy season was on, which lasts from May to the first week in November, there certainly was much to be desired in the way of comfort in my grass house. Often my floor was in such pools that I had to wear my rubbers all day, but I hoped for better things when the dry season came, and endured the discomfort. But one morning in August when my floor seemed nothing but one great puddle, I decided that perhaps it would be wiser for me to move into the house. The Indians had not torn it down, so I told the chief that I wanted them to open it up, clean it and make it ready for me. They went to work at once, and the next day, Saturday, I was moving into my upstairs tenement. Wasn't it fine! I had doors that I could shut and thus have a little privacy; I had a good board floor to walk on upstairs and a smooth cement one downstairs. There were three long desks that would seat six at a pinch, and the men made me three more; so with six benches our room was soon looking like a

real schoolroom. I took down the pictures of the saints and other paraphernalia of my predecessors and put up pictures of flowers, birds and animals that I cut from the magazines and pasted on white paper, and we all felt proud of our new quarters.

I kept one of the images to use as an object lesson, and when the boys recited the 115th Psalm I touched each part of the image as they recited: "They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not," etc., and questioned them about it. When we had finished I laid the image down and stepped on it, asking: "Can it feel, can it help us, can it hurt me, can it get up?" One of the boys, who was very bright and could speak Spanish well, and had lived with the priests as their errand boy, said: "Miss Coope, I knelt before that wooden man sometimes two hours at a time, and kissed it, and always bowed my knee when I passed it. But I see now that it cannot help us. I will never worship an image again."

I can only pray that Joe may be kept in the knowledge of God and that the word may prove a savior of life unto life in his case.

He was the son of the chief of Mona Island from which I had been ejected, and had been sent to school on this island, living with Chief Robinson. But even before the Catholic Brother left he had come to my school, and for a year he was with me, professing to accept Jesus as his Saviour. He learned to speak Spanish well, and when the Spanish official who told me to go into the big house saw him he took a great fancy to him and took him to Panama City, where he is putting him through school.

## CHAPTER IX

### HINDRANCES AND PROGRESS

ONE of the great hindrances to the reception of Christ and the uplift of the Indians on the island was, as it is everywhere, liquor. There were ten rum-shops for a population of 800. They had bottles of Balboa beer on their shelves, and they built a special cubby-hole of wood with a thatched roof which was set apart as a shop, and this was owned by the chief, or, as he said, by his brother. The traders brought up demijohns of rum, so they all sold this, the "Christians'" liquor—the captains and sailors all called themselves "Christians" when talking to the Indians—and they had their own home-made rum; so liquor was plentiful, and every week during the first year that I was there they had what is called a "chee-chee," which really is a drunken spree over a girl's coming to maturity. It was the woman's day. The

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girl was bathed three times a day for four days by the women, and during that time the father was in the woods shooting game of any kind and up the river catching fish, and the mother was cooking on a large scale and making the rum, which was put into large earthen jars.

When all was ready they fired a gun to notify all to come, for the feast was to begin. The girl passed around to the guests portions of meat, fish, vegetables and other things, and they in turn presented her with rings, beads, and cloth. Then they drank and sang. They have a special song, and if the singer does not finish it in two days the feast must go on, and of course he does not finish until he sees that there is no more rum. Sometimes the feast has gone on for five days, and I cannot describe the howling and yelling; it is hell let loose! All the men are drunk, and all the women, especially those of the girl's family, screaming night and day. The men walk the streets with bottles under their arms, asking every one they meet to drink with them. The "babblings, the wounds without a cause," the bloodshed were terrible! One morning when

I went to the door of my grass hut there were great spots of blood before the door. The boys said: "Men fight—drunk!" The chief came by and told me not to come out; it would not be safe. He was sober, and sober in more ways than one. He was acting as policeman, for all his four policemen were drunk. There was a big fight on, and he had tied them all to a post and was walking around my house to guard me.

After that terrible spree was over—it lasted from one Sunday morning till the following Sunday—the chief came to me and said: "This is too much!" He felt ashamed to have me, the first foreign woman that had ever lived on their island, see how beastly they were. When I had talked to him of Jesus as a personal Saviour, he would say, "I am not a sinner; I believe in Jesus; I am all right," and yet he kept a rum-shop, and allowed their sprees to go on.

But matters had reached a climax now. When the people had sobered up he called a meeting and told them that this thing must stop. Many were up in arms against him. They said it was their custom and they could

not and would not stop; the "white devil" must leave; it was she who had put the chief up to this move; he had never stopped them before she came.

As a result of the chief's stand the women refused to come to school; not a girl came for several weeks. But the boys all rallied around the chief and said: "Miss Coope is good; she not drink rum and fight; we ashamed of our mothers." I told the chief that he ought to accept Jesus as his Saviour if he wanted to help his people; that Jesus would guide him by his Holy Spirit in this fight for the right; that his idea was to stop these drunken bouts, but he kept his own rum-shop and so how was he better than his people? When I spoke of that he said that the cubby-hole was his brother's.

"But you sit there and drink and smoke with the rest," I said; "so they think if drinking is right for you it is right for them. You can't tell them to stop drinking rum while you go on drinking, selling and encouraging your brother to take their cocoanuts for your liquor."

Chief Robinson talked with his brother, who was so vexed that he took his wife and daughter and left the island for a long visit to his wife's brother on another island.

## CHAPTER X

### SOME OF MY BOYS

ON May 31st, 1914, three of my boys accepted Jesus in the Sunday-school. One was little Joe Harris, the son of the chief of Tupeelee; the second was Lonnie Powers, about twelve years old; and the third Andrew Ferguson, who is, I think, about sixteen or seventeen. That Sunday as we read in the New Testament class of boys of Jesus' command: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation," I explained what it meant, telling them as simply as I could the love story of Jesus; that when we believe in Him with all our hearts we want to tell some one else; that it was He who had sent me to tell the San Blas Indians about Him and His love for them. "Now you can read it for yourselves. If you will believe, God will save you and then send you to others;" I said. Little Joe's eyes were full of tears.

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I drew in the net. "Who of you will take Jesus now for your Saviour, to save you from sin and fill your heart with His love and the Holy Spirit?"

"I will believe in Jesus now!" Joe said, and struck his chest with such earnestness that we all looked at him. His face was eager, his body trembled.

"Let us all pray now," I said, for every boy in the class was deeply moved, and each one prayed.

"Jesus, make me thy child—good now—so I preach," was one prayer made brokenly. Another prayed: "Good Jesus, I want good preach. I love preach good. Amen." A third: "I believe you Jesus me for died. Make heart good. Amen." One boy said: "Jesus, make Indian good heart now, my good. Amen." Joe said, "Jesus, I believe you died for me. Make me good now; I love you. Amen." I led them all in prayer, and at its close each one said: "I feel good now."

Two of these boys have developed wonderfully. Lonnie Powers was always very bright in his lessons; he craved knowledge and rapidly passed every boy in the school,

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always crying for more work, more information. He was just as loving and obedient as he was bright, and I became convinced, watching his progress in spiritual as well as intellectual things, that God had a work for him and wanted him to have a wider training than I could give him. My thought was to send him to the Academy at Nyack, New York, and after much prayer I got the assurance that God would have him go. I had often written about him to my church people at home and now I wrote again telling them how I felt about him. I did not know who was to be the honored one to pay his expenses through school, but I knew that God was talking to some one, for a week after I had laid the matter before the Lord and was sure in my soul that Lonnie was to go, I received in my mail, which had been seven weeks on the way, a letter from a man, almost a stranger, who said that he had had a talk with me at Old Orchard Beach, Me., about five years before. I had told my experiences with the Indians and he had gone to hear me speak. "Now a few days ago," he added, "I was led to send this five dollars to you. I



Boys from the school. Andrew Ferguson is third from the left.



Beads for the legs. Dame Fashion is as tyrannical in San Blas as in other parts of the world.

trust it will be helpful." So I saw that God had begun to talk money matters to His own children. I only sent my order to the Bank of Heaven, and my Father cashed it through various bankers. This five dollars was the earnest of Lonnie's going through school; more would come. When I received the next mail all that was needed for his passage and outfit came, with a letter from Emmanuel Church saying that they would support Lonnie in school.

The next step was to gain the consent of the parents and relatives, for Lonnie was very eager to go. His mother and grandmother wept for two days before he left home, saying that they would not see him any more, and it seemed as though Lonnie's way would be blocked. He said: "I do want to go, and I keep praying that God will let me." Finally the father and older brother took the reins of government into their own hands and prepared Lonnie's clothes—for it is the men who are the tailors in the San Blas Country—packed the box, or rather threw the things in, for they do not know how to fold or press their clothes, and finally all was ready and

he was to go. I was going to attend the Latin-American Conference at Panama City from February 10 to 20, 1916, and planned to take Lonnie Powers and Andrew Ferguson with me and to send Lonnie on to Nyack from there. His mother and grandmother wept before he left, but finally ended by submitting to his father's wish.

While we were in Panama both of the boys were baptized by the elder in the Christian Mission, and their testimony in that Mission Hall aroused many of the young people, who had heard the gospel all their lives and had not accepted Christ, to do so then. I arranged for Lonnie to sail on the steamer *Colon* leaving the dock at Christobal on Thursday, February 24th, 1916, and he was to arrive in New York on March 1, exactly three years since I had started my school. He was one of the first fruits of my work going to the United States to be trained for a missionary to his own San Blas Indians.

These are some of my boys, and you see they are just as human as the boys in America. Some people have an idea that if they could only go to a far-away heathen land where the people are so different from those at home, they could do great things with them. But let me say for the benefit of those people that the heathen have as much knowledge of evil as our educated teachers at home, for the fallen nature is theirs to contend with just as much and it comes to the top in a remarkable manner. The color of the skin does not hinder its manifestations, and education does not eradicate it; only the blood of Jesus Christ

can do that. We rejoice that we are called to lift up Jesus as the only Saviour from the power of the Devil, who is as busy out here as elsewhere, and we are not ignorant of his devices.

## CHAPTER XI

### "THE CHIEF MAN OF THE ISLAND"

FOR a long time after my coming to the island I worked for the conversion of Chief Robinson without his surrendering to Christ. He resisted the Spirit, saying, when brought almost to the point of surrender, "Some other time," but I prayed on and believed for him. Often when I interpreted the gospel invitations to believe and accept Jesus now, he would preach to himself, saying: "Yes, it is true, and it is against me, but I will believe soon." Then he would come to me for a talk, and just when he seemed almost persuaded some one would come and call him, and he would go away still undecided. Often he would avoid me by going to his plantation on Saturday and returning on Monday, so that for several Sundays I would not see him. When we talked he would try to justify himself by arguing that all the old Indians be-

lieved that if they did not murder a man they would go to heaven; that he was not bad; he used to be when he was a sailor, but he had turned over a new leaf! How like so many with far greater light than he who try to reason themselves into the belief that they are not sinners needing to be born again!

After he had stayed away from the Sunday night services for three weeks, saying that he had to work or he was sick, or some other excuse, I said to myself: "Yes, you are trying to get away from God, but He will get you yet!" Then he began to tell me of the trouble brewing in the midst of the people. It seems that they wanted a big "chee-chee." There were four girls of marriageable age and they had planned a bigger affair than ever. They thought that they had obeyed the chief pretty well for months now, and he ought to let them have another spree. He was in a quandary, and with his own heart's convictions to battle against, he was having a hard time. He stayed in my sitting-room for three hours, and we talked of God and his power to save, to help and to guide. He agreed that

all I told him was right, but pleaded: "Don't I try my best to get my people to do right?"

Then I turned his own argument against him. "Yes," I said, "you are trying, and because they refuse to see as you do you feel bad about it. It is for their own good, and yet they positively refuse to be helped. How about you and God? You admit that I am right, that I am giving you the best I know of God's truth; and yet you refuse to obey God, who is over you, and expect your people to obey you! If you will surrender your will to God he will teach you how to lead others. You need God at this particular time, but you must surrender first, then your people will."

But he was not willing. After much persuasion, after he acknowledged that it was the right thing to do, he jumped up as though he had been shot and said, "Not to-night; some other time," and left without saying good-night. My heart was grieved, but I had faith in God; I was not discouraged; I knew that God was talking to him.

This was on a Thursday night. The chief went away again on Saturday, returning on

Monday, and again the week after, but had to return Saturday night as quickly as he could. He reached home at midnight and was in agony the rest of the night with bodily pain. Early Sunday morning he sent for me, his boy saying, "Oh, come quick! My father is very sick, vomiting blood." I went, to find him rolling in his hammock in great pain. As I went in he said: "Oh, Miss Coope, do pray for me! Do pray now!"

"Oh, not now," I replied. "Some other time will do. There is no hurry; go to sleep."

"But I can't sleep; God is talking to me. Pray for me!"

"No, you pray for yourself now. If God is talking to you, you must talk to Him. I've done all I can; I can't help you now. I can't relieve you; only Jesus the Saviour can do that."

"I know it! I should have given Him my heart long ago. He has been talking to me, but I didn't want to obey. I will obey now."

"Well, then, confess your sins first. Are you a sinner?"

"Yes."

"Then tell God and ask Him to forgive you now."

Between groans he prayed, and when he had confessed and asked God to pardon him, I thanked God for convicting him and asked Him to heal the sick man, that he might glorify God and lead his people to know Him for themselves. I then began to inquire about his body; that was secondary; we had to settle the spiritual sickness first. I had them get me some eggs and gave him the whites of eggs only that day and the next. The pain in his stomach ceased and he slept. I stayed up with him all night. His little boy of three was sick also, and they were going to chant some Indian nonsense over him, at the same time waving a wooden image the length of a man's hand, to drive away the bad spirit that was making the child sick. I told him to tell them to pray to God, and if the child was to get better God would heal him. He sent the message to them, and they did not go through the incantations; the boy recovered.

Meanwhile preparations for the great feast were going on. The chief called a meet-

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ing and was carried downstairs into his brother's house, where the men gathered to hear him tell what God had done for him. This was on Sunday. On the Wednesday following some of the men murmured against him, saying that they would have the "drunk." The chief sent his four policemen to gather up every vessel that would be used for holding rum. The men had gathered a great quantity of sugar-cane and insisted that they must have the feast now in order to use the cane. The chief's answer was: "You can eat the cane or use it in some other way, but you shall not make rum!" and they didn't! The vessels were all put in a pile in the house in front of the chief's hammock and I was called in to see the sight. It reminded me of what the Ephesians did after hearing the preaching of Paul: "Not a few of them that practiced magical arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all," Acts 19: 19. The chief broke the vessels, and there has not been a drunken feast on this island since that day.

The date of Chief Robinson's conversion was November 14th, 1914, and from that time



The main street on the Island of Rio Diablo. Native woman carrying her husband's canoe. Cross indicates the last rum shop, now closed.



A Panamanian policeman with some native boys and girls. The steps to the new government public school are in the background.

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he has preached in the power of the Holy Spirit. He did not regain his strength rapidly; it was three months before he could work again; and during that time he learned lessons of obedience. As the Mountain Indians visit him he spreads the gospel to them, and my boys tell me that he often talks of Jesus to them in the store.

During the chief's illness the leader of the faction who had wanted the drinking feast stirred up a revolt, urging the people to make him chief. As the office is not hereditary, but usually lasts until the death of the chief, they tried to kill Chief Robinson by giving him some fish that was a deadly poison. He discovered it before he had eaten much, but the little that he did take made him very sick. God needed him, however, and he recovered. The rebels went on holding meetings and planned and carried out a spree on another island, at which the leader made such a beast of himself that the people on that island beat him and he came home somewhat humbled.

But now a new element was introduced into the situation. Before I left Colon to come to this island I had called twice on the

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other men, each of whom was formerly a rum-seller, have ordered stoves also; and besides this in their stores there are Bibles, hymn-books, slates and pencils for sale. Praise God for this wonderful change! This is a sample of what God can do among "treacherous" Indians!

Before closing this account of Chief Robinson I must tell how staunchly he defended me the first year that I worked on the island. Chiefs from two of the other islands were much against me for coming and opposed to Chief Robinson for letting me in. The idea that Indians should learn to read and write was preposterous! No, they should never be like the pale-face! After waiting impatiently nine months for me to get weary and go, they came over, one hundred naked red Indians, in their canoes, with a red flag on the prow. They had not notified Chief Robinson that they were coming, but as the old saying is, "murder will out," and he heard about it, and what he said was carried back to them. He said that he didn't want any fights, but he wanted his people educated and he was going to have them educated, and the school teacher

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would be protected by their lives. If Chief Nceegah wanted to fight he had better look out, as he had plenty of ammunition, and if they came it would be the worse for them.

After threatening a few times they did come. The women on our island were so afraid that the men came to my house and nailed up every door but one, intending to put the women and children in there. They believed in preparedness! It was reported that the enemy had passed in the night to gather forces from another island, and that in the evening there were two hundred coming.

Men with rifles walked around the town and they fired off a cannon that the chief owns to warn off intruders. It sounded like war-times. The next day little Joe said: "Miss Coope, the mountain Indians and Nceegah are coming to kill you."

"Yes? Well, will you let them?"

"No, no!"

Then began a sham battle among my boys to show how they would fight to defend me, and Joe tumbled over four or five boys in the fray, at which we had a great laugh.

At noon the enemy came. I saw twelve

men get into a three-by-nine foot canoe and paddle towards the island. Our men fired, the cannon boomed, and one boat-load was captured without a man being killed or wounded. Our men soon hauled down that red rag and dragged it on the ground. They took the captives to the chief, who lay in his hammock giving orders. He talked to the prisoners and let them go, and they have never visited us since. This battle was on November 5th, 1913.

## CHAPTER XII

### SOME CUSTOMS OF THE SAN BLAS INDIANS

It is always interesting to know something about the family life and peculiar customs of any people, and the San Blas Indians have their own rules of domestic government. One of these is that a girl when married never leaves the parental roof-tree. The man has to come to her home and make it his as long as she lives. If she dies and he marries again, he goes to the home of the new wife, but the children of the first wife stay with the grandmother or aunts, so not many women here have to fill the position of stepmother and wait on and train the first wife's children.

Chief Robinson, however, had ideas of his own and did not propose to follow the Indian custom. He had been among white people in various parts for several years, and he chose to follow their way in this matter. He did