

MISSIONARY CORRESPONDENCE.

P. O. Hartland,
via Paulpietersburg,
Natal, South Africa,
July 6th, 1920.

Dear Highway:

The children may be interested in an account of a visit to a native kraal. It was last Friday morning that a young man arrived from across the Pongola asking that I come at once to see a certain sick woman.

I told Mrs. Sanders not to expect me home until the next day, and took a lunch for three meals. Faith's splendid horse soon covered the first two miles of good road, but from there on was stony hills so steep that I must often dismount and walk. Going down the last hill to the Pongola River and ascending a still larger one the other side takes an hour.

Unusually severe frosts have made the pasturage poor so that the sheep, which are brought down here from the cold highlands for winter grazing, are having difficulty to live. I saw them all along, wandering about in search of food. Three-fourths of the pasture lands have been burned over, because the farmers have learned that this burning makes the new grass sprout quickly. The other one-fourth will be reserved for burning next fall (March), so when the sheep arrive in May, they will have plenty of green grass.

At the kraal there were two girls and a boy about six years old, and a sickly baby just able to sit alone. It was interesting to see how they amused themselves without any toys or games other than they could invent for themselves. For the parents never think the children need amusement or toys or even clothes, though the weather some times becomes bitter cold.

The little boy had on a "beshu" much too large for him. This takes the place of trousers though it is only pieces of goat or calf skin, hung behind and in front, with a suspending string about the loins. This little fellow was ever laughing and running about as if proud to make his "ibeshu" flap around. One girl, dressed in a small goat skin, and with a string of white beads about her loins, seemed very industrious. She came to a large flat grinding stone, placed on it some broken pieces of hard clay and began to grind.

I told her I was hungry so she must hasten her grinding. It was wonderful to see her—so exact a copy of the native woman grinding—every move of the tiny hands scraping together the little pile of dust and fragments. The first upper grindstone she found too heavy, so quickly chose a lighter one lying ready at hand. In a minute this was exchanged for one still smaller, which seemed to suit her.

Then away she ran, to return in half an hour, and resume her game. The other girl soon appeared and joined in. She took a broken native-made pot sitting nearby her, brought it close to the grinder and received the prepared dust. Then in a twinkling, and with much laughter, she had placed it to cook.

A bunch of grass as kindling and dried cow manure as fuel, was tucked about the pot and the task was finished.

Just then our laughing boy appeared

OUR MISSIONARIES FOR SOUTH AFRICA.



MISS HELEN STERRITT



MISS ALICE F. STERRITT

Sisters Sterritt have begun their visit to the Churches. Note the date they are to be at your church and be in readiness to give them a hearty welcome.

and saw a chance to enliven the game. He pounced upon the pot, and before the cooks could stop him, had actually emptied its contents on the ground and fled. The pursuit was brief as the girls seemed fleetier than the stouter boy.

Then the inevitable grinding began again. But the other girl dressed with only a string of beads thought this was too much like work and proceeded to stop it by coming up behind the busy one and throwing the little goat skin, that was only suspended around the neck, up over her head.

This was too great fun for the boy; he rushed up, copying the girl. His throw was so vigorous that the skin came off over her head and landed six feet away. In a second he had snatched it and was running away. The owner laughed and took chase.

Soon she returned in triumph carrying the one-sided garment—for it can cover only one side of the body at a time and must be shifted over when wanted to warm the other side.

I had ordered a fowl killed for the sick woman, and now noticed the feathers in a grain bag lying near the grinding stone. The smaller of the two pigs had become aware of this fact about the same time and was searching for a way to reach the feathers. This he soon discovered and was delighted with the flavor. Becoming tired of so light a diet, he went to see if any grain-house door had been left open. A woman was just taking out her corn to grind for the evening meal. I strolled along and looked in, asking if this was her year's food. She replied that it was insufficient, but all she had. There was corn on the cob and another grain, "Amabele" (from which beer and porridge is made), together with some nice pumpkins and squash.

The tiny baby was now brought to take part in a dance. It was innocent of clothing, and clung on the back of one of the little girls. The two girls stamped their feet, snapped their fingers, sang a song with only a few words continually repeated, and containing the "Q" click. Their movements were graceful and the tune

and rhythm exactly as they had learned from the grown-ups. This was soon over and a chase followed in which the girl with the baby tried to keep the other from pulling it off her back. And yet it did not get a fall from its only cradle.

The door was two feet by three, and closed by cross poles twenty-four in number, the size of a man's wrist. They were simply piled one above the other and held by upright supports driven in the ground. When she left, a hen brought her brood to search for any small opening that might have been left when replacing the bars. The chickens climbed about but failed to find a hole big enough to enter. The little pig standing by grunted his disapproval, and went to talk with his mother, I suppose, about the feathers, for he soon returned to this light diet. These native pigs, like the fowls, must steal and even then go hungry, and therefore become very expert. About this time a great shout went up from a nearby kraal where only one pig is kept. I looked and saw this fellow running away from his pursuer holding a splendid ear of corn in his mouth. The owner of that neglected grain hut was visiting my sick woman, and screamed back her scolding and instruction.

These kraals are on a hill top and the water must be brought from the nearest spring, a long way down the hill side. The pigs and fowls do not get to this spring but must depend upon chance opportunities to quench their thirst. For example, next morning, when I had finished washing my face in a pan of water that had been brought by the same thoughtful woman who had served me pumpkin and cooked fowl for my supper, and now served the same cold for my breakfast—this pan I left sitting on the ground. Young Mr. Pig, however, had evidently been watching my ablutions for certain reasons of his own, for no sooner had I stepped back than he marched up and began to drink, while Mrs. Hen with her brood, stood awaiting his departure. Several times he stopped drinking and seemed about to leave, until he noticed

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