

MISSIONARY CORRESPONDENCE.

HARTLAND, P. O.,
PAULPIETERSBURG,
NATAL, So. Af.,
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Dear Friends:

Yesterday I had one of those delightful days which have not come so often my way as is usual with missionaries, viz., a day kraal (village) visiting.

The mother of a family always finds her hands and time fully occupied, and with me there is always an opportunity to find people near my own doors to whom I can preach Jesus or pray with to help them. So when I get a day among the people I do enjoy it. Different times yesterday, as I rode from kraal to kraal, I thought how beautifully God was fulfilling this promise to me: "The desire of the righteous shall be granted," for kraal-visiting has always been the desire of my heart, as I could, I have done it off and on all these years.

Filita, one of our Bible women, and I, left before 9.00 o'clock and by 4.00 p. m. had visited as good as twelve villages and held seven meetings and talked personally with about thirty adults, besides lots of children. We covered some ten miles.

First Kraal—Only four small children at home. The grown-ups had gone to the forest for wood, so we passed on with just a few words to them.

Second Village—Fine, clean and well-kept place. Hearing voices, we looked into a small hut and found several girls about grown up busily grinding Amabele for beer. One man sat on the opposite side of the hut talking to them while they worked. I was sorry to see one or two of our Christian girls at this work, but more sorry for the woman of the kraal, as she is a fine character and talented and would make a splendid Bible woman, but beer is and has been for all these years her stumbling block. Her husband, being a heathen, a good worker who always works hard planting, weeding, etc., the gardens, always expects her to grind and brew beer for him. And she cannot resist the temptation, but always helps him drink it. Can't some one at home get this Josifina on their hearts and pray her through to victory? Good chance for some one who wants to do missionary work but who cannot come here.

The mother was away also to the forest for wood, I expect to boil the beer with the next day. Well, Lina, her daughter, was very nice to us and took us to the "ilan" or hut for the young men. It is really the drawing room of the kraal, for everywhere one goes one finds a similar hut, nicely built, beautifully-made floor, and hanging up in various places will be the newest skin dresses of the young men. Beaded belts, fancy sticks, strings of beads or of skin made in nicely rolled strips, so the hair is outside. These they wind about the body, arms or head as they fancy. You all know these dandy young men do not wear enough to cover their bodies, just loin skins, like an apron behind and a peculiar apron in front. The rest of the dress is only for ornament and consists of bead work, a feather or two, and these long, nicely-made ropes of skin.

The hut was so cool and as the girls took down several nice clean grass mats we sat down on these with comfort. Lina was so thoughtful, spreading down a narrow mat on the door-step, for the door is so low and small one must get down on hands and knees and crawl through. Fancy what a woman's dress would look like

after visiting a lot of people in their huts if no mat covered the earthen door-steps. It really is not a step at all, only a pounded and smoothed ant-heap. By the time all had entered we had eleven people and nearly all grown up. The uncle, who was talking as the girls ground amabele, told me the "Amadhlose"—ancestral spirits—were no good. I was surprised, but I believe he, like others, is seeing something of the deception the devil has always held before these people. The past two years of sickness and trouble seem to have shaken the faith of many in the gods of their fathers.

We had a very fine meeting and a personal talk with each one; then bidding them good-bye, we passed on.

At the third kraal was one woman and a small boy. She was busy putting up a grass fence to keep the pig from getting into her hut. It was a continuation of a wind-break before the hut door, but would only be about eighteen inches high, so they could step over it but piggy could not.

Asking for a mat, we sat down in the slight shade of the hut and fence. She told me her troubles. Several years before, death had come and swept away several people within a few months, so all were depressed, thinking they had been bewitched by some evil-minded person. They split up the village, part of it moving several miles away, and this woman's part a short distance from the old site. Recently the young bride of the kraal lost her baby, and again gloom hung above these poor souls. Terrified from the superstitions of the Zulus, who can comfort them at such a time?

She listened so hungrily as I opened God's word and read about Jesus and His power to save from even these great terrors. Again I heard a Zulu, not yet a Christian, say the "Amadhlosi" fail to help in time of need.

She also told me she did not have the goat killed for the taking of medicine after one dies. This is a real victory, for the taking of medicine after one in the village dies is one of the Zulu customs.

She prayed well and is a real seeker after Jesus. I am sure her heart was comforted and I believe she is "not far from the kingdom."

Passing on over a very stony hill and down a long steep hill, but when we got there plenty of people needing help. A man, lame in one knee, came out of a hut to greet us. I told him my horse would be very grateful for a little corn, it would have no chance to eat any other food before sun-down and would be hungry. "Yebo, Nkosikazi," ("Yes, Queen"). While I took off the horse's bridle and tied her to the barn-yard fence, he was busy getting the grain. Such a funny barn-yard! Only a wide circle, fenced mostly with upright stakes and only large enough to hold the cattle at night. Nearby, on the other side of the barn-yard from us, standing high up on some posts and a platform, was a very ragged hut—a watch hut, I suppose. The wind being strong, I had a thought that my horse might take a bit of a fright at the ghost of a hut, but no, she was too busy picking up the corn by mouthfuls and enjoying its rich nourishment.

Entering the cool depths of the hut—an old living one this time—we found mats neatly spread on one side, the place of honor for visitors, while they sat at the opposite side from the deep earthen fireplace. About seven men were present and I lost no time, but singing a hymn and finding what would help the woman of the kraal, I began to preach unto her Jesus. Oh, what an opportunity, really among needy

heathens, a real live gospel to preach and hungry hearts anxious to be helped! Such thoughts rushed across my mind as I spoke. Then, too, here was Filita, one of our very first converts and one to whom I had given her first lessons in the primer. I had to encourage her much, as she was married, had a child or two and a husband to look after and work for, so she felt she did not have time to learn. However, she was helped and now is quite a good reader and knows a lot of her New Testament. She has a large circuit full of young people.

The woman of this kraal was twice bitten by a snake. Once when she was a girl and the second time when a married woman. Now she is a seeker, but bound by beer, etc.

Well, beloved, the devil sees to it that every soul who does not give his or her heart to Jesus when a young child is bound by something. But I am glad Christ has all power. He can free from every fetter Satan can make, if the seeking soul will only let Him.

Finishing our call here, we now had about **five miles before our next village** could be reached. (Two near-by villages had come up to meet us there, so we needed not to call on them.)

Down, down a steep hill and over a rough path across a swampy stream and up and over more hills with this heavy wind flapping the hats in our eyes, we were not sorry to reach our destination. First I thought the village was deserted, as the only things we saw were a pig and two barking dogs. Getting closer, however, and dismounting, we met a young man who took the horse and tied her in the shade of an old dilapidated goat shed.

Then we found the people, plenty of them, two head-men and five or six women. Entering the large hut, we found a box and a folded cloth for me to sit on and a nice mat for Filita. Losing no time, we began at once. Before we had finished the hymn, another man, one of their neighbors, came in, so we had thirteen adults and a fine meeting. One backslider cried unto the Lord to forgive him his sins and all the women prayed for help. Most of them are seekers. So amidst crying babies and a few other distracting things, we prayed through and felt it was a very profitable time.

Once more we must cross brooks and climb hills, and one hill was so difficult I had to dismount and lead my horse. As most of the people from the near-by kraals were with us, the day being far spent, we passed on, expecting to find two girls whom we wished to help, so they would be overcomers, but we only found the mothers at each place at home.

I must tell you about the last mother who is such a strange, rugged character. I just covet her for Jesus.

She was sitting in the shade of a pile of old thatching mats busily making a new one. Well, we sat down beside her and began to ask her about her soul. "Yes, I am hungry to know God. I am a seeker, but I love the things of this world," she replied. Now the beautiful lessons Jesus gave us of "The Rich Young Ruler," "The Rich Fool," etc., seemed to be just what would enlighten her. Then the self-sacrifice of the life of Jesus, what He left, etc., touched her heart, and as I enlarged on it and told how we who follow Him must all sacrifice those things that would hinder us in following Jesus, I told her of how Filita had left those same things she loved and also to come here to enlighten her, how the missionaries had to leave all they loved and even their dear ones. She was much surprised to learn my father was still alive.