

MISSIONARY CORRESPONDENCE.

Hartland P. O.,

Paulpietersburg, Natal.

Dear Highway Readers:

I wonder if you could picture the scene around here; the hills all green with half grown grass (some of the larger varieties are three feet high, but will be six feet tall when full grown). What few peaches succeeded in hanging on the trees in spite of three severe hail-storms, are ripening and so are the grapes and pomegranates.

What a contrast to the landscape around your homes—no fruit or green vegetables, no feed for the cattle, outside your barns, and only the ever green trees, to remind you that all your hills, now as white as snow can make them, will soon be green again.

There is quite a difference between the two pictures. And yet I do not think there is less of a contrast between you, spiritually, and the natives of our South Africa.

The word Heathen probably means a lot to anyone, but I very much doubt if any of God's missionaries, I mean even any of the oldest and most experienced of them, have ever realized the full meaning of the word!

Even the heathen themselves when they start to serve the Lord do not know what the matter is. For instance, one will decide for the Lord (to become a Christian), or as they say it, "offer themselves to God. Months afterwards you ask them when they are going to finish believing (really become a Christian), and they will almost always answer, "I do not know, the Devil is holding me." Now it is not the Devil, but Heathenism, his biggest machine in Africa! This machine of his manufacturers all sorts of chains and ropes with which he ties these poor people down to his darkness, and it is a black darkness as dense that they cannot see the light, and if it was not for God's wonderful power, not one would ever be saved.

One of the Devil's strongest chains is beer. All the natives know how to make it, and there is no wonder it is so hard for them to give it up as the women give it to their children before they are a year old, and from then on they are taught it is "food."

Some of them are years before they finally are free from it, but there are some whom the Lord delivers instantly.

Polygamy is another great drawback. Only a short time ago one of our young men, Abel, had two girls to whom he was engaged. One Sunday when I was across the Pongola, Samuel (the native evangelist) and several of the older Christians and myself had quite a long talk with him and his second girl. She said she would do what ever he decided. After praying with him, he said his heart was hard and he did not see how he could give her up. I said he had better pray over it and we would pray for him, and for him to give his final answer after a couple of weeks. I really feared that he would not give her up. And no wonder it was hard for him, for from the time he could

first understand, he has been taught it was a disgrace to have only one wife. All his relatives and all the natives around, except some few Christians, have all the wives they can get; so you see I had reason to fear. Two weeks later I was across the Pongola again and was so thankful to the Lord, when he told me everything was all right, and that he had given the girl up, keeping the first one. He said the Lord had given him a dream in which he saw himself dead, and a voice said he could not be buried, for no Christian would bury him and Samuel would not pray for him, for he was lost. He said he saw the Lord was showing him that he would be lost if he did not give up the girl and follow the light.

I would be very glad if some would put Abel on your prayer list; he needs your prayers very much.

There are many across the Pongola River who need the help of your prayers. Perhaps the eight new members, that I had the pleasure of baptizing in December, 1923, need your prayers as much as anyfi as they are living among heathen who often make it very hard for them to follow the Lord.

One of the girls across the Pongola who has for years been a good help visiting the sick and teaching the younger ones, has just lately been forced to marry a heathen man. Please pray for her that the Lord may keep her from backsliding and make her a shining light in her new home far from her fellow Christians.

Mrs. Sanders and I did what we could for her. Samuel said her man was willing to become a Christian, and we were hopeful that they would not get married until he did; when suddenly her heathen brothers took her off and married her to her heathen husband.

Our Christmas celebration across the Pongola came off very nicely indeed.

I went over the day before, about 9 a. m. A large flock of probably over 200 goats and native sheep (the native sheep are only kept for their meat, as their short coarse hairy wool is useless), were driven up and three sheep and two goats chosen out, one of the latter was presented by Asiena, a Christian worker, in memory of her dead husband, Johan Sukaze; who until his death was perhaps our best evangelist. His death was a very great loss.

During the morning another goat was brought, making three goats and three sheep, these with some corn and over twenty fowls made a fine feed for the three hundred natives who gathered for the event. About 2 p. m. they all sat down on the grass by the little stone church and listened well to the old but ever new story of the birth of our Saviour. There were, I think, over two hundred heathen and I hope the word spoken will bring forth much fruit. After the service they all filed up the path and each received a match-box except, sad to relate, the last few, for the 288 boxes of matches were gone.

It was comical, the fuss some women made because they did not get a little box of safety matches.

The eating would probably have been as interesting to you as anything else—no knives, forks, spoons (there was lots of gravy) or plates. The meat and coarse

porridge was served on pot covers or in baskets and two or three big wooden platters (the natives make these themselves). The natives sat in groups, men and women separate and heathen and christians in different companies. As the food was set in front of them, or rather in the centre of the circle, each reached for a hunk of meat and took a series of five big mouthfuls till it was gone, then reached for as big a handful of porridge as possible. When all this was gone, they pass the dish around and loudly sip the gravy. I did not take my camera with me as I heard that the river was full and thought I might have to swim my horse across; however, it was a false rumor.

Will close now with Christian greetings in which Mrs. Sanders joins me, and may the Lord richly bless you all in 1924.

Yours for His will,

H. PAUL SANDERS.

MISSIONARIES HAVING LUXURIES.

Our missionaries really indulged in luxuries quite recently, but the storm clouds made it possible for them. A terrible thunder storm broke upon that part of Africa, where our mission farm is situated, and great hailstones fell, so large that it was said that many of them were as large as turkey eggs.

As soon as the storm was over the children gathered up a lot of these pieces of ice, and Sister Sanders made ice-cream with them. Who would think that right in the hot summer time, that our missionaries would indulge in the luxury of ice-cream. Such extravagance for missionaries! That is bad enough for people at home, who have plenty of ice to indulge in such luxuries.

We have heard that some person was reporting that our missionaries were living luxuriously, but as we had not heard it directly, and had not heard of the nature of the luxuries being indulged in we doubted it, but here comes the direct acknowledgement that they had actually had ice cream. Well, well, we are afraid had we been there, we might have been tempted to help them dispose of this luxury before the hot African air had melted it into just plain common cream. It certainly was a very unusual thing, and had there been enough of it, it seems to us that those poor black children could they have tasted this luxury, so common to white people in Canada, they would have danced for joy, and would have wished for another great thunder storm with hail, with sugar and cream.—S. A. B.

You will be tempted to the end of your life, and the nearer you live to Christ the more you will be tempted. It was after Jesus had seen the open heaven that He was led into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil; and the man that stands under the open heaven and sees that heavenly vision, is the man whom the devil will tempt to the uttermost. God will permit it because temptation does for us what the storms do for the oaks—it roots us; and what the fire does for the painting on porcelain—it makes us permanent.—F. B. Meyer.