

MISSIONARY CORRESPONDENCE

Hartland M. S., Paulpietersburg,
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Dear Highway Friends:

Once again we greet you from this far off land of Africa. It is not a land flowing with milk and honey but a land of rivers and mountains, and inhabited by a people beset by many difficulties. Thank God there are some "Caleb's" and "Joshua's" who fearlessly face these difficulties in His power. We thank God for the privilege of working with and knowing these people. There is a trite saying, which is not true, "Familiarity breeds contempt." It is particularly untrue of these people. Much, which on first sight would cause contempt, on further knowledge causes real admiration of these people, and a sympathetic understanding of these difficulties. I might illustrate this: In the matter of their giving to the church and to the work of the Lord people who do not know say, "Why are they not self-supporting? Why must they be carried by the Missionaries? Why must the Native Worker be supported by the Home friends? Why? Why? Why?"

We have in our work some Natives who have made as big a sacrifice as it is possible for anyone to make for the work of the Lord, save to give life itself, and even that they have risked and do risk. One of our Native workers, Johan Kunene, has sacrificed the third highest possible office. These offices are as follows: First king, then chief, then Induna. This position meant wealth, for he would be paid for his court cases and courts and also the fines he levied were to be paid in to him. He would have, possibly six to ten thousand people under him which meant power and honour as well as wealth, and although the chief and magistrate gave him his certificate of office, he gave it up because he felt he could not preach the gospel as it should be preached and shepherd his flock as it should be shepherded, while carrying on this other work, as it would take too much of his time. He gave up this rich position to spend and be spent in the service of a higher Master, though he was receiving no salary for this, and in addition was living on the farm of a Dutchman who demanded six months free labour from him and every member of his family, six months at least and often more. He has recently been put on salary, and again within the last few weeks he has turned down another remarkable offer for the sake of the Gospel. A wealthy farmer who has known him most of his life, knows his sterling qualities, his power of leadership, and power to command respect among the Natives, has offered him a nice house on a farm, a white man's house, free servants, a large farm with all the help to work it, and to have a share in all the profits of the farm. This in a district where the prejudice against the black is such that a black man is hardly allowed to come into a white man's house. This he has turned down, because he feels that if he were faithful to his white master it would take too much of his time from his flock, and in addition to this would necessitate his moving off the farm he now lives on, and would possibly mean the loss of the church site we now have on that farm, for we know that the white man in retaliation for the loss of this valuable man would drive the church off the farm. Further this white man treats him as a slave in many respects. Twice in the last two years he has confiscated his oxen, setting his own price upon them, forcing him to sell fifty or sixty dollars lower than he can get from any other man. The last time, a month ago, not even paying him

cash. In the meantime he must find money to buy for cash, oxen to take their place; all of this he suffers for the sake of the work of the Lord, just praying that the Lord will give him grace to bear his burden for His sake. Surely, Brother and Sister Fred Brown of Lower Brighton, will feel their sacrifice worth while in maintaining such a man. His wife and children gladly join with him in these sacrifices, his wife a worthy helpmeet, preaching and holding the women's class and with no salary.

We have other men in the work who are giving their all for the sake of the Lord. Their all does not mean as much as Johan Kunene's but nevertheless it is their all. We have some who are not willing to give their all, just the same as you find among the white, or any people.

Another phase of the difficulties with which our Native church is confronted is the law in this country, relative to Natives. First, no Native is allowed to own land. Second no white man is allowed to rent land to Natives in this part of the country. Third there are small Government farms where they can rent home sites, at about forty or forty-five dollars a year, but these are so crowded that there are almost no garden lands, and usually occupied by the worst type of Natives in the district, the lawless and anti-white, many Christians fear to live on these farms. There are small locations in some of the cities where they can hire, but these do not afford proper garden lands. The only alternative for the poor Native is this, that he must go to some white farmer and make an agreement with him which means that every one of his children must work six months of the year, free; that in most cases he and his wife are liable to be called for work, hers usually amounts to about three months during the year, and he may have to work the full six months, and in addition is liable to be called for a day or days at any time his white man may see fit. Should he wish to go away to work for wages he must first get a letter from his white man giving him permission to go away. This must be stamped by the Magistrate. A new law has recently come into force whereby the white man or owner of the place is rendered liable to a fine of twenty-five dollars per year for any one whom he allows to go away before he has completed his six months of service.

Now, granting that both the man and wife are Christians, granting also that they are industrious, hard working people, making use of all the time that they have to themselves, no matter how generously they give to the Lord, it is bound to be small. He has his family to clothe, five dollars per year head tax to pay, seventy-five cents for the dipping of every cow he may possess, and often must buy food. If he has a dog, he has to pay two dollars and fifty cents dog tax. Their gardens are seldom in fenced land which means one member of the family must be shepherding all the time, and if they plant Amabele, which grows on land too poor to raise corn, and brings twice as much in price, one at least must stand and watch the birds away from earliest dawn till dusk for two months.

Now we are speaking of the most ideal Christian native family. At the very best their giving must be small, for one half if not two thirds of their time is already given away in free labour to their white man. For two thirds of the year if they have no chance to help themselves at all, especially if their white man is a Dutchman, for few Dutchman show any mercy or sense of justice in their relationship with the Natives

Now the conditions which I have cited, bad as they are, apply to the most ideal Native family, where every member of the family is working for the Gospel cause, and even if they are to do their best, you can readily see how small that must be. But the condition of many of our Christians is much worse than this above cited. For example take the case of Joana Mdiniso. She is the first wife in her husband's kraal and should be the "queen or ruling wife". He is a heathen whom she married in her heathen state, and has since taken two other wives, heathen, like himself, who have alienated his affection for his first wife, who treat her like a dog, and although she is a sick woman he does not provide for her in any way. She must clothe herself and her children (his children as well, for he is the only husband she has ever had), she must build her own house, or pay for having it done, must pay for the ploughing, cultivate and reap alone, and buy whatever she fails to raise; how can she give to the work of the Lord? Besides doing all this, she provides food for her husband, for he gets his share of every meal.

Another example, Tryfina Sibiya, one of our Native Workers in the Transvaal, also married in her heathenism to a heathen husband; he takes a second wife who makes her life as miserable as possible and finally has her husband drive her away. She has her own little family to support and has had all these years. Through it all, these women have kept beautiful experiences in the Lord, but how can you expect much in the form of offering from such cases? I suppose three out of every four in our membership are such wives of heathen husbands who make no provision whatsoever for the clothing of their wives or children and may or may not provide part of the food.

Let me give one more example; Tabita Sikonde. Her husband had two other wives whom he took after she had married him. Last year in the midst of famine here, when the food was finished, he took one of her goats and went to the Compound, supposedly to buy food for his starving family. He left her with her own children, and the children of the other wives, without a bit of food in the home. Instead of returning with food he sold the goat and forsaking his poor little family in their dire need, stayed on, living with a prostitute in the compound. This is enough to show you a picture of what the Christian is up against here.

Again, take the position when you open up a work in a new field like that at Moolman where there seems to be a real need of a church at once, and where permission was granted by a white man on condition that work is begun at once, and no one there to finance it. The Missionary must do so out of his own pocket. The church there has cost me about seventy dollars, and at that was very cheap, for we were able to get walls already erected and just needing a roof, and some other repairs. In our offering at the church opening we received about a dollar in cash, ten eggs, and a few safety pins. "What an offering!" you say. Well they gave what they had. They are almost all heathen. Does it pay to build churches under such circumstances if you are looking for dollars and cents? "No!". If you are counting souls, "Yes!", for eight have already given themselves to the Lord and others will soon follow.

May I state the proposition of new churches in new fields is a real need here. There are some places where you can start in a hut and work up a congregation who will build their own church like they did at Mbucu's, but there are places like the one mentioned at Moolman and