

MISSIONARY CORRESPONDENCE

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Dear Homeland Friends:

Summer time again in Africa with its heat and beauty, down pours of rain and times of drought. There is much to enjoy and delight in, mingled with the strain on the physical, and we "praise God from whom all blessings flow."

We have received some refreshing showers lately, and the atmosphere has been changed from intense, depressing heat to a delightful coolness which helps us so much. The whole country is so green and beautiful to look upon and all the natives are busy plowing—hoping for a good rainy season. We trust the Lord will be gracious.

We long to see more refreshing spiritual showers also. Last Thursday we had a very lovely class meeting. Sunday was also a day of refreshing. A larger number of young people attended the service, many of them from the other churches. Our hearts do yearn over these young Zulu people for many of them are taught error and have no true conception of the gospel.

Helen was at Emozane, had a good congregation and good service. The husband of Evelina Mabhuga was there—the first time he ever attended a service in the church. She said his face is so changed and happy. He returned from Johannesburg a few months ago and said he wanted to become a Christian. This was welcome news to us all and especially to his wife who has lived these years with a heathen husband. They had a good harvest of "amabelle," a grain from which they make beer, but he said though he had such a lot of the grain, he never wanted to see beer made again in his kraal. He gave himself to the Lord on Oct. 16th, and has been growing ever since. Many of his old companions came flocking to his home when they heard he had given himself to the Lord, and besought him to have one more big beer drink to say "good-bye" with, and then leave off after that, and in other ways endeavored to hinder his soul, but he was greatly helped of the Lord and would not listen to their request. A few Sundays back he accompanied Isaya on a visit to a distant kraal to see a sick woman and surely he does show that he is leaving the world to follow Jesus. Dear friends, it does rejoice our hearts so much to see this young man really seeking God. He has been always very kind to us and treated us well when we went to his home, and often attended services held there, but his heart and life were with the heathen people. When Solomon, King of the Zulus, visited that place he was one of the foremost in dancing and jumping before him; in fact it seemed that his performances surpassed the others, for he is slim and nimble.

Isaya holds meetings there quite often now and told us that this man Uspoti Mota, testified one day that he had desired to have more than one wife, but now he sees the hand of the Lord in preventing him, so we do praise God for what he is doing. It will be a very happy Christmas season for him for he will come to the services and feast and have a new glimpse of life among the Christians. It is beautiful, dear friends, to see a heathen turn from darkness to light.

On November 16th, we had our first Christian church wedding, and it was a very interesting event. There is a difference in a church wedding and a wedding by Christian rites

only. Many want to be married by the Christian rules, but are not willing to follow closely all the church rules pertaining to Christian engagements and marriages. Therefore they are denied the privilege of a public church wedding—it must be a private affair.

Joana Msibi has been a strict upright girl; gave up one or two young men because they would not follow Christian teaching, and when she chose Meshak Kunene, a member of the Independent Church, she let him know that she intended to adhere strictly to her Christian teaching. He respected her for it and agreed also to honor the custom of this church in their engagement.

We have appreciated this girl so much and her love for her church has been so apparent, we felt we must let her have a very nice wedding indeed for she was certainly worthy of it. We decorated the church with pink, green, white, silver and gold crepe paper, and hung a pretty Japanese lantern for them to stand under. It certainly was a pretty sight and something the natives had never seen before, which added to our enjoyment. We also took the organ over, for Joana is very fond of music, and loves the organ. The school children brought vines and palms which were placed at the gate and also to form a green border leading to the church door, so we had quite a festive appearance, both within and without.

A native wedding party consists of the bride and groom, bridesmaid and groomsman—the special four—and besides that the bride's party called the "umtimba," and the groom's party called the "iketo." These are the young friends and special young relatives of the contracting parties who accompany them, singing special songs.

Joana, who is the oldest daughter of a chief and very popular among her friends, had a very large "umtimba," but the groom's "iketo" was much smaller in number. He is an orphan and has been away to the towns for work most of the time. He has made her a nice two roomed house, with a real door and windows and by his diligence become quite a well to do young man.

Mr. MacDonald arrived at noon time to perform the ceremony. The bride came to Isaya's home with her friends and dressed there in her bridal array which was a very lovely white dress with veil, flowers, etc., and we felt quite proud of our pretty "makoti" (bride). The groom also looked very fine and the attending couple. The "iketo" came with the groom about 3 p. m. and marched down from Isaya's in advance of the bride's party singing very nicely. Outside the gate they waited for the bride, then the two parties separated and stood within the grounds while those who were assembled had a good chance to survey the wedding party. Singing does not cease during this time and it is really quite solemn and impressive. The bride entered the church first with her party, followed by the groom and his friends. We had ushers for the occasion and the seats for the both parties were decorated with white crepe paper, and the ushers also had their special touch of white. All these special things make a great impression on natives you know, and our desire was to show them that those who obey Christian teaching have much nicer weddings than those who follow Zulu customs. While the congregation was being seated the organ was played. Many of these natives had never before heard the sound of an organ nor seen such decorations,

nor been present at a Christian marriage ceremony, so it was really a very impressive hour for all. A deep solemnity pervaded the whole place, and we believe the name of the Lord was glorified on that occasion and we felt that it was good to be there.

After the ceremony the people remained in the church and sang while the register was signed and then the "special four" with Isaya and another native preacher who was present, were seated at a table on the verandah and given a lunch of bread, rolls, cake and tea which was served by our native girl and the teacher. Helen made a special cake for the bride with candy decorations, to show them a bit of European custom. They were very pleased indeed.

About 6 p. m. they left the mission station, all singing as they had done on arrival. Singing is the special feature of a Zulu wedding.

The bride returned to her father's home which is seven or eight miles from here to await the coming of the groom and his party next day to take her in proper Zulu fashion. Two oxen had been slaughtered and many friends of the kraal, both young and old, Christian and heathen, would meet there to feast and see the bride's departure. Mr. MacDonald returned home after the ceremony, and next morning George came over and went with Helen to see the proceedings at the kraal.

The "iketo" knowing that our church strictly forbids the worldly forms of amusement in which they like to indulge at weddings, purposely delayed going for the bride. This was really unfair and a disappointment to us and all the guests. The father, who is a heathen, was much displeased, but carried himself well in spite of his vexation. After the feast, it was getting so late the departure of the bride could not be accompanied with as much ceremony and interest as is usually done which was really disappointing to all, but the church of the "white people" is always receiving its "knocks" in one way or another and our natives know what to expect. They look away to the Lord and thank Him that they have a gospel of love which helps them to overcome all things. The anti-European spirit is certainly destructive to Christianity.

Joana had asked that the evening singing be carried on here in the Church, so as to be under proper supervision, so we had a chance to hear the whole wedding program, and it was all very good. Much of the singing was in English. Some cousins of the bride came from a school in Swaziland and sang in English. The groom provided tea to treat his guests and Helen made a generous supply of cookies. Presents were given the bride which was a pleasing part of the program. She received 48 — a very unusual thing for a Zulu bride and the key note of the whole affair was thanksgiving and praise because she had walked worthy of a Christian during these years. One thing brought the tears to one's eyes. The bride stood up and a number of her girl friends surrounded her and sang:

"Blessed be the fountain of blood
To a world of sinners revealed.
Blessed be the dear Son of God
Only by His stripes we are healed.
Though I've wandered far from His fold,
Bringing to my heart pain and woe,
Wash me in the blood of the Lamb
And I shall be whiter than snow."
Surely it was the blood of Jesus only who