

MISSIONARY CORRESPONDENCE

Altona Mission Station, P. O. Berbice,
Via Piet Retief, Transvaal, So. Af.

Dear Homeland Friends:

We have been enjoying a great downpour of rain all night, also yesterday heavy showers, and the prospects are that it will be very wet and showery all day, so I am hoping to get some letters written, for it may be a quiet day. We have had several weeks of hot dry weather and the crops have been lessened. The people were beginning to feel discouraged, fearing another drought, but this beautiful time of heavy rain has again saved the situation, and we do praise the God of love and mercy. The heat has been terrible indeed. Last week we were saddened by the sudden death of one of our Christian women. Their kraal is about twenty minutes walk from us and three of the children attend school.

Belina was a heathen woman when we came to live at Altona in 1928. Her husband is a very enterprising native—one of these Zulu men one cannot help but admire—for he is so dignified and fine in his manner. He is the son of an old chief, and therefore very proud of his name and family, also a strict adherent of all Zulu customs. In spite of all this pride and hardness, we have seen a tender side to his nature and he has always allowed us to have prayer at his home, attending respectfully himself when he was present at the kraal. His wife began attending services here at the church very soon and gave herself to the Lord about a year after we came here. Her husband also allowed the young children to be presented to the Lord, and Belina was baptized two years ago. We liked her so much and she was always so thankful for the help of the church, and many times expressed her thankfulness to the Lord for bringing us to Altona to live. She was sick only four days, and there is a suspicion that she was poisoned. We visited her each day and Isaya was there when she passed away. He found her much worse when he went to see her on Monday and she was soon gone. Though scarcely able to speak she expressed her hope in Jesus and said "Pray." She leaves an infant a month old, a small boy, and a boy who attends school. She has been a mother to four other children as well, and a faithful wife, a very hard working woman indeed. As she was his only wife, the man is left with a great burden, and we do pray for his soul. He has asked for prayers at his kraal, and we expect to go quite often with others. We do miss this dear woman.

The funeral was very largely attended. He wanted her buried near our church and made a rude coffin for her body which was brought to the burial place by ox wagon. It was truly a very impressive service. The native workers spoke lovely and the Spirit of the Lord came upon Isaya very blessedly. Conviction was deeply felt and we believe hearts were that day enlightened. We made a cross of wild flowers and had it placed on the coffin as an expression of the school children's sympathy. This was something very new to the natives and greatly touched their hearts.

Poisoning is suspected because of the fact that on the day she was taken sick she had drunk "amahen" (a refreshing non-intoxicating drink made from grain) and others who drank of the same "amahen" were also sick afterwards. One of the boys who came to school was taken sick that day, though he had drunk

but little of it. We gave him medicine and kept him here all night, but did not suspect poisoning until the father came next morning to see him and reported Belina's sickness. He had returned home the night before after three days absence at his heathen brother's wedding and found her quite sick.

Poisoning is a favorite way of killing among the natives, and "Ngati," the husband of Belina, has several bitter enemies because of his wealth and prosperity, for natives are very very jealous. "Ngati" certainly has a great desire to accumulate wealth. He owns great herds of goats, cattle and donkeys, raises quantities of tobacco to sell, owns a waggon and can do transport work, and this year has built himself a nice stone rondavel. He told us last year that the natives hate him because he sends his children to school also, but he wants them to learn and not grow up in ignorance. This is not the first time sickness has entered his home by poisoning, but this time it was a fatal attack, and the poor man is sadly stricken.

We have been told that his first wife was a very pretty and nice woman. He was very fond of her and proud of her fine heathen head-dress (isicolo), etc. She wanted to become a Christian, but he refused—told her to wait three years, but within one year she was seized with consumption and rapidly failed in health. She truly gave herself to Jesus and left a beautiful testimony exhorting her husband to become a Christian. Her triumphant death made a very deep impression in that heathen kraal, and I believe this man has never forgotten it. Now a second one has gone and we do pray for his soul. He separated from the big kraal many years ago and has his own home, so he is without any one to look after his children. His oldest brother, who is a smaller chief than Bheke-ipi, has taken the baby and small boy to his own home and the others are continuing school.

February 24th

My letter has had to remain unfinished all week, but I trust to send it in tomorrow's post.

Last night we had a hail storm, which was light here, but very bad in some sections. Our nearest white neighbor has had a very heavy loss indeed, and I suppose others have suffered as well.

We are looking for an eclipse of the sun this afternoon, and I hope it will be clear. It is wet and cloudy this morning after the storm last night.

Tuesday evening a few of us went to the Msibi kraal for an evening service with the bereaved man and his children. He received us very kindly and gathered them in the hut with him for the meeting. We had a very blessed meeting and when we arose from the closing prayer which was offered by Isaya, the man's eyes were wet with tears. Please remember this man in your prayers.

Well, I have left this letter to attend a wounded finger. Two women were at a beer-drink and got into a quarrel. This one has a badly bitten finger and the other one's face was bitten, but has healed, while the finger is in a bad state. The husband came with her and has consented to leave her here for a few days treatment. Both women are his wives and he has a third wife as well. Polygamy is indeed a curse in this land of Africa.

We have a very nice teacher now and are very thankful. Her influence over the chil-

dren is very helpful and she is doing good work in school.

Isaya's youngest child is very sick with pneumonia. We trust she will recover. We had a beautiful class-meeting yesterday afternoon and Isaya expressed his confidence and hope in God. In times of trial surely this Zulu man does shine for Jesus and the whole community have confidence in him as a Christian.

We have had a widow staying here for two weeks who was sadly neglected by her husband's people. When the native Christians visited her they were surprised to see how little they looked after her, and I found her with no one to stay with her at night. It was really sad to see her so neglected, so we had her brought here. She went home yesterday, looking so well and happy, rejoicing in the Lord's goodness. She does not want to live in her husband's kraal any longer, nor do we want her to, for we fear another case of poisoning if she does stay there. Her sister-wife is a very jealous and dangerous woman so she has gone now to her mother's home. These poor natives live under such a fear of witch-craft and the evil practices are truly appalling—only the grace of God can deliver them from it all, and we do praise Him for what He has done for many, and pray that many more may be saved and delivered from bondage.

With Christain love to all from us both,
I am, Yours in Him,

ALICE F. STERRITT

BROODING OVER TROUBLE

Brooding over troubles has hatched out many an evil.

The more we study and morbidly brood over them the bigger they get. Look away from them to God. It was only when Peter got his eyes off Jesus on the waves that he became frightened. Many people look so long at their sorrows that they are unfitted for life. When the trouble comes, take it at once to Jesus and lay it on His mighty shoulders, and instead of looking at it any more, look at Him, and the burden will become a song.

A. B. Simpson says: "Don't run away from them. Don't magnify them. The more you brood over them the bigger they get. Do not take them with you, spoiling your digestion, by feeding upon them all day, and making everybody unhappy by throwing their shadows on every one you meet. But with a resolute, courageous and trustful spirit take them to God in prayer and then go forth to meet and vanquish them, and you will find that they are much less formidable than you feared."

An old farmer ploughed around a rock in one of his fields for many years, and had grown actually morbid over it, for he had broken a cultivator and two ploughs over it, besides losing a lot of valuable land in its vicinity. One day he made up his mind that he would dig it out and have done with it. And lo, when he put his crowbar under it he found that it was less than a foot thick and he could loosen it with a trifling effort and lift it bodily into his farm wagon to cart away. He smiled to think how all these years it had haunted him.

So shall we some day look back upon our trials and upon our anxious cares and find how needless many of them were, so unreal, and yet so distressing that we can say like the old lady when she was reviewing her past life, "I've had so many trials, especially those that never came." —Living Water. The Holiness Era.