

MISSIONARY CORRESPONDENCE

Altona M. S.,

Dear Highway:

Some weeks have passed since we wrote last. We have been waiting for Canadian mail but seemingly in vain; letters are few and far between. It seems as if some of our mail has been lost on the way.

The weather here has been very hot and dry lately. The corn crop and others will likely be small as the result of drought. We are trusting for rain to clear the atmosphere and water the crops.

Our Hartland Quarterly came to a close on Sunday. It began on Wednesday. Most of the Natal workers were in attendance but several Transvaal workers did not get there. As usual, we had a busy time as there were many persons to interview and matters to discuss. A good spirit was present in all the sessions. We were especially blessed in the Sunday afternoon preaching service; conviction was strong and many came to the altar for help.

Six persons were disciplined. One woman was restored to partaking of the Lord's table. Two girls were baptized and given the right hand of fellowship.

Several of the interviews and discussions were quite interesting in showing the character of the natives and in illustrating the peculiar problems we have to face on the mission field.

We interviewed Joana, the wife of Paul Nkosi, as we had heard she was not partaking of Communion. She explained she had not been publicly restored after having back-slidden some years ago when she was engaged to her husband who was then a heathen. When he heard of her reverting to heathenism on his account, he wrote and told her that she should not leave off being a Christian because of him for he said, "If you will leave off being a Christian for me, some day you may leave me for another man." Not having been publicly restored she did not feel just right about taking Communion; nor did she feel that it was her place to ask for restoration; it was the preacher's place to ask her. This case illustrates how rigid the native system of dealing with one another is. The native is very sensitive and careful about rights, rank, privileges, methods, etc. Many of the differences between natives and Europeans out here is because the European either does not understand the ways of the native or else he ignores or flaunts them.

We dealt with another case of restoration. In this instance a worker was involved. He had been set aside for selling tobacco. When we interviewed him he brought up the fact that several of our members had been talking about his domestic life and were casting reflections on his integrity. He wanted this talk settled before he could feel right in his heart. It took the whole night long to talk this out—until dawn. Then after they had forgiven one another and we had agreed to restore him to the Lord's table (but not as a worker), he rose up in arms and refused to be restored to the Lord's table if he could not be restored as a worker also. A night's work seemingly wasted!

Among the problems discussed was the advisability or inadvisability of allowing polygamists (men) into church membership. Some feel that men who took several wives in their heathen state might be allowed in in their old age if they appeared to have a good experience and had lived exem-

plary lives for some years. Some feel that the verse: "ordain elders . . . the husband of one wife," implies that members other than elders might be admitted even though they had several wives in the transitional stage from heathenism to Christianity. Others feel that it would be a mistake to allow such a thing; it would be lowering standards. The matter was left over for further study and discussion.

We are now looking forward to the opening of the Little Mapandhleri Church Sunday after next; also to the preachers' school the following week. Pray for work.

Yours in Him,

E. A. M. KIERSTEAD

I WAS A PRISONER OF THE JAPANESE

(Abridged)

I was a prisoner of Japan. I have just come out of that horror—but if you are looking for one of those atrocity story articles, you had better stop reading right here. I suffered, yes—but no more, and probably not as much as the Japanese themselves are suffering now; certainly no more than the Koreans and the Chinese have suffered. I come back to you not with a long, sad tale of brutality and torture, but with another message. Read it carefully: The money that you folks in America have been spending on missions in the East is the best investment you have ever made. It has created between the people of the East and American people the only bond of understanding and the only ray of hope that is left. The seed of the Gospel which you have planted there has only just begun to grow. The Church of Jesus Christ in Japan, China and Korea is absolutely indestructible! Please remember that!

I say I suffered. Some of this was inflicted suffering, but most of it was due to nothing more than the chaos of war, and to the brutality that is roused everywhere, once the bugles begin to blow and the killing begins. I bear no malice: I cannot hate; I only want to get back to the mission field and get to work again.

The police came for me on December 7th, on the very day they bombed Pearl Harbor. We were bundled off to an interment at the Methodist Theological Seminary at Seoul, twelve of us—six missionaries, a Hungarian chemist, two White Russians, an American banker, a retired Canadian mining man, and a young lady. We had our own bedding, for which we paid five sen (a little over one cent) a day; food was brought to us from our homes; we had plenty of books * * * and the English paper published in Tokyo. Having from two to five guards in the room with us wasn't particularly pleasant, but we made the best of it. The worst part of it was in being cut off from our families.

The real trouble began when they moved those of us who were "suspicious cases" to the police station, where we were crowded twenty at a time into 11' x 11' cells. We slept on the bare wooden floor. I had my overcoat for cover, and the corner of a blanket. We could not speak to each other, but only to our guards. For a week at a time I did not stir out of that cell. And then, there was the food. What food! A contractor was being paid by the government to feed us, at the rate of 11 sen (or less than 3c) per day. The contractor had to make his profit out of that—and I think he made plenty. We lived on a diet of one small bowl of boiled rice, a tiny portion of boiled burdock roots, and a half cup of warm

water, three times a day. We all began to lose weight. There was no exercise, no chance to keep clean, nothing to read—and a lot of lice! One day Dr. Miller's cellmates went over him and his clothes, and they picked off 600 of the little pests. This was hard, but it was understandable. All Korea—and all Japan, for that matter—was on a limited diet, in jail or out of jail. All living conditions were hard; people everywhere lived in a state of suspense.

For weeks I was treated as a criminal, spoken to in the rudest possible language, subjected to beatings and other indignities. But one evening I was called to the bars of the cell, to confront one of the guards who had just come on to watch us through the night. He spoke to me:

"Do you remember me, honorable teacher?"

"No," I replied. "In this light and without my glasses (our glasses were taken from us lest we try to kill ourselves) I'm afraid I can't see you well enough to tell who you are."

He came closer, and whispered, "I am—, who graduated from your honorable school in the class of—"

And he was! For half an hour the police cell, and the bars faded away, and we stood there and talked of old times, as teacher and student again, as friends. Unless you have felt the brutal rudeness of the language of the Japanese police, you cannot understand what that half hour meant to me.

"Honorable head-master," begged he, "what can I do for you?"

I told him I needed nothing!!! it was the best answer I could make, under the circumstances. He left me, and went out to join a group of his soldier-comrades around a stove where they did all their cooking. Shortly, he was at my cell door again. He pushed through a little saucer of sliced turnip which the police ate with their rice. Our rice was cooked entirely without salt, and the few shreds of boiled roots that went with it were practically tasteless. We longed for a little seasoning—and here were eight slices of it! I divided it with two sick men in the cell, and we ate it with all the relish of men eating their Thanksgiving dinner.

A pretty gesture, you think, on the cop's part? Don't fool yourself. It was a lot more than that. He would have been in serious trouble if his superiors had caught him passing food to prisoners, for prisoners, to the Japanese, are not supposed to be treated like human beings. This boy's loyalty was too much for that barbarism. Who was it who said that "night brings out the stars?"

Aye, "night brings out the stars;" adversity brings forth faith; this war is bringing the seeds of Christianity to full bloom—right in the Japanese police force!

On the seventeenth day of my stay in the cell, I got a meal from home. Crisp radishes, fresh lettuce, a small hamburger, and creamed potatoes! And the next day, with another home meal, there were flowers! I did not know the whole story until I was released, then my wife told me that our Christian servant boy was really responsible for the flowers. The first day he came with my home-cooked food, he had a bouquet for me, but the officer in charge pulled them out of the basket and hurled them to the floor. "No flowers for him!" snarled the officer. The boy picked the blossoms up, blew the dust from them, and set them on the desk of the official. "If the master cannot have them," he said, "then you shall have them!" The next day, the flowers