

MISSIONARY CORRESPONDENCE

LETTER FROM MISS CROWELL

Lisbon, Portugal,
December 27th, 1944

Dear Friends:

Little did I think last year that I would be spending Christmas in Lisbon. However, in spite of the fact that we are separated from our loved ones and friends for this season, when we all like to be together, I am glad to be here. At present this seems to be about the only door open through which missionaries can get out to their various fields. We pray that it may remain open to the many who are going out to carry the gospel to needy souls in every land.

Shortly after I last wrote you, I had word that all boats had been cancelled by the Portuguese government and there was no transportation out of Lisbon. On November 22nd, I left Toronto for New York, after receiving word that my Portuguese visa had been granted, and there was a slight possibility of a boat onward from Lisbon. I had to do some rushing about in New York, but got down to Philadelphia and aboard ship on Nov. 25th. We sailed Sunday morning. It was a beautiful day and we all met together for a service to praise God for His goodness to us. There were about 100 missionaries aboard, counting children, and many families, teachers, etc., going to the Near East. I enjoyed the twelve days at sea, except the several attacks of seasickness. We had a few rough days when most of the passengers kept in their cabins. On December 6th we spent the day at the Azores. We were not allowed ashore, but we could see the green fields and the town from the ship. Peddlars came out in little boats with all manner of wares to sell. I think the pineapples were enjoyed by everyone, as they were nice and fresh, and a welcome change to the food on the ship.

We docked at Lisbon on the morning of December 8th and were met by Mr. Grancha, an evangelical pastor who had arranged rooms for us and got us through customs. This gentleman has been most kind to us; also Mr. Oliveria, another brethren pastor. He works in one of the banks and has helped us with our affairs considerably. Everyone has been most kind to us, and are doing all they can to make our stay pleasant.

There is only one thing here that we mind, and that is the cold. We had snow the other day, the second time in seventy years, they tell us. The hotels and rooming houses have very little or no heating system. Today, I moved to the Florida Hotel, and for the first time since my arrival here, have been able to write a letter or eat a meal without several sweaters and a coat on. It is wonderful to be warm!

I have been very fortunate in having for my room-mates two girls on their way to India. Miss Alena Calkins, of the Friends Mission, a nurse going out for her third term; Miss Esther Close, a Pilgrim Holiness girl, going out under the Oriental Missionary Society for her second term. We have been together ever since our arrival in Lisbon and have fellowshiped together.

Christmas Day all the missionaries got together for a dinner at one of the hotels. We all felt we had a nice Christmas. The choir of the First Baptist Church was present and sang several songs. I was thrilled through

and through when they sang "Glory for Me." It was lovely to hear them sing. There are only about eight thousand Christians in Portugal. The population of Lisbon is eight hundred thousand. I know Mr. Grancha and Mr. Oliveria would appreciate your prayers as they carry on their soul-saving work here in this needy land.

I hope to get away about the middle of January. It will take twenty-eight days to go down the coast of Africa. It will be good to get started on the last lap of my journey. The Lord has been so good and His presence has been real to me during these days of travel. I have found that His promises do not fail, when we put our trust in Him and in His word. I am looking forward to reaching the field and starting work. I covet your prayers for the remainder of the trip, the learning of the language, and the getting used to another climate. We are having a little taste of it here. I would like very much for you to write to me and will answer all letters as time permits.

Sincerely yours,

MYRA CROWELL

Hartland M. S.

Dear Highway Friends:

You may be interested in my trip to Ngenetsheni, our outpost which is about 15 miles from here. To get there one has to climb two very rugged and steep hills, or mountains, and cross the Pivaan river. The outpost itself is set upon the top of one of these and has a more or less horse-shoe shaped range of cliffs surrounding it part way. Ngenetsheni means go into the rock. However, once you reach the church these cliffs are out of sight and there is a small tableland covered by many gardens and with a few native kraals dotted here and there.

I left home on horseback at about half past twelve in the early afternoon. I had planned to get away earlier but there seemed to be so many things to do that I was hindered. How often it is that way in life, and on such occasions Satan tries to get a person troubled. And how often it is too, that just such a little apparent hindrance later proves to be merely God appointed.

Thinking that Filimoni, one of our native preachers, would be going too, I went around to his home; but found that he did not think that the Pivaan river would be passable so had decided not to go. Because of the urgency of the occasion I had decided to go to the river and, if it were full, to sleep in some native kraal and try to cross on the following day. The following day was the day on which Paul Nkosi and Joana Shabangu were to be married by Christian rites. Joana will be a familiar name to our returned missionaries, the Misses Sterritt sisters, as she worked in their home for some time not very long after they first came to this country. Joana still recalls with pleasure her happy stay with them. The point of urgency about getting there was that if I did not, then there would be no one to perform the ceremony.

Paul and Joana had been married by the usual rites. He had paid the usual ten head of cattle, and the customary feasts had taken place, but they wished to receive the blessing of being united by Christian rites. Also he desired to come up to our church rule in this point.

I must say that I had some misgivings myself about being able to cross the Pivaan

river as we had had some heavy rains. The weather looked very threatening too, so I expected to have to ride through the coming storm. Then even if I succeeded in crossing the river there was the uncomfortable possibility of it filling up and preventing me from getting back home very soon. But as it often is in life, our greatest fears never become reality. God kept the storm away and though quite a little rain fell, yet the river was not at all hard to cross. So I went and returned safely and did not even have the heavy storms anticipated, to ride through.

It would have been very interesting for you to have been there to see the preliminaries to the wedding ceremony. The coming of the bridegroom from one hut, with singing, and the singing of the bridal party. The waiting outside of the bride's hut, she finally coming out. The short period the couple were seated on a special box set outside the bride's doorway. Then the slow process of walking to the little stone church. There were quite a few heathen present, including quite a few relatives of the groom. Because none of our workers from the Hartland side came to the occasion it left all the work for Paul and myself to do. God gave us a very blessed service, and rather a good time it was to impress the gathered heathen with the beauty and solemnity of the Christian ceremony.

After the service the company was broken up into three groups and refreshments were served. Two goats had been prepared for the occasion. Meat, samp (cracked corn boiled till it is soft), sweet potatoes and some coffee, composed the feast; in place of coffee, the most of the guests were served with "maheu," a refreshing drink made from corn or a native millet. The crowd dispersed just a short time before the evening darkness closed us in.

Before the service, Paul and I took a walk down to a brook which winds its way to the nearby cliff and there it goes tumbling down over the edge of the precipice. When we reached the edge of the high, rough cliff Paul walked fearlessly to within a few feet of the very edge. I did not at first venture so close, feeling an inspiration to greater respect. Looking down across the deep valley, on down between the hills, there I saw the place where the Pongola and Pivaan converge. These two winding rivers have caused your missionaries and native workers many an anxious moment and many long trips to go around by the long road to the distant bridge to get across when the flooded, forbidding river refused to let them cross its rushing torrents. There I stood and looked, while out in front and above us wheeled the powerful vultures, there shot out the swifts (a kind of swallow) and other birds joined in as they seemed to be in their paradise, without fear of being molested: they were safe in the fastness of the cliffs. Suddenly I saw a dark object moving on the hill below the cliff and I soon recognized it to be a baboon, later I saw a second one, or possibly it was the same one which had moved around to another place without me noticing its change of position. As this wild creature proceeded down the hillside Paul gave a shout, and whistled, and some goats, which were feeding just below and in the direction that the baboon was going, trotted out of its way. The vast stretch that broke upon the view, the towering cliffs, the sweeping wings of the large vultures and the trees and rushing stream all combined to give a lasting impression and a few thrills.

I have heard of two natives meeting death