

By Rev. J. A. Owens*

A Visit to Rhodesia

Rev. E. A. M. Kierstead

Dear Highway Friends,

I wonder if you ever had a day dream of twenty-five or thirty years standing come true? Well it nearly happened to me the two weeks before Christmas.

When I was still in High School I used to have dreams of travelling to different parts of the world, one of which was Africa. Later on while I was teaching and in college I felt a drawing to take up mission work and to do mission work in Northern Rhodesia in particular.

For much of the fifteen years we have been in South Africa I have had a desire to visit Rhodesia and see what the country was like and what the prospects of doing mission work were.

The purchase of a G.M.C. truck for our South African field gave us a trustworthy means of travel. Then a fellow missionary here at the college loaned us his movable semi-house top for the back of the truck so that we had a place in which to sleep and eat.

Within twenty-four hours from the time we decided to set off, we had obtained tourist passports, had our equipage packed and were headed north for Rhodesia thrilled to pieces wondering what was ahead of us.

On the journey, as far as Johannesburg, we were six: Harold, Shirley and baby, Brother Charles Sanders, Kenneth, and the writer. We went by way of Msobotsheni and Ermelo so that we could see the new partially completed church building at the first place and our new mission site at the latter place. Msobotsheni is about one hundred miles from Vryheid and Ermelo is about sixty miles farther along. We were all pleased with these two developments in our extension programme as each is a centre around which we have several well started outposts. We hope to build up both as mission centres as soon as finances become available for building churches, parsonages, etc.

We left Shirley and Jennifer to visit at their mother's and grandmother's respectively, then travelled still farther north, passing through Pretoria, Pietersburg, Louis Trichard, Messina and hence to the border of the Union of South Africa and Southern Rhodesia.

Early Tuesday morning we passed through the customs, crossed the Limpopo Bridge (Beitbridge), and were soon humming along through low-lying, sparsely spaced tree country over "strip" roads (many of the roads in Rhodesia are made with two strips of tar about a foot or so wide and the width of the car wheels apart) on towards Fort Victoria nearly two hundred miles from the border.

At Fort Victoria we started, what became a routine procedure with us in nearly every village and town we passed through, and asked numerous questions about the native population in the area, missions working in the area, school facilities already established for the natives, cost of building sites, etc., etc. We were most courteously received in every place and our questions were most helpfully answered—one would have thought we were ambassadors or some high-ranking dignitaries the attention we were given. We soon de-

veloped a high regard for the Rhodesian officials and their keenness to "sell" their country to visitors.

Near Fort Victoria we paid a short visit to the world famous Zimbabwe Ruins. They came up to our expectations, and, started within our minds, as in all other visitors, trains of thought as to when were these structures put up and by what "lost" race. Some think that they may have some connection with King Solomon and the source of his great stores of gold.

Our trip now took us directly east across the famous Birchenough Bridge which spans the Sabi river and into the mountains of the Melsette district nearly to the borders of Portuguese East Africa. What twisting and turning as we alternately climbed three to four thousand feet up the mountains and, then quickly descended an equal number of feet! This was repeated time after time. The scenery was simply grand!

The rains had started and we could have been mud bound in among the Melsetter mountains but the Lord's hand was upon us and we got out safely just in the nick of time.

Umtali, the eastern gateway town of the railroad coming into Rhodesia from Beira, nestled in a valley and surrounded by imposing granite topped hills, caught our fancy because of its beauty and planning. Wide streets, beautiful trees and flowers, and fine houses could be seen stretching along for several miles. A large well-built and well-planned native village lay to one side. Natives in this part of Rhodesia speak several dialects of the Shona language. There is little doubt but that we could find unevangelised areas among the Shonas if we had had time to scout about a bit in the back areas.

Farther along we were also quite taken by the small town of Marendellas which is about 5200 feet above sea level and has a delightful climate. The area to the east is extensive and fairly thickly populated for Rhodesia.

We found Salisbury to be a large and modern city and very attractive and up-to-date with many evidences of rapid development. Here we got a lot of useful information at the Education Department, Public Relations Department, and other places. We collected maps, brochures, and bulletins of interest as well.

PRAYER

There's a holy vocation

Needing workers everywhere;

'Tis the highest form of service,

'Tis the ministry of prayer;

There's no weapon half so mighty

As the intercessors bear;

Nor a broader field of service

Than the ministry of prayer.

Do you long to see the millions

Who are perishing today,

Snatched as brands plucked

From the burning? Do you long and

seldom pray?

Come and join the intercessors!

Laurels then someday you'll wear;

For there is no higher service

Than the ministry of prayer.

—Selected

Ever since the Great Commission was given to the Christian Church by Jesus Christ our Lord, Christian men have been endeavouring to carry His message of salvation to every tribe, kingdom and tongue of earth's people.

But to fulfill our Saviour's command we need trained young men and women, with a vision of the worth of those who "sit in darkness and in the shadow of death," and who consider leaving home-land and loved ones, not a sacrifice to stumble at, but a privilege for Jesus' sake.

Thank God we have them

We need churches with spiritual leaders who have a sustained vision of the lost ones of earth.

Thank God we have them

We need funds to finance our foreign missionary work, to make possible the continued support of those who are there, and also to send others.

Is it too much to say what I have said regarding our prospective missionaries and the churches, and not to include the latter? I think not.

Let us proclaim our Faith and Vision, by saying on Easter Sunday, in a great Foreign Mission Offering:

Thank God we have them.

*Foreign Missionary Society President.

From Salisbury we passed through Hartley, Gatooma, Que Que, and other smallish towns and went on until we came to Givelo where we once more made a lot of inquiries and came to the conclusion that we might find a new mission field somewhere in that vicinity. Here a Salvation Army school inspector was most kind and helpful in giving us advice and showing us un-schooled and unevangelised areas. Before we left Givelo we were all about ready to take leave of our Natal and Transvaal Stations and head for Rhodesia in the fever of our enthusiasm to start mission work in another country and to give the gospel to still other tribes.

When we got to Bulawayo we debated whether or not we should go up to Victoria Falls and on into Northern Rhodesia but reports of bad roads, rains, and the nearness of Christmas made us decide to strike for home. We drove practically non-stop for six hundred miles and arrived back in Johannesburg at about two o'clock Sunday morning.

On Sunday we drove out to Benoni where we had a service and our first Communion with our Benoni Location people. We were sorry to miss seeing several adherents who had gone on to Piet Retief for Christmas and our New Year's half-yearly Convention. Those who were present were very glad to see us.

Monday saw us on our way again, having picked up Shirley and Jennifer again, and it was not long before the last two hundred and fifty miles of our two thousand five hundred mile trip was covered and we were back home again in Vryheid with plenty of stories and ideas to keep us talking for hours.

Pray that we may find out the Lord's purpose and will in this trip, and that it may augur well for the future extension of our evangelistic and holiness effort in what was and to a certain extent still in Darkest Africa.

Yours in Him,

The King's Highway