

## JUST A DAY IN THE RHODESIAN FIELD

(Continued from Page 2)

is quite swampy in many places, but as now, in the height of the dry season, everywhere on the surface is quite dry and deep in dust.

Chidobe and Mizpah are each at one of these bore-holes, so is the new clinic site. So far they are fitted with a large and rather cumbersome hand pump, each bore-hole providing for a small village of people and their cattle. Anyway, off we started again in the "Land-rover", bound for the village at bore-hole 60 (wherever that might be). After a few miles of very rough going we came to a bore-hole and its villages, and my hopes rose, thinking it might be No. 60, but no, it was 23. Although I said nothing, my heart rather sank, as it seemed we might reasonably expect to pull up at bore-hole 60 around midnight, but no, the very next one was 60. (How they number those bore-holes, or whether they have any system about it, I do not know,) but it is good enough for out there in the virgin bush, and so long as we know where to find the places we are seeking, is all that really matters.

Here we found a really nice little village, of neatly thatched huts, surrounded by a fencing of poles, and the soil around it, instead of being the usual flat deep sand, had outcrops of rock, evidently of volcanic origin, while all around was the same dense growth of bush. These native huts, sometimes rectangular, sometimes round, are built by placing fairly straight poles close together, stuck in the ground at the bottom, tied by bark at the top, then plastered inside and out with clay. This, I believe, is the opposite of the method of building the old log huts "out west," where the logs were placed horizontally one on top of another. The people came out to the nearby bore-hole, bringing a chair each for us white folk, and a few grass sleeping-mats for themselves, which they spread in the shade of a fairly large tree, and there again a simple service was held for them, at the close of which Harold extracted 6 teeth (a good missionary needs be proficient in many things besides actual preaching and teaching). Here again the congregation numbered about 40, including a fair number of men. At each of these villages there seems to be a nucleus of folk who have had some contact with missions before, usually it is the London Missionary Society, so that they soon pick up some of our familiar hymns and fall into the general run of our services. Then followed the usual conversing with various individuals, and arrangements made for some future meetings, then some who were from the next village asked if we could not take them home and go there also. So along we went, with the back of the Landrover packed very full, and soon came to the next village, which for a wonder was at bore-hole 59. There they have a petrol pump fixed, and a good reinforced concrete storage tank, so all they have to do is to turn on the tap in order to fill their water pots. At Mizpah too, the government is now fitting a similar pump and storage-tank, and it will indeed be a great day if ever the new clinic can have the same, as thus far they have to laborously pump and carry by hand every drop of water they need, for their personal needs, as well as for the brick-making which is now in full swing.

By this time evening shadows were beginning to lengthen, and we thought to have just a few words with them concerning the possibility of services at some future date, but out the people came with a few chairs and their mats, all prepared for a service, so we held a brief one for them. Here was had a congregation of between 40 and 50, which included a good number of men and lads, and Harold gave them very simply the story of the

Prodigal Son as the sermon. Here again there was a troublesome tooth to extract, then the men came around, each seeming to have some problem to discuss at great length, and as darkness fell we had simply to tear ourselves away. I rather suspect there had been a beer-drinking in progress at that village, which accounted for the large number of men, and their eagerness to talk—though at no time are Africans at a loss for words, no matter if there be anything worth saying or not—and at least it was good that they all came to attend the service.

At those three sites—the new clinic, bore-holes 59 and 60, it seems we might go ahead at once to build a church and establish a school—and at scores of other villages too, if we had the time, money, and staff to commence the work. Those people are practically all of the Matabele tribe, closely related to the Zulus, and their language too, is very similar, so that missionaries who are familiar with the Zulu work and tongue down south (which unfortunately I myself am not), can quickly adapt themselves to work amongst these African folk.

Then on our way back we called in again at the clinic site, where the Haywoods already back from Mizpah, had very kindly prepared a nice supper for us; so we supped together by light of an oil lamp, in their dining-room, seated on odd corners of boxes. Beside their caravan they have rigged up what really is the top of our large mission lorry—a timber frame-work having a sheet of roofing-iron as its top and another sheet along each side—plenty of air space between the sides and roof, and along the bottom too, as it stands up on some bricks at each corner to give head space, and it has no door, but one end is closed by their refrigerator and food stores, and their wood stove stands near the open end; and this most convenient erection serves as their kitchen, bathroom, dining-room, or just whatever the occasion calls for. By that time it was 8 p.m., the two small children were bathed and put into their sleeping gowns, and they slept soundly all the way back home, which we reached about 9.30 without mishap or further event; as usual we brought quite a load of African passengers, some for the hospital in town, others coming in to do business or to visit their friends. So ended our day; we were all quite ready for our beds, but even more so for a bath, as the sand and dustiness of these areas, combined with the heat, makes a bath always welcome and even a necessity; and I sometimes think how fitting it could be if we here adopted the good old custom of Bible days of providing a foot-bath for guests as soon as they arrive. And I do think a "Landrover" is the ideal vehicle for work around here, as it seems to take in its stride just any kind of road which comes along, especially the unmade sandy bush tracks, and when in that with Harold at the wheel, I always rest confidently in the knowledge that we can get practically "anywhere".

So much for a little glimpse of the work amongst the African villages out in the bush. In the big locations near to town there also is an immense amount of work waiting to be done, and it is so full of its own special difficulties—the many differing tribes and tongues, and "town work" is always in some ways the more difficult than that amongst the more simple "bush folk." Nor is there time nor space here to mention the many others—the Indian folk, the Coloured, and not forgetting the Whites either—each in their own way of life more or less satisfied, seeking what life has to offer them—while not realizing the most important thing of all, that they are just so many lost souls, bound for a hopeless eternity. Everywhere one looks around the fields truly are white unto harvest;—pray ye therefore, the Lord of the harvest—.