

World of Missions

A Notable Communion Season in Central Africa.

By the Rev. Donald Fraser.

"We have just concluded a Communion season after the old Highland fashion. The people gathered in from all the out-stations, and spent five days together, humbling themselves before God and waiting on Him. For weeks before hand prayer had been offered at all the stations for the presence of the Lord among us, and a spirit of expectation had been created.

"On Monday, 2nd May, the strangers began to arrive. The first to come were from Mperembe's, the great warrior chief. Mateyu, the teacher, marched at their head, and behind him in a long line followed nearly seventy people. They brought with them a sheep and a goat, which Mperembe had sent as his contribution to Sabbath's collection.

"Next day, towards evening, the Njuju people arrived. We could see them winding their way down the hill-side in a straggling line, which stretched back for nearly a mile. Through all the forenoon of Wednesday bands of people continued to arrive, sometimes marching up the road in solid phalanx, with a swinging step, and sometimes in long drawn-out Indian file.

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"The paths to the south were alive with people. And men sat on the anti-hills as the companies passed, and cried out, 'What mean these things? Has an army come in among you? Are you going to a new country?' And the people cried back, 'We are going to the baptisms. Come and see.'

"As the strangers arrived at the school here they were received by Johane and Amon, the chiefs, and a number of the Christians, and conducted to the villages where they were to stay. More than one thousand people came, but accommodation was found for all.

"On Wednesday afternoon the services proper began. We met within a large grass screen, which served admirably as a church. A covered-over platform had been erected in the centre for the speakers. Here we gathered every morning at nine o'clock and at half-past ten. The audiences usually numbered between 2,000 and 3,000, and were addressed by Mr. Stuart, the Rev. James Henderson and myself. In the afternoons the native teachers addressed meetings in six of the chief villages, and in the evenings

held a great number of informal services.

"From the first a spirit of earnest expectation prevailed. The people listened as I have never seen them listen before. They had come up expecting to meet with Jesus, and I believe that many were not disappointed. For a long time we have been very conscious of the lack of deep experimental religion among the Christians, and not less among the teachers. These services were planned to meet this need in part. Earnest prayer was poured out for a deepening of spiritual life among the Christians. And so the addresses ran largely on that line. We spoke of sin on Wednesday and Thursday, and then of consecration to Christ, and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.

"Among some of the teachers God seemed to be moving mightily. At one of the evening meetings with them, after I had spoken of backsliding and the need of reconsecration, we had a time of open prayer. Man after man prayed, making broken confessions of sin, some were sobbing aloud, others gave way to severe physical emotion and became hysterical. But this noisy demonstration I sternly checked, and afterwards there was only the awful stillness that comes when God is dealing with men. Out in the bush during the night, or in the quiet of the early morning, more than one teacher confesses to having spoken with God, and claimed from Him His great gift. If this is to be the beginning of a new spirituality among the teachers, and if some of them did indeed open themselves out to the fullness of the Spirit, what praise shall we give to God? How solemn it is to stand by and see the birthday of a church. Whereunto shall this thing grow? Shepherd of the flock, let Thy rod and staff comfort.

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"On Saturday morning we intended to baptize the adults who were to be received into the Church, but owing to a cold, drizzling rain, we deferred it to the afternoon. But what a day that was. None such has ever been seen in Nyasaland. We baptized 195 adults, and on Sabbath afternoon eighty-nine children, in all 284 souls.

"On Communion Sabbath our monthly collection was taken at the beginning of the service. What a collection that was. We counted £1 8s. in money, 3 lbs. 6 oz. of small beads, 11 knives, 1 axe, 2 hoes, 5 finger rings, 3 bracelets, 1 spear, 14 pots, 16 baskets, 1 mat, 67

fowls, 2 goats, 2 sheep, 233 lbs. maize, 34 lbs. of potatoes, and 62 lbs. of pumpkins.

"A great congregation, numbering nearly 4,000 people, assembled. On the raised platform we three missionaries sat, along with our seven native elders. Arranged in rows before us was the little native church, and, crowding on all sides, the great mass of people. Hundreds of poor, naked, wondering women stood around on the right, and on a large anti-hill to the left sat some sixty or seventy men, many of them old warriors, looking down at the feast below, and wondering what it all meant. It was indeed a royal banquet, for to many the King was very near. And some faces that had been heavy and dull with the memory of sin, caught the radiance of the joy of the Lord.

"As we gathered together on Monday morning at sunrise to give God thanks, the note of joy was ringing. And we believe that more than one man went home conscious of a new fellowship with God the Holy Ghost."

Religion in India.

From an English magazine we cull the following: "Bhavani town is situated on the river Bhavani. It is a fairly large river, and at the end of the town it runs into the well known river, the Cauvery. It is a very large river, and sacred to the South Indians. On the way we met a large number of people, (principally young men), returning after having had their sacred bath. Nearly all of them were carrying little brass pots on their heads, full of water from the Cauvery. Asking them what they intended doing with it, they replied, 'We are going to pour it upon the gods (idols) in our own villages.'

"When we arrived at Bhavani the main street was crowded with people. Making our way to where the people were bathing, the first thing that drew our attention was the large number of beggars sitting on each side of the road. There were at least a hundred of them. Some did not look at all like beggars, others were really 'hard up' and many of them suffering from various diseases. The people who came to worship gave them grain and sometimes money. We soon found our way to where the people were bathing. Before going under the water they put a small coin on their heads, and as they go their sins go with it. We told them of Him whose blood was shed for the remission of sins, and not for ours only, but for the whole world. Some listened attentively, and others laughed at such a simple remedy. Others passed by and took no notice of what we were saying. We had several meetings and gave away Gospels which, we trust, will bring forth fruit. They say the crowd is not so large this year. May this be a sign that they are losing faith in their religion!"