

# Northern Messenger

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## Worship on the Congo.

Mr. Sidney Bowskill sends to the Baptist 'Missionary Herald' the following interesting account of the opening of a new chapel at San Salvador, on the Lower Congo river. He says:—

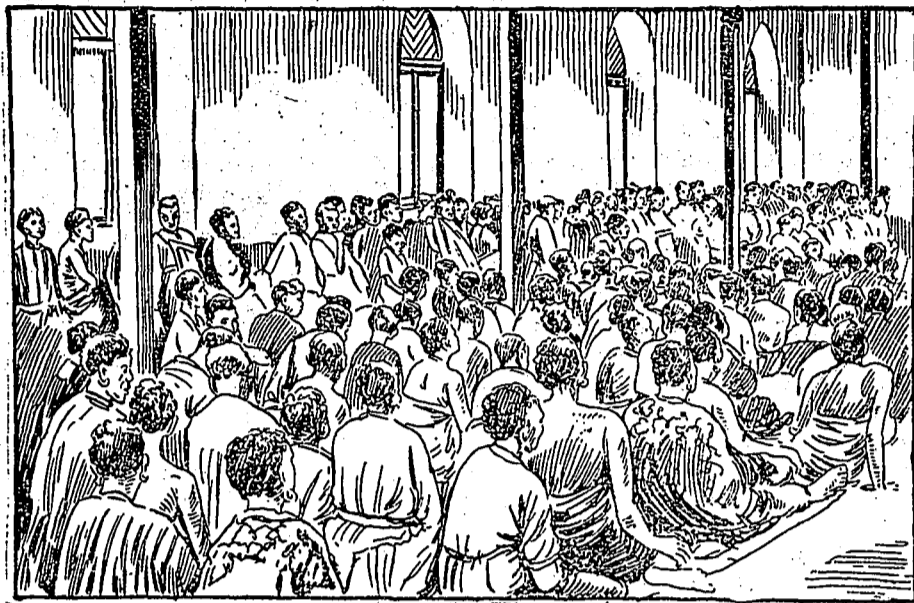
'The first service was fixed for Saturday, Sept. 16. But two days before, people began to arrive from outlying towns. On the Friday they seemed to come in swarms. Again and again one could see long files of them enter the gate by the chapel, and slowly wend their way along the path to our houses.

'First would come the chief; behind him his men, all clad in their best apparel and carrying their long, decorated staves; following these the women folk, also in their holiday attire, and carrying on their heads huge baskets of "chop" for their sustenance during the four or five days they would be here (see picture); and behind these, the children, looking as proud as princes at being allowed to come up to San Salvador and be present at the opening of the wonderful house of God.

'The natives of the town, from the King downwards, were determined that everything should be done in first-class Congo style. His Majesty, as his tribute, sent over a keg of gunpowder to the male church members, and long before sunrise on the opening day we were all suddenly aroused from our slumbers by loud and continuous reports of firearms.

'I understand there was no little rivalry as to who should fire the first shot, Nekaka, one of the deacons, securing the honor by rising between three and four a.m. Though we appreciated their enthusiasm, we did not altogether feel thankful for its early manifestation.

'As four p.m. drew near, the station began to be thronged with people. At 3.30, a huge crowd, determined to be in time, was patiently waiting outside the church doors, and when, some minutes later, we admitted them, the scene was indescribable. We only had a few seats, so these were ranged close to the wall all around the building,



OPENING OF THE NEW CHAPEL, SAN SALVADOR, CONGO.

grass mats being spread on the floor for others to occupy.

'Of course there was a rush made for the seats, which were soon filled; then came a good-humored tussle for the best positions on the floor (see picture). I suppose in less than five minutes—it seemed much less—the place was filled. One did not need to know the language in order to understand the people's feelings—a study of their faces was enough.

'Such a house they had never seen before; it was their house; for them to worship their Father God in, and they were proud of it. Indeed, they made such a deafening noise in discussing its many good points that we were obliged to start the choir singing, that order might be restored. But this reminds me; I must say a word concerning the choir.

'Mr. Ross Phillips, with great pains and perseverance, had got together a number of the young people and taught them to sing. How much this means only those who have undertaken similar work can understand, and when one remembers that these people seemed at first to have little or no idea of

tune, the difficulties he encountered and overcame can be somewhat appreciated.

'All I can say is, that the choir sang surprisingly well, and rendered invaluable service at each of the meetings. At four o'clock punctually, proceedings commenced, Mr. Phillips in the chair.

'The nature of the meeting was "a welcome for the newly-arrived missionaries" (Mr. and Mrs. Graham, Mr. and Mrs. Beedham, and myself). After the singing of a hymn, Bukusa (a male) and Wansevele (a female member of the church) led in prayer, thanking God for their new chapel, the safe arrival of their old friends, Mr. and Mrs. Graham, the presence of the new missionaries, and besought much blessing on their future work.'

The opening services lasted during the following Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday, and closed with a memorable and inspiring communion service.

Mr. Bowskill writes:—

'There yet remained one more meeting, the happiest of them all. At 3.30 on the Tuesday afternoon all the church members, to the number of about a hundred and sixty, assembled in the chapel to celebrate the dying love of our Lord. I cannot describe this meeting; I can only say we felt the presence of God in our midst in a marked manner. The station was now quiet, the majority of the people having left for their towns. The peace of God seemed to fill our hearts, and we were glad.

'And now this meeting was over; the night had closed in; we were again in the seclusion of our rooms, and thinking over the events of the past few days. Had our prayers been answered? Yea, verily. Had our expectations been realised? We had not dared to expect so great blessings. Were we grateful to God? Ay, we were, and still are.'

## Man the Surfboat.

Hark! A surfman opens the door of that life-saving station by the Atlantic and shouts, 'A wreck ashore!' What a tumult and yet what system!

The men in the living-room whose door was opened seem to be rushing in all directions at once, pulling on coat, hat, boots, and yet all soon are jumping one way. They



WOMEN FOLK ON THEIR WAY TO THE MEETINGS, SAN SALVADOR