

CHRISTMAS IN SOUTH AFRICA.

GRANDMOTHER.

The sun went down like a ball of fire behind the blue hills of Kranzkop, leaving St. Joseph's Mission Hospital standing stark and dark in shadowy veld.

The stars crept out, the fat heavy brooding stars, so typical of the clear atmosphere of South Africa, and if the Star of Bethlehem was not among them, at least the Southern Cross shone with steadfast radiance.

The Matron of St. Joseph's had just put the last touches to the Chapel decorations, the Figures had been placed in the Crib and a not-too-white Holy Child in the Manger.

As she left the Chapel she had said to Sister Rowlands who was fresh from England and her training school, "It is hard to think it is really Christmas on a hot and breathless night like this," and Sister had replied thoughtfully, "Yes, it is absurd how we try to restrict Christmas to the Northern Hemisphere."

It was at this point that Harriet the native Staff Nurse interrupted them—a cheerful girl with smiling white teeth in a coal black face, a neat scarlet uniform, and white apron, "Please Sister," she spoke almost perfect if slow sing-song English, "Please Sister, here is Grandmother again, she would like to see Sister, if Sister will please come."

"This is our Staff Nurse, Harriet, this is Sister Rowlands who has come out from England to help us. You would like to see the wards now, I expect, and we will see Grandmother on our way round."

The wards were huts of mud and thatch and each held a few beds which were beds, and more "beds" which were apparently mere heaps of rugs on the floor. Each ward was lighted by a paraffin lamp suspended from the ceiling roof. "Not quite the wards you are accustomed to," was the Matron's apology.

As they reached the last hut a figure rose unsteadily from the ground and advanced towards them. At first sight it looked like a living bundle of rags and bones and then as it drew towards the light the flickering lamp displayed an

incredibly old woman with a black skinny face, seared and wrinkled with age; one bony hand gripped an old shiney staff, while round her was clasped an indescribably filthy blanket. So this was Grandmother. The old lady advanced in the unselfconscious dignity which marks the old native, the old aristocrat, and seizing the Matron's hand she covered it with kisses.

"Ask her," said Matron, "where she has been all this time?"

"She has been up and down," translated Harriet, who combined interpreting with her other duties, "up and down the veld"—this with a comprehensive sweep of her arm—"sometimes sleeping here, sometimes there, sometimes she eats, and sometimes she does not eat when

the mealies are short and she cannot find a Kraal to stop at. She has been very sick lately, but she knew it was Christmas time and she wanted to come and see the piccaninny Jesus—her heart was sore to see the piccaninny Jesus, so she came."

"My mother, my father," murmured Grandmother in confirmation.

Matron gave orders for Grandmother's accommodation and led the way to the Sisters' house. During the evening she told the story of Grandmother's frequent visits and of the fascination which the Christmas Crib had for her. "She often used to sleep in the church beside the Crib at Christmas time, I suppose it was the smallness of the Figure which attracted her, anyway she never misses coming,

even when it entails a long journey without food to come."

They were sent for by Harriet late that same evening when the natives had begun to pour in from the neighbouring villages and kraals for the beloved Midnight Mass.

Grandmother was obviously much worse and very restless and she wanted to see the Crib.

They found her exhausted and breathing very badly, it was obvious that her hours were numbered. Sister Rowlands felt a sudden wave of pity in her heart for this lonely old woman who would never again see the Christmas Crib.

Just then a young native woman entered the hut, tall and fine looking, with a baby strapped by a blanket to her back.

Grandmother's eyes opened feebly and with a look of joy and recognition she murmured, "Piccaninny Jesus."

In the Mission Church next door in Zulu, Dutch and English, shrill voices were singing:

"Yea, Lord, we greet Thee
Born this happy morning;
Jesu, for ever be Thy name
adored." L. K.

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the National League of Nursing Education, 370, Seventh Avenue, New York.

Miss Gage asks us to say that she is not the author of the article on "Sprue," published in this journal in August and attributed to her in the Quarterly Journal for Chinese Nurses, from which we quoted it with acknowledgments. It was forwarded to that Journal by her, but was written by a medical man.

THE OUT-PATIENTS AGAIN.

C.O. (to female patient): "You were in—Ward?"

F.P.: "Yes, sir."

C.O.: "What was the complaint?"

F.P. (indignantly): "None. I was always treated as a perfect lady!"—*St. Bartholomew's Hospital Journal.*



THE CHRISTMAS CRIB.

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