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Newsletter No. 4

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Dear Friends:

Rees and I are thoroughly enjoying our work in Nigeria. The past two and a half months have been filled to the brim with quite an assortment of enjoyable experiences. We are making a cultural adjustment, but we are having a lot of fun doing it. I think of the time when Rees went all through the crowded market-place asking for avocados. He was followed by a sweating, chattering throng, all trying to help him, but none making any sense out of what he said. Finally, his eye fell on a pile of avocados, and he asked to buy them. "Oh!" they said. "You want to buy pears!" So now we ask for "pears", pronounce them "peers", and we feel quite at home. We have learned to feel "at home" in many other ways, also. The tropical climate no longer bothers us. The thick growth, the endless palm trees seem "natural". The lound babbling of bicycle-riding traders passing along the road below our house before dawn only seems to us another morning sound. All the things that were strange and new to us when we arrived are taking on proper perspective.

Never since we arrived have we felt that we were not needed. The need for Christian workers is evident on every hand. I had an experience this week which pointed this up. Our eight month old son, William Rees, was needing a check-up at a nearby hospital. I gathered him up, along with Sara Jo, our three-year-old, and one of our yard boys to hold the baby, and climbed into the motor. We were just pulling out of our driveway, when we were met by two men on bicycles. They stopped us, and asked if we could pick up a woman back in the bush who had had dysentery for two days. She wanted to go to the hospital. I said, "Yes!" I drove along sandy, wet roads, past little clusters of mud houses, through places where the road had grown up in grass, leaving only a foot path. We honked at squawking chickens and fat, sassy little goats that ran in front of our truck. Finally, my guide directed me to the very compound where the sick woman lay. Since there was a large area of standing water in front of her compound, I told her relatives to carry her to the motor so that we would not bog down. They insisted that she was too weak to be carried that far. They promised that if the motor got stuck, they would push it out. I drove through the water and right into the compound. Just as I drove in, I heard a commotion that I didn't understand at first. The noise grew louder, and then turned into a screaming wail. The woman had just died. All the villagers were running toward the place. Peo-
ple were emerging from the huts in the compound. They all began to scream at the top of their lungs. The sound was anguished, hopeless, despairing. For that soul, we had come to Nigeria too late. So far as I know, she had entered eternity without knowing Christ. There was reason for despair.

I related this experience to the doctor at the Catholic hospital where I took my baby. She asked me, "Did you baptize her?" I said, "No, I believe that after death, it is too late to baptize." She replied, "Oh, no. Baptism is good so long as putrefaction has not set in. It always makes me feel so much better if I know they have been baptized after death. But if she was living up to the best that she knew, even if she was a pagan, then she will be alright." Truly, there is great need for the truth in Nigeria. Let us redouble our efforts, build a fire under our zeal, and try to accomplish more for the Lord.

This week we met the Joe Cross family at Port Harcourt. We were so happy to see them. Bro. Cross and his family will live at Ikot-Usen and work with the Tommy Keltons. We had seen three families leave in April. It was a joy to see one arrive. We are eagerly awaiting the arrival of the Billy Nicks family on June 12. We will work together with them here at Onitsha Ngwa. Their arrival will make two white families in Iboland supported by churches of Christ in America. Needless to say, they will be welcome. We want you to know.

We want you to know again that we are very grateful for your support that enables us to be here. We are trying to fulfill the trust you have in us. We beg your continued prayers. You have ours.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Rees Bryant
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