

Basel Mission Archives

"Dilger to Basel"

Title: "Dilger to Basel"

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Description: A full report on the illness of Afwireng and the attempt to settle a catechist at Obo. After Afwireng was settled at Obo he was frequently visited, but things went along very slowly indeed. After two months he began to complain of pains in his arms and legs, and since he had arrived from Akwapim with an injured and swollen foot Dilger felt that this illness was a continuation of his old problems, and that rest and quiet would cure it. He was told, however, by doctors (traditonal presumably) that he was being poisoned, and instead of patiently waiting for the illness to run its course he became more and more convinced that they were right, and went about in a growing state of anxiety and fright. At this stage Kwabi was brought in by Afwireng - Dilger describes the treatment as drastic, without being specific. A few days after this he began to have fainting fits and they began to be really concerned about the danger to his life. Kwabi's comment was that his good medicine would be of no good if God had decided to call Afwireng to him. Afwireng was panic-stricken at this suggestion, with Kwabi present he got better again, and the missionaries suggested that he should return to Mpraeso and live with Kwabi for a time. However, the fainting fits continued. At this stage' Afwireng asked Dilger's advice about calling in another 'doctor', who, Dilger adds, was not only a heathen but a bad one. He was, however, a relative of Afwireng. The new doctor, knowing that he could not expect any payment for what he did for Afwireng advised him and Kwabi to claim the money they had lost since the beginning of the illness from the fetish priest of Obo who mus have poisoned him. The two teachers therefore sent to the fetish priest with the advice that he should come and heal the sick man. The fetish priest denied that it was he who had poisoned Afwireng, and swore the Kwahuhene's oath on the matter; but in the Kwahuhene's court the case went against him. At this stage the 'doctor' claimed 20 dollars. Dilger heard about this first on a Saturday in terms that the Kwahuhene had ordered the fetish priest to pay the costs of Afwireng's treatment and compensate him for the time he had lost. The matter had to rest on the next day because it was Sunday, but the next day Dilger met Kwabi and ordered that all moneys received had to be paid back since it was not right to take vengeance in this way. Kwabi asked about the covering of Afwireng's payments and Dilger said that the he could not promise it he thought the Basel Committee would cover these 'in these exceptional circumstances'. The money was exchanged 'after the exchange of a number of letters in my presence', and after 20 dollars had been given to the heathen 'doctor'which he refused to give up. Dilger promised to regard that sum as part of the expenses of Afwireng's illness which he would ask the Basel Committee to refund. Shortly after this they made the suggestion that Afwireng might go back to Akwapim for a time to see if that helped him, His wife said that if he were going to die he would die in Akwapim as well as in

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Kwahu, and if he were going to be cured, similarly - 'Such a speech naturally pleased us'. Eventually he went, however, when the suggestion came from Ramseyer himself, and the idea of his being under Dr. Fisch was spoken about. Dilger welcomes the latter point - he needs to know whether this poisoning story has any truth in order to formulate a policy for the next step to do with Obo. Subscript to the letter from Ramseyer: The story was not known to him before his visit to Kwahu as a result of which Afwireng was brought down to Akwapim, except the extent that they knew that Afwireng had been withdrawn to Bepong as a result of his illness and that poison was suspected. He brought Afwireng to Akwapim particularly on account of this poisoning story. Ramseyer obviously does not believe it in the slightest, saying (vis-vis Kwabi) that their employees are still sometimes somewhat superstitious, and that experience teaches that the African has no poison which can be given to a man surreptitiously - Paulo Mohenu himself bore witness to that effect. No-one in fact can say when and how poison was given to Afwireng. Ramseyer regrets that no-one took up this question with any energy - Afwireng has now lost all courage, and all energy to resist indeed one of the 'doctors' had made fetish for him. Ramseyer reprimanded him sharply for this. He is puzzled too by the scale of Afwireng's outlay on doctors. He had 20 of them, but the custom is that you pay the doctor a few shillings, and then only after he has cured you. As for Obo that should be re-settled with fresh courage. Subscript to the letter from Dr Fisch with a diagnosis of Afwireng's disease.

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