

Basel Mission Archives

"Eisenschmid to Basel"

Title: "Eisenschmid to Basel"

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Description: He stresses that he personally has knowledge only of the Akropong area. The emancipation has had effects in only isolated cases in Akwapim - people talk about 50 cases, and even if you double this number this is very few among so many slaves. In the Akropong community the daughter of an ex-slave Irenkyi took the opportunity offered by the proclamation to return to her parents. Several slaves ran away from Larteh recently to the coast - their master had an arrangement with the Tutu people to bring them back. The Tutu people found them in Aburi as Brother Widman's hammock-carriers and treated them very severely. The case came before the Akropong court, and the evildoers were fined a total of 240 dollars, partly as damages to those who were mishandled, partly as punishment money payable to the Akropong chief for breaking the new law. This not to say that the Akropong chief is for the proclamation. The effects have been much more striking in Akim, and this is understandable in terms of the much more oppressed situation of the slaves in that area. On May 28th Brother Mohr wrote that the King and his family had run away from Kibi, out of shame because many of his slaves had simply refused to serve him any longer and had claimed their freedom. He could have saved himself through public reading of the Proclamation and the promise of good treatment to his people, but instead he would not humble himself to this extent, and claimed that he could force people to remain in their traditional state. At this they ran away in dozens. The king left Kibi too, but was eventually brought back by the friendly encouragement of his elders. The slaves seek freedom under English protection on the coast, while the younger boys have done into the school. Eisenschmid goes on to explain how, as far as missionary work was concerned, everything in Akim was under the thumb of the chiefs and elders though he adds nevertheless that the school work was blessed to the extent that that very day the first Akim Catechist was being consecrated. He also repeats the event at which the elders instructed the missionaries never to accept converts without the master's permission, the withholding of the latter being final. The Akim masters are realising that if they want to keep their slaves, they must treat them humanely. Wages have not gone up as a result -- in fact except for those paid to craftsmen wages have returned to their pre-war level. This was not difficult to achieve in view of the number of Crepes looking for employment. Nor has the crime-rate increased - nor has a bread-less proletariat come into existence. The question of land for the slaves is the most important. At the moment an emancipated slave must go to the coast for British protection, unless he can find place with the mission. Leaving for the coast is not easy, obviously, and if it occurred on any scale it would lead to further depopulation of the inland areas. Thus without some arrangement concerning land the nerve of the emancipation is cut and it is prevented from coming to its proper development. On the other hand it is

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difficult to see how land could be provided - even remote and isolated places have their owners - should these be compensated by the Government? Or should the slaves simply be encouraged to settle? He does not seem to recognise the possibility suggested by Dieterle of a mixed situation in which the ex-slave was both free and attached to the landlord in some traditional way.

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