



NTSIKANA.

THE STORY OF AN AFRICAN HYMN.

By JOHN KNOX BOKWE.



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CHARLES WATERS, *Hon. Sec.*
56, Old Bailey, London, England.

—= INTRODUCTION. =—

THE story which is related in the following pages by Mr. Bokwe was written at my request, and has already appeared in "*The I.B.R.A. Messenger*." Through this channel it has been read by members of the International Bible Reading Association in all quarters of the world. During Mr. Bokwe's visit to England in 1892, I was glad to have a brief interview with him, and was much pleased with his ready and intelligent grasp of the subjects discussed, and his eagerness to adopt any plan promising to be of benefit to his fellow countrymen. The I.B.R.A. scheme of daily Bible Readings seemed to him to be a hopeful means of interesting the Kaffirs in their study of God's Word, and with his prompt and effective help Kaffir Cards were printed and issued early in 1893. Mr. Bokwe has continued to act

as Secretary for this department, and has had the pleasure of seeing his work increasing and proving very helpful in Sunday School work, and to those who have been brought under its influence.

I very cordially commend this little narrative, and have no doubt it will prove as interesting to others as it has already done to many in England and elsewhere. I look upon it also as a proof of the valuable work done at the Lovedale Mission, with which Mr. Bokwe has been so long associated.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "C. A. Waters". The signature is written in black ink on a white background. The letters are fluid and connected, with a prominent flourish at the end of the word "Waters".



NTSIKANA.

THE STORY OF AN AFRICAN HYMN.

By J. K. BOKWE, I.B.R.A. Kaffir Secretary.



Mr. J. K. Bokwe.

THE progress of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in Africa — considering that scarcely a century has elapsed since its advent — is indeed surprising. But it is not so much with Africa in general that the present story deals, as with the southern part of Africa, and, more particularly, with a

certain tribe in Kaffraria known as the "Gaika." It comprised several branches under different chiefs, but

the paramount chief of the whole Ama-Xosa, or Kaffir tribe, was Krell. The Gaika division was the most powerful and warlike in the south, and occupied territory which was named Kaffraria, the central town of which is King Williamstown.

The story of Ntsikana, the first Christian convert among the Kaffirs, necessarily touches on certain characteristics and customs of the people, which, perhaps, it may be interesting to relate. The colour of the people is more brown than black. To protect themselves from the effects of the hot sun, the women especially paint their faces, and such exposed parts of their bodies, with red ochre, or brownish clay, and anoint themselves also with fat. This gives them the colour of polished bronze, though before the clay has been rubbed off, the appearance is hideous and unnatural.

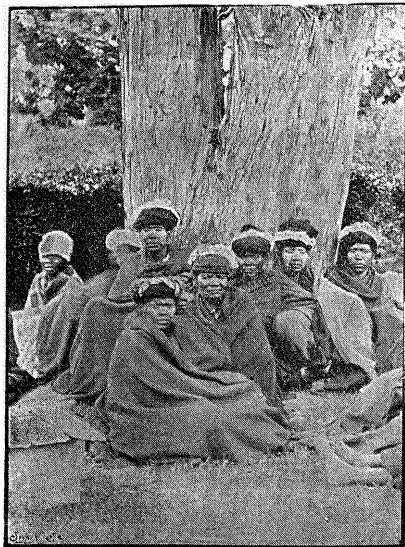
As to dress, originally the skins of animals formed the only material. The skin of the leopard or tiger was reserved for chiefs and principal councillors alone. All other kinds could be used even by common people. Women wore short leather skirts at all times; their persons decorated with ornaments, such as shells and teeth of animals, used as necklaces; copper and ivory rings on their arms, the latter ornaments also principally worn by men. (See p. 16.)

The Gaikas lived in villages, and in huts shaped like bee-hives, formed on strong wicker-work frames, thatched with reeds or grass, made proof against rain or wind. To this hut there was only one opening, a low, narrow aperture, which served for all purposes of light and ventilation. A fire was made in a round, shallow hole, in the centre of the hut, round which the family gathered. There was no chimney, so the smoke found its escape through this one door, or through the thatched roof. There were no separate rooms; one hut served for dining room, parlour, pantry, kitchen, and bedroom for the whole household, and sometimes for pet animals besides!

The chief builder of the house was the woman. She had to gather the material, build, thatch, and furnish ready for occupation. The only thing the man was called upon to do was to fix the four or six pillars supporting the roof of the hut. Chairs or tables were not needed; the flat mat spread on the earthen floor being sufficient for purposes of comfort. A low, wooden block, or stool, might sometimes have been found. It was, however, not a necessity.

While in their heathen state, they believed that there was a God, but they had no way of describing Him. They had no idol worship; but they believed in the existence of the spirits of their departed

ancestors, who they thought had the power of regulating their form of life; could take care of them on their travels; and could intercede for them to a Being



*Gasha Kaffir Women, painted in their
Heathen Clay.*

whom they called "Qamata," God, or "Nkulu-nkulu," the Greatest-great. The chiefs of the tribe, who were the only personages who had the privilege of a funeral

ceremony, were asked to intercede with this great Being—now that they had newly gone to join the spirits of the ancestors—for those left behind, and speak well of them when they had reached the land of bliss! One form of prayer was the custom of throwing a pebble on a heap of stones at a road-side or near the ford of a river, and, while throwing it, the individual exclaimed: "May God and the spirits of my fathers befriend me in the hour of need."

They had a strong belief in witchcraft. Every sickness or death, however natural, was attributed to this cause. The belief pervaded almost every act. An infant sleeping soundly on its mother's back, when about to cross a stream for the first time, must needs have its neck, or forehead, smeared with wet clay, taken from the water's edge, to propitiate the mermaids. A wolf was a witch, so was an owl; and when the latter uttered its doleful wail, it was supposed to be out on an errand of destruction for its owner. Each Gaika in the heathen state suspected the other of possessing deadly charms, or being in league with a miniature elephant, wolf, or baboon, which, amid the darkness of night, fulfilled its deadly commission. On his person, and in his tobacco pouch, he carried secret charms to ward off evil. The clashing of the elements in a thunderstorm were supposed to be the wings of an unseen, but deadly

bird, called "Impundulu," bearing messages of death from the great Being. The locality of a river was greatly feared, because supposed to be a resort of a snake, which had the power of changing itself to any form, and the coming in contact with which was the cause of leprosy and other diseases. There were other animals whose looks were believed to have such powers of attraction, that all cases of drowning were attributed to them. If a person was about to cross a ford, he was always recommended first to throw a stone at the nearest deep part of the river, and while the animal was winking with alarm, he had time to run for his life across the river!

Such was the state of this African tribe, typical also of other tribes, before the truths of the Gospel penetrated the land. The story of "Ntsikana" forms a connecting link between the days of utter darkness, such as I have described, and the now apparent marks of civilisation.

The Sunday School Union has, since 1893, generously helped the spread of the Gospel in South Africa by printing the I.B.R.A. cards in the Kaffir language. These are now penetrating into hundreds of homes, and the daily readings are being found very helpful. The Biblical passages are being read with more interest, and a

knowledge of the Gospel truth is thus being gained by the people. In the days of Ntsikana such advantages did not exist. No missionaries had settled in the country, and it was the falling of only one precious seed from a stray traveller which took root in Ntsikana's heart. The ever-careful Husbandman tended it, and fruit has been reaped abundantly.

Ntsikana was of the Galka tribe. His father's name was Gaba, who was a polygamist—as most Kaffirs are till they profess Christianity.

Ntsikana's mother was the second wife, perhaps better loved by her husband, and the first wife availed herself of the illness of another member of the family to bring about a charge of witchcraft against her rival. She consulted a Kaffir doctor, and succeeded—as it was easy to do—in getting him to confirm the charge. Ntsikana's mother was therefore adjudged a witch, and had to flee for her life to her own friends.

A few months later, Ntsikana was born, spending his childhood among his mother's people. At the age of twelve or thirteen, he was sent for by his father, Gaba, who laid claim to the lad on account of so many head of cattle having been paid for the mother before marriage.

There were no schools in dark Kaffirland in those days, and as soon as a boy was eight or nine, he was

occupied in tending goats and herding sheep. At the age of fifteen, he was promoted to herd cows and oxen. He learned to use his knob-kerrie and throw his assegai in hunting game and guarding his father's cattle, and thus prepared himself for fighting his chief's battles. His only article of clothing was a sheep-skin; and if he washed himself once in six months, he did well; indeed, nobody cared if the boy did not wash at all.

Ntsikana was at this cattle-herding age, when one day a strange, elderly white man arrived in Gaikaland, who, after being cautiously welcomed by the chief, was allowed to pitch his tent on the banks of the Keiskama River. The natives gave the stranger a name peculiar to the circumstance of his arrival, as they have since done to every European who has come to dwell with them, sometimes descriptive of a blemish in his person, or a certain mannerism in his bearing. The name given to the new arrival was "*Nyengana*," meaning one who had appeared as if by accident. His European name, however, was Dr. van der Kemp, who visited Gaikaland about 1799.

The stranger carried a Book in his hand when the tribe gathered to see and hear what his errand was. There stood the brave soldier of the Cross, telling the Good Tidings for the first time to a congregation of wondering Gaikas! Alone, yet not alone, he had left

his home in obedience to the command of his Master and Saviour—"Go ye and teach all nations." How attentively they listen; how carefully they scan his features! A little distance away sits a small crowd of boys, clad in their karosses, parts of their black bodies rendered grey by the scratches of the thorny thickets through which they have had to creep. One of these boys seems especially to drink in the words of the strange white man. This is Ntsikana receiving the precious seed. It lies there, as it were, rotting, but destined one day to take root, to bud and blossom, and bear abundant fruit, to the glory of its ever-careful Husbandman.

From the herding age, there is a stage higher in the promotion of boyhood life in Gaikaland. Ntsikana is only a boy, and, before he can exercise any influence, he must needs be *made* a man. A special ceremony is performed before lads are admitted to the standing of men, and added to the fighting force of the tribe. While the ceremony lasts, the lads live by themselves, in the forests, away from their homes, and are looked after by one man, who takes charge of them during that period. They are covered from head to foot with white clay, and present a very ghastly appearance, as if they were whitewashed. In this state they are called *Abakweta*. On stated occasions they go round to the different villages, when there is a good



Painted Heathen Kaffirs, in full Ornamental Dress.

deal of singing, dancing, feasting, and beating of dried ox-hides. This revelry is continued for weeks or months, until by the order of the chief the lads are recalled. At the dance they wear a strange head-dress, and round their waists is tied, in folds, a sort of kilt made of the fronds of rushes.

On the day they are recalled, the white clay is washed off, the lads are assembled to receive instruction from the old men as to their new duties as men, and then they are publicly discharged.

Such was the rite Ntsikana had to undergo. Not long after, messengers were observed driving cattle to a neighbouring village, to get a wife or wives for Ntsikana. It was not necessary in Kaffirland for a young man to meet the young lady. The chief concern was the number of cattle the former was willing to give for the latter; and, without the interested parties having seen one another, the engagement was complete when the cattle were delivered by the young man's friends, and accepted on the other side. The young woman agreed to go, or, rather, was compelled to go, the marriage taking place in due course. It was somewhat in this way that two damsels were brought back by the aforementioned messengers as wives for Ntsikana, whose father had in the meantime died.

Having inherited his father's property, and occupying an influential position among his people, he shortly afterwards removed to another part of the district. After Dr. van der Kemp's withdrawal from Kaffirland, there arrived another Missionary, the Rev. Joseph Williams, of the London Missionary Society, whom Ntsikana also heard proclaiming the same news. It seemed to the heathen Kaffir that this "thing"—as he called it—was following him wherever he went, haunting his very existence, and troubling his soul.

Kaffirs are a pastoral people, and are accustomed to early rising. One of the first things a man does when he rises in the morning, is to go to his kraal to count and admire his cattle. Ntsikana had a favourite ox, an ugly-looking animal of large size, dun coloured, but here and there spotted white, with large horns. He had given this ox the name of *Hulushe*, and when he spoke of it, he added a peculiar expression, not easy for a European to pronounce, because of the click sounds. Ntsikana, in his language, thus praised his favourite ox:—

*"Hulushe, ngqezeqamtweni,
Lunga lama Pakati";*

which means, literally translated—

*"Hulushe, thou store of milk sacks,
Thou dappled one of the Councillors."*

Ntsikana one morning went, as usual, to the kraal. The sun's rays were just peeping from the east, and, as he was standing at the kraal gate, his eyes fixed with satisfied admiration on his favourite ox, he thought he detected something brighter than usual striking the side of his beast. As he looked at the animal, Ntsikana's face betrayed excited feelings, and he thus enquired of the lad standing near by: "Do you observe the thing that I now see?" The lad, turning his eyes in the direction indicated, replied: "No, I see nothing there." Ntsikana, recovering from the trance, uplifted himself from the ground, on which he had meantime stretched himself, and said to the puzzled boy: "You are right; the sight was not one to be seen by your eyes."

Later on in the day, the memory of what he had seen haunted him away from a dance to which he and his family were invited. It seemed to bring to his recollection the words he had heard preached when a boy, and the idea expressed then, that "Men ought all to pray." He could not enjoy the day's pleasure, and at last summoned his family to accompany him home, without giving any reason.

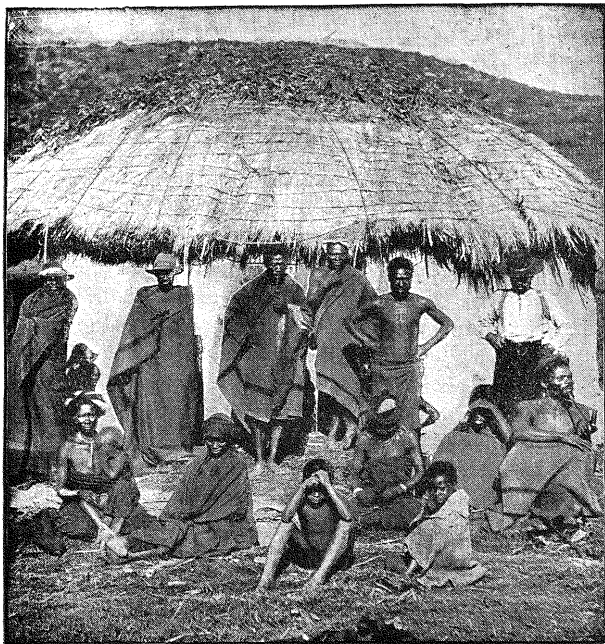
On their way home, on passing a stream, he, before them all, washed off the heathen clay from his body,

which has now become the acknowledged sign of adopting Christianity. The next morning, at dawn, Ntsikana was heard to sing a chant, and to make his first statement on the Christian religion. The relatives could not understand this eccentric behaviour, and thought he was bewitched, or was getting mad. But he told them that the thing that had entered within him directed that all men should pray. Though they might not yet understand what that meant, they would do so by and bye.

He sang over and over again this strange chant, the words of which are not translatable into English, beyond saying they express the idea of HALLELUJAH, AMEN! The chant was sung only while people were gathering in to Ntsikana's meetings, and should not be confounded with the Hymn itself, which will be given later on.

| s, f : m, m : m, m | r : l, :- | r :- :- | d : s, :- }
| Elé lé lé lé lé | hom | Hom, | Homna! }

| s, f : m, m : m, m | r : l, :- | r :- :- | d :- :- ||
| Ele le le le le | hom | Hom, | Hom! ||



A Kaffir Family and Neighbours.



NTSIKANA.

(Continued.)

NTSIKANA began to preach in right earnest, and crowds came to listen to his words. In some hearts the seed was taking root, and eyes were being opened to the importance of the thing he spoke about. This they showed not merely by attending the meetings regularly, but by praying at their houses.

One day Gaika himself visited Ntsikana, and as usual a great retinue of followers accompanied the chief. A spirit of prophecy seemed to have taken possession of Ntsikana on this occasion. At one of the many religious meetings that were held during Gaika's visit, Ntsikana prophesied about the coming of the Fingoes into Kaffirland, a tribe then quite unknown. He prophesied also about the land being taken from the Gaikas and divided out to white

men, and cut up into roads. No Europeans were resident in the country at the time. Putting the prophecy in Ntsikana's own words, he said: "A time is coming when you will see people whom you have never seen before. Be careful of these people; do not receive them to dwell among you, but let them pass unmolested. If you receive them they will raise the dust off their feet and leave it lying on you, that is if you do not accept this word. I see this country white with waggon roads. I see flocks of sheep grazing on it. I see this land studded with white houses. There are witnesses who will bear me record; but beware of strange doctrine—it will mislead many."

Just after the morning prayers were over, a few days after the chief's departure, Ntsikana sent an urgent message to him to be called back, and to be told that Ntsikana had a presentiment that the heads of the Gaikas were being devoured by ants. This referred to the tribal encounter shortly to take place, and afterwards known as the Battle of the Amalinde (1818), in which the Gaikas were shamefully defeated. Ntsikana's voice was raised against this war; but, alas! his countrymen paid no regard and their "heads were devoured by ants," as he had told them.

After this Ntsikana lived only about three years, during which time he was constantly carrying on the work of preaching. His meetings were held under a large shady tree, round which were collected stones, used as seats. This interesting spot may still be seen, and my aged informant often told me that in order to freshen up the pleasant recollections of his younger days he frequently visited the place where he received his earliest religious impressions.

Ntsikana sat under his large meeting - tree, dismissing a congregation to which he had delivered a prophetic address strangely difficult for his hearers to understand, but which we can look at now in another and clearer light. Time has worked out changes, events have occurred, and are occurring, which are remarkably in keeping with what he said would befall his country in subsequent years. The address referred to was somewhat in the following strain: "To show that sin will have increased in the world, there will smoke even a child. I see the plumes of the Gaikas waving on the borders of the Kei. I see the forests full of roads, and the trees split into splinters or planks. In the distance there comes a great war of races, which will cause men to wade almost knee-deep in blood. There will be fighting and fighting, and

then a time of respite in which there will be friendly giving of tobacco to each other. Then at the last there will be a general rising, in which a mother will quarrel with her own daughter; the son will rise against his father, and friend against friend. Men will stab each other's shoulders, and there will be such crossing and re-crossing as can only be likened to ants gathering stalks of dried grass. Then the end will come—the beginning of peace, for which there had been no preconceived council or arrangement of man. The reign of BROAD-BREAST (*Sifuba-Sibansi*) will commence and continue in the lasting peace of the Son of Man." (The name of *Broad-Breast* for the Saviour may be compared to Bunyan's Great-Heart.)

Not long after this address the Rev. John Brownlee, of the London Missionary Society, arrived in Kaffirland and was stationed at the Chumie, not far from where Ntsikana lived. An arrangement between them had been made for Ntsikana to dwell in the station as soon as his crops had been harvested. But Ntsikana's happy expectation was not to be realised, for he was attacked by a very severe illness. We need not describe the gloom that pervaded the whole of Ntsikana's people at the illness of their head. One day he

called a trusty messenger to carry the following message to his chief, Gaika: "The servant of God is now going home. Where did you ever see a servant that did not return to his master, after he had been sent? Let all the people pray. Pass this word on to Ndlambe." Looking round to the people he said "Go and dig a grave." Surprised to hear this strange order, they naturally did not feel inclined to obey, seeing no one was yet dead. They said so to him. He asked for a crowbar, and went himself to turn the first sod. After this there was no difficulty in getting the people to do as he bade them, and day by day they toiled on with their wooden spades and picks digging Ntsikana's grave. At last the work was finished, and it was evident that Ntsikana too was very near his end. Notwithstanding his illness, he still conducted worship, though now in the house instead of outside, and at all these services his famous hymn was invariably sung.

At last, addressing his children, he said, "I am going home to my Father. Do not, after I die, go back to Kaffirdom" (meaning heathendom). "I want you to go to *Buluneli* (Mr. Brownlee) at Gwali. Have nothing to do with heathen dances, but keep a firm hold of the word of God. Always stick

together, and be as close to one another as the particles of a ball of cement. Should a rope be thrown round your neck or a spear pierce your body, whatever persecution on account of the word of God comes upon you, don't give way, keep it and stick to it, and to each other. To my two sons I say, **KOBE** (the elder), you will be my *back-bone*; and **DUKWANA**, you will be my *walking-staff*. Don't allow my children to return to red clay and heathenism; take them to Gwali Mission Station. I am going home to my Father, to my Master!" He was now exhausted, and said, "Lay me down." So saying, he quietly passed away, and Ntsikana, the son of Gaba, was gone up higher, to a heavenly home. This was in 1821.

His remains were carried to their last resting place in rather a novel coffin, the first ever used in Kaffirland. The stem of a large tree was scooped out in the middle. In it his body was laid, and placed according to Christian usage, in the grave he had had made ready, the funeral service being conducted by two of his own Christian converts—*Robert Balfour* and *Charles Henry*.

I have now finished the story of Ntsikana, whose life has played a very important part in the history of the Gospel in this country. Though seventy-

five years have passed since Ntsikana died, his great influence still secures for his memory, his words, and his actions that reverence which this first Christian convert among South African Kaffirs worthily deserves. All that still remains of the story to be given is his great hymn. The words are in the original Kaffir with a literal—though not metrical—translation into English. The tune or chant to which the Kaffir words are sung was published for the first time in the Sol-Fa notation at Lovedale, South Africa, in 1876, the music having been handed down only by tradition till then. The words had been committed to print by the early missionaries, and the hymn is in every Christian Kaffir Hymn Book now in South Africa. The words and music were both composed by Ntsikana. It is a weird air, chanted to lines expressive of what the man took God and the Gospel to be. It is the first Christian hymn composed and sung in Kaffirland to real native music, and it is to Kaffirs a precious legacy left by Ntsikana to his native fellow Christians, and is highly valued and loved by them.

NTSIKANA'S HYMN:

ULO TIXO MKULU.—THOU GREAT GOD.

KEY F. *Gravely.*

Arranged by J. K. BOKWE.

<i>ad lib.</i>			<i>tempo.</i>
s	:- .f	f,f.,m:r	l : l
U	- - lo	Tixo omku -	fe : fe
:	:	:	r : r
:	:	:	lu ngo -
:	:	:	fe : fe
:	:	:	r : r
l	: l	s : -	s : -
fe	: fe	m : -	m : -
r	: r	d : -	d : -
se -	- zu -	lwi -	ni,
fe	: fe	m	m : -
r	: r	d	d : -
l	: s	l	: s
fe	: m	fe	: m
r	: d	r	: d
U	- lo	Ti - xo	o - mku-
fe	: m	fe	: m
r	: m	r	: d
r	: m	d	: l ₁
t ₁	: m	d	: l ₁
s	: m	se - zu -	lwi - ni.
lu	ngo -	m	: d
r	: s	m ₁	: d ₁
s ₁	: d	: r ₁	: d ₁

Ulo Tixo omkulu, ngosezulwini ;
Ungu Wena-wena Kaka lenyaniso.
Ungu Wena-wena Nqaba yenyano.
Ungu Wena-wena Hlati lenyaniso.
Ungu Wena-wen' uhlel' enyangwaneni.
Ulo dal' ubomi, wadala pezulu.
Lo Mdal' owadala, wadala izulu.
Lo Menzi wenkwenkwezi nozilimela ;
Yabinza inkwenkwezi, isixelela.
Lo Menzi wemfaman' uzenza ngabomi ?

Lateta ixilongo, lisibizile.
Ulonqin' izingela imipefumlo.
Ulohlanganis' imibhamb' eyalanayo.
Ulo Mkokeli wasikokela tina.
Ulengub' inkul' esiyambata tina.
Ozandla Zako zinamanxeba wena.
Onyawo Zako zinamanxeba wena.
Ugazi Lako limrolo yinina ?
Ugazi Lako lipalalele tina.
Lemali enkulu-na siyibizile ?
Lomzi Wako-na-na siwubizile ?

The Great God, He is in heaven.
Thou art thou, Shield of truth.
Thou art thou, Stronghold of truth.
Thou art thou, Thicket of truth.
Thou art thou, who dwellest in the highest.
Who created life (below) and created (life) above.
The Creator who created, created heaven.
This Maker of the stars, and the Pleiades.
A star flashed forth, telling us.
The Maker of the blind, does He not make them
on purpose ?
The trumpet sounded, it has called us,
As for His hunting, He hunteth for souls.
Who draweth together flocks opposed to each other.
The Leader, he led us.
Whose great mantle, we put it on.
Those hands of Thine, they are wounded.
Those feet of Thine, they are wounded.
Thy blood, why is it streaming ?
Thy blood, it was shed for us.
This great price, have we called for it ?
This home of Thine, have we called for it ?

J. K. B.

