



October 2020

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Sophie Spieß

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### BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Spieß, Sophie, "More about the Two-, Four-, and Six-legged Inhabitants of Our Mission Hill" (2020). *Essays*. 1682.

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# More about the Two-, Four-, and Six-legged Inhabitants of Our Mission Hill (English Translation)

This translation was prepared for the *Sophie* website by Cindy Brewer's German 201 class during Fall Semester 2006 at Brigham Young University.

**Student contributors were:**

**Kimberly Allred, Ryan Clark, Alicia Cutler, Sara Forsyth, Hans Gaul, Tyler Hills, Brenna Jackson, Chante King, Kristen McGregor, Phillip McKinney, Taylor Merkley, Julia Moore, Mary Ann Olsen, Emma Owens, Trevan Reeves, Savanna Sessions, Katherine Smith, and Emily Velardi.**

[1]

More about the  
Two-, Four-, and Six-legged Inhabitants  
of Our Mission Hill

By Sophie Spieß

Mission Library  
Zurich

Basel  
Publisher: The Basler Mission Bookshop

[2]

[3] In the first small book, we already met some of the inhabitants of Peki-<<A rural city in Southeastern Ghana>>mission hill, but we haven't been all around the block yet. Now we must continue. So first, we want to look around the mission house's yard and garden. Yes, it looks bad again. The termites, our evil six-leggers, have eaten the cores of my beanpoles, and now the wind blows them to and fro. As my pupils leave, I must stop a few of them so they may find some replacements for me. They are willing to do anything I ask in exchange for some small photo reprints.

But then how do the eucalyptus trees look, that our predecessors arduously grew from California seeds? On one tree the leaves are shriveling, another leans almost completely on its side and there, at the top, lays a single tree across the path. I lift it off and look. Once again the evil destroyers, the termites, have accomplished their goal. The roots are being eaten right away so that the pretty little trees with blooms that smell strongly of essential oils must woefully decay. Yes, the termites. Nothing is safe from them. In the cellar they ate away one of the straw husks covering the seltzer water flasks, indeed, they even get through the corks despite the lead capsules over them.

[4] The bottoms of the boxes were eaten through and when you want to lift a box quickly, all the

contents fall, plop, underneath it. The termites appear to be learned and musical as well since they gladly incorporate themselves into the books and the pump organs. It is a perpetual struggle against these vermin. One of our teachers, who moved away from Peki, left behind his clothes and other things with relatives. Now when he visited his hometown to preach and wanted to bring out his black robes out of the closed chest, he found only a small heap of black crumbs left. **Phillip**

Upon reaching deeper everything collapsed and the area under the crumbs was teeming with small colorless critters. The only protection against these was the rock buildings, slaked with cement and concrete floors, which only the fewest of natives could afford.

[5] We also had four-legged foes. The goats and sheep of the black inhabitants were once again hard at work. The fence of palm-leaves, which surrounds our large schoolyard, makes delicious fodder for the goats. When they had chewed through it, like the children in the fairytale of Schlaraffenland <<A land where animals roam pre-cooked and ready to eat. There, work is considered a sin and the occupation of choice is to eat oneself fat.>> who ate their way through a mountain of cake, there our delectable tender corn plants awaited them. For the sake of the corn, we allowed a few rocks to be thrown. There is certainly a fine for people letting their pets roam everywhere freely, but no one seems to be troubled by that. They must be recaptured again and again. Naturally, this is a favorite game for the school kids, especially since the reward money is divided among them. But we had to lock them up. We cared for them and listened to all of their squawking during the night. Most of the owners were not in a hurry to pick up their captured animals. Either they thought, we would have enough of this spectacle and open the prison doors or the offenders would run away at the first opportunity they got. Once the fine had been paid and the animals were to be picked up, the animals often didn't want to go out into the golden freedom. We would often laugh when we saw people with their stubborn animal that had to be dragged out by their front legs like kids who are misbehaving. Those thus afflicted by a rebellious animal often laughed themselves at this funny scene. And so that is why there was no hostility between our black neighbors and us.

The next day, no one could leave their homes. A strong thunderstorm was roaring in; shaking the leaves about and forcing the trees to do the most daring bends.

[6] How wretched were those trees, who did not do its bidding. With a firm hold, the whirlwind broke them in pieces or ripped them, together with the roots, from the protective earth. A powerful rain followed it, turning our station road into a raging torrent. In earlier times on such days, almost all the traffic stopped on the station hill, and the teacher sat drearily with only a few faithful followers in his damp schoolroom.

However, since no one who had not attended at least 150 whole or 300 half days, meaning mornings and afternoons, in the course of the school year was allowed to advance to the next class, even the most violent rain didn't result in school-free days any more. It certainly wasn't nice to sit in school freezing in your soaking wet, thin clothes, but there were few umbrellas, and the banana leaves, which offered good protection against the rain, don't grow behind every hut. Fortunately, no one had to worry about cold feet as a result of wet shoes, because the black "Horses" « from the old German saying "auf Schuhsterns Rappen," meaning "by means of a shoe maker's horses," in other words, "to go by foot"» on which the children rode to school, also called "feet of little boys," were watertight and lasted a lifetime.

Around evening, the lovely sun peeked quickly through the clouds. Its rays created a marvelous rainbow that spread from mountain to mountain over Peki Valley and all the wet fields and forests. Like a promise from our God, that He will hold His hand over us not only in the beautiful and peaceful days, but even in the storms and tempests of our lives, this last greeting of the sun, in its multi-colored beauty, appeared to us.

[7] Ludwig and Maria lived with their children directly below our house. Our next outing

would be to these people. But can one call it living, when a family dwells in a run-down cottage with a broken-down thatched roof? When the European house was built, an agreement was reached with those who lived too close to it, that they would move as soon as their huts became damaged to occupy. The area was supposed to be vacated after two years at the latest. For the building of new huts, a lovely place was designated for them, and they were even paid money as compensation. In the meantime, the old thatched roofs were not repaired. But see there, often after a rainy night, when we glanced out over the station hill, we could see here and there brightly illuminating stripes of grass that had been hastily shoved into place to repair the roofs. The people had willingly begun their new huts, but still only the naked walls stood there.

[8] In the old ruins, however, you could still get along well enough. Dry enough places could still be found. "Time will tell," thought Ludwig-, "besides, the missionaries are messengers of peace, who are only allowed to be gentle with us."

Surely, nobody would throw us out. But the unexpected happened anyway. One morning, after the repeatedly extended ultimatum, (i.e. the set deadline) had passed; a "wrecking company" of school kids began to completely tear down the ruins. Ludwig, together with Maria, had to hurry and escape to their relatives with the rest of their belongings. The other people had long since gone. In most aspects the two were honest, industrious people who also urged their children to be diligent in school attendance. However, it was a great benefit for us when the farm was leveled to the ground because the two- and four-legged inhabitants were usually agitated and created a lot of unrest.

Maria had a nagging, loud voice, such that we heard everything she said during the day. Whenever she criticized her husband, children, sheep and chickens, we all had to listen to it.

The first sound of the morning that we heard was her "ao, ao," whenever something annoyed her and her evening song had the same tone. She definitely had plenty of reasons to be upset because Daniel was especially difficult to manage. Either he would let the sheep go through or he would pull their tails. Then he would scare away the chickens from laying eggs and would also hide his siblings' books whenever they wanted to go to school, or he did some other kind of nonsense. One time I observed him while he attempted to ride the goat without much luck. Often he would put wet wood or chicken feathers into the fire, so that the cooking area in the middle of the yard burned.

[9] Naturally, a biting smell and the ugly odor of burning feathers came up to us. Even at the children's school he always pulled pranks. On the other hand, his brother Simon was a nice boy, and unfortunately, he was the one who suffered a great misfortune.

One day a government doctor came to Peki to examine the school children for sleeping sickness. Wild rumors preceded his visit. Some even said that he would be cutting bodies open. When he came to my school, it was everything I could do to calm down this frightened flock of children that were crowding around me. Finally, we got them to stand side by side against the wall. First, the doctor felt their throats. Then, when he reached for the fat bellies of those that stood around him to feel if their spleens had become enlarged from the malaria, all hell broke loose. Now, so they believed, he was going to slice their bodies open! Simon, who was a little bigger than the others, stood closest to the wall. He had wailed and whined the longest, so much so that he had agitated his stomach. Before he could get away, he vomited his breakfast all over the people who were standing around him.

O the uproar! The children involved nearly became violent; especially Ali, the dirtiest of all, who was ready to start throwing punches. But with a pail of water and an old rag, that unfortunate occurrence was quickly remedied and the interrupted medical examination could continue. After this, Simon absolutely never wanted to return to school. It required all of my persuasive powers, in as far as I was capable of expressing myself in the Peki dialect, to convince him to change his mind. Augustine, who is the only daughter, suffered from chronic inflammation of

the adenoids. Half her face had, through the ineffective treatments of an African Healer, become saggy and unresponsive. She mostly dragged around her little cousin, a completely miserable little creature; who, although she was two years old, couldn't even stand yet. — The many sheep, which live together with the family, had the annoying habit of getting hungry at the exact time that we wanted to take a break from the sweltering midday heat. All the inhabitants had gone to either the field or to fetch water. The animals bleated and lowed incessantly until they realized it was in vain. Because people become accustomed to unpleasanties, it seemed there was something significant missing when the first silent day came.

Before our departure, Maria, the housewife, became seriously ill and was called to her heavenly home, where she may now praise her Lord and Savior, with a blessed, pure voice.

[11] We must all continually learn to kindly tolerate the weaknesses and mistakes of our fellowmen, because unfortunately, they have plenty to criticize us about. Let “Carry another's burden” be our motto in the battle of life.

Afterwards, we went to Anna, who although her dead husband was the King's brother, is now a poor widow and must earn her daily bread - or, more applicably in Peki, her daily pepper soup with yams or kassada <<an edible [starchy tuberous root](#), also known as yuca>> - through hard work.

Her oldest boy suffered from a knee-joint infection and had to stay in the huts. Caroline and Johanna went to school with Johannes the “Elementary Baby”, on Caroline's back.

[12] Johannes got his nickname because his first weeks of life were spent with Caroline in the elementary school. His mother couldn't take Johannes on her back, because her job of carrying stones required her to bend down a lot. Johannes read and cried all the way through his first years in the kindergarten. But we must now make an end.

Now we'll take a quick glance over Salome's bamboo fence. She sits in front of the fire. In a bucket full of green herbal remedy, she dips her rag and squeezes the contents onto her leg wound. Next to her lies a long stick with which she smacks the cheeky root-eating sheep on their noses.

In addition, she can't prevent the chickens from picking out reasonably-sized chunks from the porridge pot. Salome has no children. Only eight-year-old Margarete, her young relative, helps Salome a little because Salome can hardly move from her place.

And now to the biggest and most beautiful farm on our station's hill. We must leave the others unvisited. This farm belongs to Isaak the bricklayer. He was sick for a long time and is now in the process of paying off his debts. A few months ago he visited an African witch doctor who bled him of a lot of his money. It may be that Isaak's body naturally healed itself of the sickness or it may be that the witch doctor actually knew what he was doing. But whatever the reason, Isaak is healed and back at his house. When I asked him why he hadn't gone to the Basel << refers to a protestant mission society from Basel, Switzerland>> missionary doctor, who lived in the vicinity and who had already helped many people, he said:

[13] “Yes, Aweno, the Mission-Atikewolawo” (Mission doctors and Mission pharmacists) are often right and they know quite a bit. But there are many diseases that they aren't familiar with which only our people know how to treat. One thing is certain, the native doctors know how to make it expensive enough. That's true. I assigned the task of capturing the runaway chickens to Isaak's well-behaved son. The chickens preferred to remain in their huts where there is always food lying around, rather than go out in the yard with its beautiful fragrance of orange blossoms drifting through. Isaak lives next to my courtyard, and the chickens often wander over to his courtyard, wherein he quickly delivers them back to me.

[14] I had an altogether horrible experience with my chickens. One chicken built its nest right above a snake's hole. When the chicken wanted to lay its first egg, the snake stretched its head

out of its hiding place and bit the chicken, which died. One day my child servants had not quite closed the chicken coop. On that morning my colorful rooster wavered laboriously out and stretched out to die under the blossom covered coffee tree. When I saw yet another hen sitting dead on her eight chicks, I lost all enthusiasm for chicken breeding. Since then the big beautiful yard sat empty and unused.

I have not told you anything of the visits to our teachers. But since it looks more European and organized there, there is not much to report about that. We only want to go to the Catechist Anku's, at least for the sake of his daughter Florence, who caused me so much effort. She was accustomed to visiting her father every morning in his school class. Since that was not permitted, she was supposed to go to the children's school, but she rebelled against this with all her might. The whole week long she had to be dragged there, and, during the school hours, she would be tied on to the back of the teacher to keep her calm, until finally she came to school voluntarily and sat on the bench. However, despite all our efforts, she still wouldn't open her mouth, until it was the mango season. I had her brought to me a few times and I filled her little hands and her little dress with the delicious fruit; only then were defiance and shyness overcome. At least then I got a handshake and a greeting from her when she came to Kindergarten.

[15] Her father, Aron Anku, was our preacher, a beloved man. He understood how explain religion clearly so that the people could learn to love and value the word of God. Through gripping examples from real life, he held their attention and kept them from sleeping, which was far too easy to do, because of the muggy air in the cramped chapel. In his house standards of order and cleanliness were upheld, in which he loyally supported his valiant wife. Now our tour has come to an end. We have come to know a number of heathen Christians in their way of living and working, thinking and acting. Now I would like to ask you, dear readers, to remember in your prayers also this small flock of Christians in distant Africa, that they might truly become firm and certain in the faith and that they might, through word and deed, inspire in other heathens the desire to follow them.

[16] But you should always pray to the Savior on behalf of the heathens, that he might lead them out of the darkness to his light; that out of idol-worshippers he might desire, through his power and grace, to make worshippers of God.

God's promise: "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd," <<John 10:16>> is and remains true.

However, we wish to ask God that he might soon fulfill his promise for many more heathens.