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Marella Mission Farm

Sky Pilot Fellowship Ltd., Marella Mission Farm

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Young Dodger was about 30 years of age, with a round, bullet-shaped head, from which his black hair stood up like wire bristles. His forehead sloped backwards from large, staring eyes which always wore a look of intense surprise. At the slightest excuse, or for no apparent reason at all, he would break into a foolish giggle. This was a disturbing habit, especially at funerals, and the chief mourner or anyone who was sober usually detailed someone to sit on his head during the prayers. He took it remarkably well, as a rule, but on one occasion, just as we were lowering the body, a blood-curdling yell caused us to let go, and the body landed at the bottom of the grave in a way that made George say: "It's lucky Bill's dead. A fall like that's enough to injure his back for life."

The yell came from Dick, who was sitting on Dodger's head. George was annoyed.
"What did you yell like that for?" he asked.
"You know the mourners are on the verge of the horrors. You've ruined a good funeral now.
"Aw, shut up!" replied Dick. "Wouldn't you yell if someone bit a piece clean out of your seat?"
"Maybe I would," George admitted. "But who bit you?"
"Dodger, of course. I sat on his head, like you said, but he reckoned he couldn't breathe. I'll have to stand up in the stirrups riding home."

But Dodger was like that. You never knew what he would do next. But he didn't bear malice. A week later, he offered to drive Dick to the Katherine. There were no floor-boards in the car, and Dick gulped a bit about having his legs hanging down, but he soon got used to it. After they had gone a few miles he began sniffing, then asked: "I say, Dodger, what's that awful smell?" "He, he, he," laughed Dodger. "I ran a bit short of oil and I filled the sump with bullock fat. I suppose it's getting warm."

They had a number of punctures, and Dick was soon fed up with the whole business. Finally he heard a strange "swish-swish" every time the front wheel went round. Leaning out, he found that the outer tyre had come right off, and the inner tube was hanging by the valve.

"Stop!" he cried. "Stop, Dodger, you've lost your front tyre."
"He, he, he," laughed Dodger. "Why worry? Have a drink?"

Dick walked back to get the tyre and, on returning, found that instead of mending the blow-out, Dodger had finished the bottle and was sleeping peacefully in the shade. Dick mended the tube himself, then took the water-bag and walked on.

Young Dodger woke with a raging thirst to find there was no water. He tried to crank the car, but the bullock fat had set in the sump and wouldn't even drain out when he removed the sump plug. In desperation, he lit a fire under the sump. Almost immediately the car burst into flames, and his thirst increased as he fought them. He managed to put out the fire, but not before considerable damage had been done. He tried to spit, and couldn't. Then he left the car and walked on also.

At the beginning of the North West Monsoon a number of us was trapped by a couple of inches of rain, and we had to camp at Dodger's station. Dodger was suffering from an outbreak of boils, and we felt sorry for him. The biggest one prevented him from sitting down, and he had to lie on his face. Someone suggested that a hot bottle was good for drawing boils, so they put one near the camp fire for an hour or so. They didn't tell Dodger. They rushed him when they were ready, and two of them held him down while a third carried the bottle, wrapped in a saddle cloth, and placed it in position. Dodger yelled and fought, and it took another stockman, a blackfellow, and two lubras to hold him down. They hadn't realised how hot the bottle was. For the rest of his life Dodger carried as a brand the neat circle made by the neck of that pickle bottle. But, as we told him afterwards, it was nothing to worry about. It wouldn't be seen, and if at any time he was drowned or perished for want of water, it would be useful as a means of identifying him.

It took a long time for that bottle to draw. In the end we had to wrap wet towels round it. But when it did, there was no mistaking it. Dodger let out a howl and broke free. Then he went kind of "troppo". He started by smashing things up in the kitchen; but it was his kitchen, so we didn't interfere. Then he rounded on us. He knocked old Mick into the fire, and chased Dick up a tree with an axe. And the bottle was still sticking on like a big tick. George realised something had to be done. "Quick, Smithy," he exclaimed, "can't you do something? He's going into that bottle like a periwinkle into its shell."

"We can't pull it off," I said. "The only thing is to break it and let the air in."

We armed ourselves with mosquito pegs and had a hit at the bottle every time he ran by. But the bottle bobbed up and down, and wasn't easy to hit. We marked Dodger considerably before a lucky hit broke the bottle. Dodger lay down (on his face) still crying with relief. I lost a lot of faith in bush remedies after that. The boil was worse than ever. But George didn't like to give in.

"You know, Smithy," he observed, "I don't think that boil could of been properly ripe. It's the first time I've known a hot bottle to fail. Suppose we wait till the boil comes to a head and try again?"

"A bit rough on Dodger," I told him. "I think he'd sooner have the boil."

"Oh, I don't know," said George. "Anything we do now can't hurt him much more. Besides, he's done a lot of tearing about and he's weaker than he was—he easier to hold."

But Dodger overheard us, and he sneaked outside and took George's horse, which was the best one, and went bush, standing up in the stirrups as he rode. It was a pity, as
we still don't know if a hot bottle is a good cure for boils.

George is a great one for bush remedies. He told us that a bee sting cures rheumatism.

"Have you tried it yourself?" I asked.

"Well, no," he replied, "I haven't. But I heard of a man who did. He'd been bedridden with rheumatism for years, poor fellow. When he heard of the cure he gave a boy sixpence to get him a couple of bees. The boy was interested in the cure, and when he put the bees in a jar he poured in a little water and shook 'em up, to make sure they was wild enough to sting."

George paused, and I asked: "Did the cure work?"

"I don't properly know," George admitted.

"The man tried to take a bee out of the jar to put on his bad leg. It stung him on the quick of his fingernail and gave him such a shock he let the other bees out under the bedcovers."

"Well, what happened then?"

"The man got out of bed for the first time for years and ran across the room and fell down a flight of stairs. But I couldn't say he was permanently cured. He had a relapse and had to go back to bed. Maybe he had no faith."

The trouble with bush remedies is that they are often worse than the complaint. When there's no doctor within hundreds of miles, there's some excuse for the bushmen experimenting. Personally, I would not try either bees or bottles if there was any other way.

Many a man is sick with sin and wants to get rid of it. He knows that it is dragging him down and separating him from all the best in life, but so often he messes about with crude bush remedies. Sometimes we find men torturing their bodies or deliberately seeking some form of mental suffering with the idea of earning deliverance from sin. Yes, man has sought out many devices, only to find in the end that after all his misery and suffering, he is no better. But the Great Physician is ready and anxious to heal if we will but give Him the chance.

And the final entry in to-day's Log is taken from the 1st chapter of Isaiah. "Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

STREET STALL. Although the day for the Street Stall (October 16th) turned out to be a very windy day and the workers had a job to keep the goods from blowing away, the Stall was a success. A total of over £27 was made. Considering the weather, this was a splendid effort. We are always grateful of gifts for these Street Stalls. Volunteers to help the members of the Women's Auxiliary are always in demand. It is always a very strenuous and tiring day, and the more workers we have, the easier it is for the "faithful few."

GIFTS OF FRUIT. We are very grateful for several cases of oranges given by two friends during the month. This enabled us to see that each child had one or two oranges every day. The fresh fruit is very good for them, and do they enjoy it! Sometimes we wish that oranges could be grown without skins. It takes time to teach the dark children that it is easier to put the peel into the rubbish tin in the first place, rather than to throw it about and have it picked up later.

DARK CHILDREN. The dark children are well, and they greatly enjoy the shelter so kindly provided by the members of the Apex Club. It shelters them from the cold south and westerly winds and the rain (when we have any), yet enables them to have the full benefit of the sun from early morning till afternoon. As a further attraction, we put several loads of river sand in their playground. The delight of the children was in marked contrast to our dismay when we found they were even taking it to bed with them in toy buckets. Their pockets had to be emptied, clothing shaken out, rooms swept several times a day. Then we removed the sand a little distance and placed it in an enclosure with a retaining wall. Even so, we are wondering if it was a wise move to introduce the sand in the first place.

At the Labour Day week-end Isabelle went to the Young Warriors' Camp conducted by the Baptist Church at Tuggarrah Lakes. She enjoyed it thoroughly; also the camp reunion a couple of weeks later.

MISSION FARM. Week by week the incubator has been bringing out chickens and young turkeys. It is too late for more chickens now, but we are still hatching a few turkeys. All appear to be doing well. The young pigs are growing fast, and should be ready for sale for the Christmas market. It seems strange that not long ago we were complaining about floods. Now everything is so dry that we are worried about our orchards. No doubt there will be great bushfire danger this year. We are fortunate in having the farm well cleared, but once a bushfire sweeps down it appears to burn the bare ground. There is
valuable timber in our bush paddock, and we are concerned about this also.

With the help of a man who works on the farm every Saturday, we have been able to concrete most of the remaining sheds and have built drains in preparation for possible floods in the future. But there is much to do, and the preparations for the Rally and Sale of Work take much time. The days are too short, and there are not enough of them in each week.

DEPUTATION. Mr. Langford-Smith has been kept busy with deputation work. At this time of the year there are many Sunday School Anniversaries. Added to the usual run of Church services and week-night meetings, he is finding it increasingly difficult to manage. There will be still further demands on his time and strength during November and December, as he has very heavy bookings for these months.

It is a wonderful opportunity of speaking to thousands of people each month, seeking to interest them in the aboriginal children. Although there has been no radio session since the beginning of the year our mail is increasing every month, and the number of visitors to the Mission Farm mounts also. We praise God for this evidence of His blessing on the work.

SUEZ CANAL. Those of us who have been following Bible prophecy, especially with regard to the return of our Lord, are anxiously watching events. Egypt looks on the Suez as her territory, but it must never be forgotten that the devout Jew, steeped in the Old Testament writings, believes that it is part of the Promised Land. God said to Abraham: "Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river Euphrates." Genesis 15:18.

In a book by the Rev. L. Sale-Harrison, B.D., published many years ago, he states: "The Prophetic News lately pointed out that according to Dr. Keith, 'the Promised Land extends to Mount Cassius, on the River Aroutes, as the north west boundary—the true entering into Hamath—and to Bir or Berothah, on the Upper Euphrates, on the north east boundary. That is about 100 miles across from west to east, with the mountains of Amanus at the back, shutting in the Promised Land like an enclosed garden. The south west boundary is the River of Egypt—the Nile—and the south east boundary is the River Euphrates, where it empties itself into the Persian Gulf. The southern breadth of the land from the Nile to the Euphrates is 1100 or 1300 miles. The western boundary is the Mediterranean Sea, and the River Euphrates is the eastern boundary. The length of the land from north to south is about 600 miles, which makes the Promised Land about 300,000 square miles. This is twelve and a half times as large as Great Britain and Ireland'."

If those figures are correct, how long will the Jews be content with the tiny portion they now occupy? God said to Abraham: "To thee will I give it, and to thy seed FOR EVER." Genesis 13:14-15. Much of this land has never yet been occupied by the descendants of Abraham, but the promise will be fulfilled—maybe sooner than we expect. The Jews (and we use the term to include all Israel) were told that they would be scattered amongst all nations but in the LAST DAYS they would return to their native land and once more become a great nation.

FINANCE. With our growing family, who all have big appetites, it has sometimes been a matter of concern to know how to balance the budget. After some discussion at the dinner table one day, Bruce (aged 12) had a brilliant idea. He said: "I don't know what you are worried about. All you need to do is to get an honorary butcher and baker and grocer, like you have an honorary auditor, solicitor and doctor!" It sounds a little too good to be true. But, as our supporters know, we depend on the freewill gifts of interested friends and the proceeds of our Street Stalls and Sales of Work. God will not fail us if we do not fail Him.