

SKY PILOT NEWS

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MRS. LANGFORD-SMITH TAKES SOME OF THE CHILDREN FOR A RIDE

THE MAN WHO WAS AFRAID: From the Sky Pilot's Log 2CH Broadcast

Tim was a half-caste. There was nothing very unusual about that; there were plenty of half-castes in Arnhem Land and on the cattle stations around. Most of the half-caste men found work amongst cattle; some were head stockmen, and at least one was the manager of a large station. But Tim was different. Somehow he never seemed able to make the grade, and the stockmen on the one side and

the native warriors on the other, spoke of him with contempt.

The wet season had broken unusually early this year, and the rivers had come down in flood. Some of the cattle and horses had been trapped by the rising water, and the stockmen banded together with all the stockboys in an attempt to save what they could from the flood. It was dangerous work swimming horses through

flooded creeks and trying to force terrified cattle to swim to higher ground. Joe brought Tim along with him, and most of the stockmen objected. George put the objection into words.

"Look here, Joe," he said, "it's no use takin' Tim along with us. This is man's work and — well, Tim's got a yellow streak in him a mile wide. Better leave him behind with the women and children."

"Oh, give him a chance," Joe pleaded. "He means well, and he's anxious to help. I know he's no good in an emergency, of course."

"In this work," said George, "there is an emergency a dozen times a day. I tell you Tim's no good at all. Our lives depend on each other, and I wouldn't care to trust mine to Tim. He'd funk it if there was any danger — just clear off and leave a man in the lurch. What do you think, Jim?"

"That's true enough. Give me a decent full-blooded native any time, rather than a yellow cur like Tim. He's the biggest coward I've ever met. Even the blacks can't stand him."

"Hold on," Dick broke in. "You fellows don't know him as well as Joe and I do. I know that what you say is true enough, but I agree with Joe. Tim means well, and he's always anxious to help. Why not give him a chance?"

George shook his head. "No, I'm in charge of this plant, and I wouldn't risk the lives of any of my men by givin' Tim a job. He may mean all right, but he'll let us down, and someone may lose his life over it. Send him home."

"But," Joe insisted, "you know the saying about giving a dog a bad name. Well, I think it's like that with Tim. Everyone expects him to act like a coward and — well, he lives up to it — or down to it."

"Look here, Joe," said George, "I've known Tim since he was a piccaninny. There ain't many half-castes like him. He's full of superstition, and he believes all the myths of the blacks, and fears their medicine man and tries to keep their laws and customs. But he's also afraid of the white man's law and religion. He'll attend Church, and then rush off to some corroboree to appease the spirits of the workers of magic. He's a con—contraption in terms."

"You mean a contradiction in terms," Joe suggested.

"That's what I said. And he's no manner of use to us this trip."

"He's not a bad cook," Dick remarked. "Why not put him on as a cook? He won't have to run no risks then, and it won't look so bad as sending him away."

Jim grinned. "It'll be us that will run the risk — if he's cook."

"Dick's right," said Joe, eagerly. "Tim is a good cook, and I'd sooner see him taken on as a cook than to be sent back. It would be a bad thing for him to be knocked back again. I think he's really trying, and he can't help his unfortunate make-up."

"All right," George agreed. "Sign him on as cook. I suppose that if there's a storm and he hears a decent clap of thunder he'll go bush and we get no dinner, but that's about the worst that can happen. What a life!"

And that's how Tim became a member of the mustering party. Joe was pleased, as he had been trying to help Tim for some time, and now he would be able to keep him under his eye. He was not altogether surprised, one evening, when Tim came to see him.

"You good friend belonga me," said Tim. "Allabout say Tim no good for nothing. You always say, 'Poor Tim, give him a chance,' ain't it?"

"Of course I'm your friend, and I'm anxious to help you if I can. I talked the others into giving you this job. What do you want now?"

"Me want to become Christian. Proper Christian, no gammon."

"You want to become a Christian, do you?" Joe asked somewhat doubtfully. "Well, I'm glad to hear it, but are you sure you're not just doing it to please me?"

"No more. Me savvy Christian way more better way."

"Well," said Joe, "do you understand what it will mean if you become a Christian? You'll have to give up your old beliefs and customs. You'll have to keep away from the medicine man and take no notice of anything he says."

"Me savvy all right."

"You have to believe that there is only one God and that He loved you and gave His Son to die for you."

"Me believe all that."

"You have to believe that God will forgive all your sins if you truly turn to Him, and He will give you the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome temptation."

"Me savvy all right."

"You must follow God's way," continued Joe, "and keep His laws and not be afraid of anything."

"Suppose me fright little bit? Maybe can't help that."

"Even if you are afraid, you must never let it stop you from doing your duty, whatever it may cost."

"Me try, if God help 'im me."

"Well," said Joe, "kneel down with me and

thank God for His love in forgiving you through Christ, and promise to serve Him."

And Tim went down on his knees with Joe beside the camp ovens and quart pots, and repeated a simple prayer.

When, later in the evening, Joe told the others about it they were sceptical about the reality of it. George said: "I don't reckon it means much to a fellow like Tim. Mind you, I ain't sayin' he don't mean well. But you know what a superstitious fellow he is, and you can't change a coward just by prayin' over him."

"I can't," said Joe, "but God can. Nothing is impossible to God."

"That sounds all right," Dick put in, "but how do you know that God comes into it at all? You can't be sure that God is going to help Tim, or change his whole life."

"Yes, I can," Joe insisted. "Christ said: 'Who-soever cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.' No one has ever truly sought God without finding Him."

"But Joe, you can't see into a native's mind," said George. "Tim might be only tryin' to please you or to create an impression. Maybe he thinks he's safe enough from the medicine man while he's with us, but it might be a different story when this trip is over and he goes back to the camp."

"Well, Joe, you've done your best," Dick put in. "If Tim slips back to what he always has been, don't take it too much to heart. I'm not expecting much change in Tim. It'd take a miracle to change him. He's a born coward. Why, he's even afraid of the dark!"

"I admit it would take a miracle to change him, but I'm hoping that the miracle has been worked — not by me, but by God."

A few days later the men had a wild mob of frightened cattle in hand. They were very touchy, and a storm was brewing. George had all the men riding round, trying to steady them. He gave final instructions: "Now, you fellows, get on to the job. When the storm breaks there is likely to be a stampede. Keep ridin' round, and don't forget to sing all the time."

"Did you say to *sing*?" Dick asked. "What's the idea of that? If Joe and me start singing, it's likely to start a stampede. And you and Jim ain't no canaries, neither."

"If you can't sing, keep whistling or talking aloud. That way, the cattle know where you are, and they're not so likely to get a fright if you ride on to 'em suddenly. If they do rush, try to head 'em off from the river, else we'll lose the lot. They go mad in a stampede."

Tim spoke up: "Maybe me help 'im you, George."

George laughed. "NO THANKS! You keep clear. You'll be safer in the camp. If they rush your way, you'd better climb a tree; they'd chop you into mince meat if you got in their road. Now, come on, you fellows, here comes the storm."

It was a dry storm, and there was no rain as yet, but the lightning was vivid, and each flash was followed by a crash of thunder. The cattle began milling, and it took the men all their time to hold them steady. Suddenly a fierce globe of ball lightning ran along the ground and burst near the cattle. It was too much for the already terrified animals. Like one beast, they stampeded in a frenzy, and George galloped round to head them off. They went quite close to the camp, and George chuckled as he saw Tim climbing the highest tree he could find.

Next minute there was a yell from Jim. George's horse had put its foot into a hole and crashed to the ground, pinning George beneath it. They were right in the path of the stampeding mob, and there was no time for Jim or the others to reach him. Jim covered his eyes. That was why he failed to see the figure of a man drop from a tree and throw himself over the injured stockman. It was all over in three minutes. The cattle had gone, and the men gathered round a blood-stained mess on the ground.

"My heavens!" said Joe. "This is awful. Poor old George! What a mess!"

George's voice came from underneath. "Never mind sayin' 'Poor old George!' I'm all right, except for a broken leg. This mess on top of me is all that is left of Tim. Poor devil, he's chopped to pieces. He shielded me with his own body, and — God forgive me — I called him a coward."

The stockmen buried Tim under a crimson flowering poinciana tree. George, his leg in splints, insisted on being present. And there was never a white man who was paid greater respect than the half-caste, Tim, the man who was afraid — and yet acted bravely. On the block of sandstone that was erected at the head of the grave, Joe scratched in his crude lettering a verse from the 14th Chapter of the Revelation: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

FORMS REQUIRED FOR SEATING.

We are anxious to purchase a number of forms such as used to be used for Sunday School halls. These are required to seat those attending our Sales of Work and other Rallies. Some Churches are replacing the old-type forms with chairs that

can be stacked away. If you know of any such forms for sale where they are no longer required, we will be very pleased if you will let us know. In the past we have had to borrow from the local Churches, but we really need our own seating, now that we have sheds where they may be stored when not in use. This is important to us, so please keep watch for old forms for sale, and let us know.

MORE DARK CHILDREN. We are constantly being asked to take extra children by mothers who are unable to care for them. The number we have had to refuse admission in the past few months is over seventy. We hate having to turn them away, but until the new hut is ready for use, we cannot possibly accept the care of more children. With Winter coming on, our accommodation is overtaxed as it is. However, the new hut will provide the extra room that we really require to give adequate care to those dark children in our care. We will need about £500 to put the hut into use. This will enable us to erect the partitions needed, connect the toilets and bathrooms to the septic tank, and instal power and light and water. A special building fund for this purpose has been opened, and we would appreciate donations marked for that purpose. Now that the hut is in position and paid for, it should not be long, with your help, before we are able to put it to full use.

STREET STALLS. We are very grateful to Mrs. Onslow, the Secretary of our Parramatta Women's Auxiliary, for taking over the supervision of all clothing and other gifts sent in for use on the Mission or for sale at our various Street Stalls. This has relieved Mrs. Langford-Smith of a great deal of work and responsibility. It is a tremendous task. It means spending several full days at the Mission Farm every month, when the articles are sorted, packed and labelled, ready for use or for sale. We are able to raise a considerable amount each year by the sale of clean rags—especially cotton articles—so we are always grateful for gifts of clean, worn-out clothing as well as good used clothing for use or for sale. Parcels should be railed to the Mission, care of Parramatta Railway Station, from where they are picked up at frequent intervals. Unfortunately, we have not the staff nor the time to send round to the various homes to pick up parcels. We trust you will understand this, and the little extra labour involved in railing the parcels to us is a real contribution to missionary work.

KEROSENE STOVE. We are anxious to purchase a good kerosene stove with a reasonably large oven, for use in heating pies for the refreshment stall at our fetes. It must be in really good order. We shall be glad to hear from any friends who might know where such a stove is available.

DARK CHILDREN. The dark children are all well and happy. Little Ralph has always been delicate, and his chronic bronchitis causes him a great deal of trouble at night—especially in the cold weather. He needs constant care and supervision. He always sleeps in the main house, not with the other children, and he often has us up at all hours of the night when suffering from a severe attack of coughing. All the children have regular checks with doctor and hospital. We are much indebted to our honorary doctor for the various needles and other attention given to our children.

Following the theft of our poultry, the dark children have been rather nervous at night. One night Eddie came rushing into the house and breathlessly told us that there was a light in the poultry shed. We guessed that it was only the light from the house reflected in the glass window of the shed, and told him to switch off the house light to prove it. Janet, who is very dark, went to meet him. Eddie turned out the light and came running back. He did not see Janet in the dark, and when he collided with her he received a terrible fright. Later, he had to get coke for the fire and wanted someone to go with him for company. Janet offered, but Eddie said: "No, you won't do, as I can't see you in the dark unless you smile and I can see your teeth!" Janet, who is a very sweet character, takes it all as a huge joke.

The children get on very well together. They are just like brothers and sisters, and the bigger ones take great care of the younger ones. Dawn is a real mother to all the younger children, and Eddie assumes responsibility for all the little ones.

We aim to keep this always as a real home, rather than an institution. It is not just the fact that they call Mr. and Mrs. Langford-Smith "Dad" and "Mum"; it goes deeper than that. Each child is made to feel that he or she "belongs" to the family, just as much as if they were our actual children. Other children who have left here to rejoin their real parents often phone us to know how we are. Rhonda, for instance, never misses a Christmas or Mother's Day, but always phones her good wishes.