

SKY PILOT NEWS

Sept., 1956

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"Give us this day our daily bread" (Christine and Janet).

CIVILISATION: A Story From The Sky Pilot's Log (2CH Broadcast)

The campfire burned up brightly as a lubra threw on an armful of dry gum branches. By its flickering light old King Wonga could see the members of the Mara tribe—his tribe—gathered round. There was more than one fire. The main one burned at the end of a narrow strip of ground which had been carefully swept clean with tea-tree bushes. This was the dancing place. On either side, forming two long lines, sat the young warriors

—fierce and splendid in war paint and feathers stuck on with blood.

A little apart, crouching over a smaller fire, were the young lubras. Several of the old men, crouching on naked haunches, had two small fires each, one in front and one behind, in order to protect their old bones from the evening mist and the frosty night air.

Wonga sniffed like some wild bush creature as the smell of the burning gum leaves reached

him. His black eyes glowed like coals as they took in the whole scene; even the children stopped whimpering and crouched back afraid when those eyes rested on them for a moment.

Wonga half turned to the fire, as if he were cold. His deep, dreamy eyes looked into the coals for a moment, then he picked up his boomerangs and began tapping gently. The low murmur of voices died away. Every eye was upon him. Suddenly, without looking up, he lifted his voice in a wild chant, beating time with the boomerangs. Fifty voices joined in; dozens of boomerangs and nulla-nullas tapped in unison; then the dancers sprang into the centre of the clearing, and the corroboree began.

They made a fine sight, these young warriors. All in the pride of manhood; proud of their strength and of the scars which covered their bodies. Some of the scars were relics of fierce tribal fights; others had been deliberately made as ornaments or in memory of some deceased relative: great even weals extending right across the chest and standing out nearly half an inch from the surrounding flesh. They had been made with flint knives or sharp shells, with dry wood-ashes rubbed in to make the scar prominent.

Wonga looked on with pride. Tradition told him that there was a time—long ago in the "dream-times"—when the young men had murdered their father, the leader of the tribe. The record was dimly preserved in the sacred rites of the initiation ceremony even to this day; but he was not afraid. By magic, fear and superstition, the old men were now able to demand respect and obedience from even the most ambitious young warrior. Wonga smiled wickedly to himself as dance followed dance.

They sang of hate, of war, of love; danced in imitation of the brolga, the kangaroo, the emu. Incidents of war and the chase were enacted; fierce eyes glowed, nostrils extended, hearts beat faster, muscles involuntarily tightened; while lubras beat time with bare hands on naked thighs, and the ground shook to the stamp of dozens of dancing feet.

Wonga lived again through the stirring times of his own youth. Once again he was a young man in the pride of savage manhood. He thought of his first fight. For a lubra it was; old Mianica, who was ugly and almost toothless now. Then she had been young and beautiful, and her teeth had showed strong and white as she smiled at him; it had made him strong to fight for her. She had watched as they fought. Two evenly matched young men, each with the lust to kill. Once he was

beaten to his knees, but she had called his name, and he had sprung to his feet, and carried on, with the blood running into his eyes and almost blinding him. His opportunity came when his enemy tripped on a root. One mighty blow, and then a wild shout of victory as the nulla-nulla crashed down on the other's head.

And Mianica had turned and run from him. Tired and weak as he was, what a chase it had been! But he ran her down at last in the mangroves, and when she struggled he stunned her with a quick blow and carried her to his camp on his shoulder. How proudly he had taken his place with the warriors of the tribe that evening. But no one would fight for Mianica now! She was old; almost too old to grind water-lily seeds into flour, or dig for ground-nuts and yams, even when the ground was soft. . . . Ah, well!

Suddenly the dancers ceased, the songs died away, the tapping stopped. Wonga sank back exhausted, grown suddenly old again. His eyes looked into the glowing coals of the fire; he seemed to see through a film. For a moment no one moved. Then there was an outburst of clapping. Wonga sighed wearily, and, getting stiffly to his feet, picked up a battered felt hat and moved towards the crowd of white onlookers for whom the corroboree had been staged.*

This man was a king; though to be strictly accurate, the aborigines have no kings as we know them. But no matter if we call him medicine man, counsellor, or whatever you will, he had lived to see the glory departed from his tribe. The white man's civilisation which had promised so much left his tribe hopeless, lost, degraded. For a little while they forgot their surroundings, but as the old man handed round his hat for the white man's money to buy the white man's tobacco, he realised how deeply they had fallen. Their birthright of freedom had been bartered away for a mess of pottage. Esau cried out in the bitterness of his heart: "Bless me, even me also, oh my Father."

Through the ages God has made many wonderful promises, but usually God works slowly. So the devil comes in with his counterfeit promises—not better promises, but promises for NOW. The devil doesn't ask you to wait. He says: "Come and take it NOW—never mind about waiting for God." The prodigal son would have had his inheritance in due course, but he wanted it right now. Oh, yes, he got it. But he didn't have it for long. And when he had nothing, he cried out: "I am perishing with hunger. I will arise and go to my Father."

The aborigines attempted to embrace civilisation too rapidly—or rather, it was forced upon them. There was no time to assimilate it. Christ knew that some day the world would be His, but it meant getting it the hard way—the way of the cross. The devil showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and offered it to Him NOW. But Christ knew that God's way was the only real and permanent way, though it took time.

The aborigine doesn't cry out or complain. He just sits in his cast-off clothing, eats the white man's scraps and silently mourns for the little he once had which has been taken away. Many men look back over a wasted life. All they asked was happiness. But they couldn't wait to get it God's way and in God's time. They wanted it NOW. And the pleasures of sin passed and only an empty shell remained. But what has Christ promised? "I have come," He says, "that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

And the final entry in to-day's Log is taken from the fifteenth chapter of St. Luke: "But the Father said: This my son was dead and is alive again: he was lost and is found."

(*The first part of this story by Mr. Langford-Smith appeared first in The Bulletin, to whom acknowledgments are made for permission to reprint).

DARK CHILDREN. During the month there was a slight outbreak of ulcers which affected mostly the limbs of the dark children. Our latest addition to the "family", Marj., was suffering from them on arrival, and though we took every care, it was impossible to prevent them spreading. However, the

complaint responded readily to treatment, and is now well under control.

We were pleased to receive a visit from an officer of the Child Welfare Department during the month. We have always found such officers most helpful, and we were glad to hear some news of children who had been here formerly.

Miss Fleming, of the Aborigines' Welfare Board, also paid us a visit, and was warmly welcomed by the dark children, who are very fond of her.

The Matron of a hospital, a visitor also, was able to help us considerably with advice from her wide experience.

The dark children received their first Salk Polio vaccination during the month. They were not at all afraid, and were proud to know that though some white children cried, they didn't cry!

ORGANISED FUNCTIONS. Several friends interested in this work very kindly arranged functions on our behalf. Mrs. Watson, of Ashfield, held a very fine travel-film evening at her home. The Mission Farm was represented by Mrs. Langford-Smith and some of the dark children. Though it turned out to be a pouring wet evening the gathering was well attended, and was most enjoyable and instructive. To be quite truthful, the dark children slept through the screening of some films, but were well awake at supper time!

Mrs. Rapmund, of Chullora, organised a ladies' luncheon and afternoon at her home. How she managed to fit so many into the room is a miracle. The "luncheon" was more like a banquet! Mr. Langford-Smith gave a

Sky Pilot Fellowship

Eighth Anniversary Rally and Sale of Work

to be held (D.V.) in the

SYDNEY TOWN HALL

(LOWER HALL)

SATURDAY, 3rd NOVEMBER, 1956

Doors open 10.30 a.m.

Public Meeting, 2 p.m.

Items by Dark Children from our Mission Farm. Refreshments available.

Our Responsibilities include: Christian Radio Broadcasts, Mission Farm and Home for Neglected Aboriginal Children, etc.

Gifts for Stalls should be railed to "Sky Pilot," Parramatta Railway Station, or brought to the Town Hall on the day of the Rally. Letters to "Sky Pilot," Marella Mission Farm, Kellyville.

You are specially invited. Come, bring a friend, and support this work for the Dark Children.

talk about the work, and Mrs. Langford-Smith took some of the dark children, who thoroughly enjoyed the outing and the lunch! The ladies showed a keen interest in the problems of work amongst the mixed bloods. Members of the Women's Auxiliary had a small stall, which was well patronised.

We are deeply grateful to Mrs. Watson and Mrs. Rapmund and her helpers. The combined financial contribution from these two functions was sufficient to support one dark child at the Mission Farm for over two months!

SPRING FASHION PARADE. The members of the Parramatta Soroptimist Club thoughtfully arranged a Spring Fashion Parade in the Parramatta Town Hall. This was held in order to provide amenities for the Mission Farm. The parade was led by Christine and Rita, who looked very sweet in the dresses made for and presented to them. Mr. Langford-Smith opened the evening and spoke about dress fashions in Arnhem Land. At the display the Children's Frocks were by Little Minx, Sports and Beach Wear by Jantzen, Underwear by Grace Bros., Frocks by Normans, Hats by Mary Jeffress, and Flowers and Bouquets by Arcade Exclusive Flowers. We are deeply grateful to the Soroptimist Club and the business firms who co-operated in this function.

VISITORS. We always welcome visitors at the Mission Farm (except on Sunday), and every week new and old friends pay us a visit. Amongst those who came during the month was a crowded 'bus-load of G.F.S. and other girls from Carlingford Church of England. In no time they were scattered over the farm looking at pigs, lambs, cows, rabbits, guinea pigs, dogs, fowls, ducks, turkeys, geese, pigeons, pheasants, peafowls, guinea fowls, etc., etc. Some of them enjoyed pony rides, but the time passed only too quickly. The Rector (the Rev. H. R. Smith), who has been a friend of both Mr. and Mrs. Langford-Smith for almost 30 years, was accompanied by his wife; it was a time of happy fellowship.

NEWSPAPER ARTICLES. From time to time photographs and articles dealing with the Mission Farm have appeared in the press. It is unfortunate that the information given is not always accurate, but allowance has to be made for a reporter unfamiliar with the background of the Mission. It is hoped that another book may one day be published, giving an accurate account of the growth of the work.

TRIP TO ENGLAND. Some confusion has

arisen amongst friends owing to radio and newspaper reports, and it is necessary to mention that it was Mr. and Mrs. F. Langford-Smith who have gone to England. Mr. F. Langford-Smith is the elder brother of Keith Langford-Smith (the "Sky Pilot"). What has added to the confusion is that Margaret, the eldest daughter of the "Sky Pilot" has accompanied her Uncle and Aunt to England. Margaret, who is a photographer's colourist, is making the trip to further her studies and gain experience before returning to her position in a studio in Australia.

POSTAL STRIKE. As practically all our donations come by mail, it was a severe blow when mail was held up recently. We have a large family to feed and we passed through a difficult period, sometimes wondering where the next meal was coming from. But it is during emergencies that God proves that He is watching the welfare of His little ones. On one occasion there was no money in the house, the mailman had been—but no letters or donations. We carried on in faith, and when a friend called unexpectedly and left £10 we were not really surprised. It was the answer to prayer that we had been waiting for, and the children did not miss a meal!

OFFERING BOXES. The Home Offering Boxes were due to be opened at the end of September. If you are a Box Holder and have not already done so we will be obliged if you will open your box and forward the contents to the Secretary, Sky Pilot Fellowship, Marella Mission Farm, Kellyville. We have an ever-growing family, and they have healthy appetites. We depend entirely on voluntary contributions and the money raised by the Women's Auxiliary and such friends. It only costs about £2/2/- per week to feed and clothe each dark child, but that amounts to about £1,000 per annum. Besides this, there are the overhead expenses—rates, taxes, light and power, telephone, postage, printing, wages, etc. We can only act as your agents to help these dark children, and we depend on your support.

8th ANNIVERSARY RALLY AND SALE OF WORK. May we remind you of this Rally announced elsewhere in this leaflet? We are grateful to the Social Services Department of the Presbyterian Church for its kindness in lending us the tables we require, free of charge. But we need something to put on them, and we also need your presence to make this an outstanding day—November 3rd, Lower Sydney Town Hall. Have you made a note of it?