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Introduction

The following story was written by Leo Tolstoy (1828-1920) a Russian writer. While I was mentally assembling the editorial for this issue of BN, I remembered Tolstoy's classic work on mortality. A few of my own comments will follow at the conclusion of his story.

How Much Land Does a Man Need?

I

An elder sister came to visit her younger sister in the country. The elder was married to a tradesman in town, the younger to a peasant in the village. As the sisters sat over their tea talking, the elder began to boast of the advantages of town life: saying how comfortably they lived there, how well they dressed, what fine clothes her children wore, what good things they ate and drank, and how she went to the theatre, promenades, and entertainments.

The younger sister was piqued, and in turn disparaged the life of a tradesman, and stood up for that of a peasant.

"I would not change my way of life for yours," said she. "We may live roughly, but at least we are free from anxiety. You live in better style than we do, but though you often earn more than you need, you are very likely to lose all you have. You know the proverb, 'Loss and gain are brothers twain.' It often happens that people who are wealthy one day are begging their bread the next. Our way is safer. Though a peasant's life is not a fat one, it is a long one. We shall never grow rich, but we shall always have enough to eat."

The elder sister said sneeringly:

"Enough? Yes, if you like to share with the pigs and the calves! What do you know of elegance or manners! However much your good man may slave, you will die as you are living—on a dung heap—and your children the same."

"Well, what of that?" replied the younger. "Of course our work is rough and coarse. But, on the other hand, it is sure; and we need not bow to any one. But you, in your towns,

are surrounded by temptations; today all may be right, but tomorrow the Evil One may tempt your husband with cards, wine, or women, and all will go to ruin. Don't such things happen often enough?"

Pahom, the master of the house, was lying on the top of the oven, and he listened to the women's chatter.

"It is perfectly true," thought he. "Busy as we are from childhood tilling Mother Earth, we peasants have no time to let any nonsense settle in our heads. Our only trouble is that we haven't land enough. If I had plenty of land, I shouldn't fear the Devil himself!"

The women finished their tea, chatted a while about dress, and then cleared away the tea-things and lay down to sleep.

But the Devil had been sitting behind the oven, and had heard all that was said. He was pleased that the peasant's wife had led her husband into boasting, and that he had said that if he had plenty of land he would not fear the Devil himself.

"All right," thought the Devil. "We will have a tussle. I'll give you land enough; and by means of that land I will get you into my power."

II

Close to the village there lived a lady, a small landowner, who had an estate of about three hundred acres. She had always lived on good terms with the peasants, until she engaged as her steward an old soldier, who took to burdening the people with fines. However careful Pahom tried to be, it happened again and again that now a horse of his got among the lady's oats, now a cow strayed into her garden, now his calves found their way into her meadows-and he always had to pay a fine.

Pahom paid, but grumbled, and, going home in a temper, was rough with his family. All through that summer Pahom had much trouble because of this steward; and he was even glad when winter came and the cattle had to be stabled. Though he grudged the fodder when they could no longer graze on the pasture-land, at least he was free from anxiety about them.

In the winter the news got about that the lady was going to sell her land, and that the keeper of the inn on the high road was bargaining for it. When the peasants heard this they were very much alarmed.

"Well," thought they, "if the innkeeper gets the land he will worry us with fines worse than the lady's steward. We all depend on that estate."

So the peasants went on behalf of their Commune, and asked the lady not to sell the land to the innkeeper; offering her a better price for it themselves. The lady agreed to let them have it. Then the peasants tried to arrange for the Commune to buy the whole estate, so that it might be held by all in common. They met twice to discuss it, but could not settle the matter; the Evil One sowed discord among them, and they could not agree. So they decided to buy the land individually, each according to his means; and the lady agreed to this plan as she had to the other.

Presently Pahom heard that a neighbor of his was buying fifty acres, and that the lady had consented to accept one half in cash and to wait a year for the other half. Pahom felt envious.

"Look at that," thought he, "the land is all being sold, and I shall get none of it." So he spoke to his wife.

"Other people are buying," said he, "and we must also buy twenty acres or so. Life is becoming impossible. That steward is simply crushing us with his fines."

So they put their heads together and considered how they could manage to buy it. They had one hundred roubles laid by. They sold a colt, and one half of their bees; hired out one of their sons as a laborer, and took his wages in advance; borrowed the rest from a brother-in-law, and so scraped together half the purchase money.

Having done this, Pahom chose out a farm of forty acres, some of it wooded, and went to the lady to bargain for it. They came to an agreement, and he shook hands with her upon it, and paid her a deposit in advance. Then they went to town and signed the deeds; he paying half the price down, and undertaking to pay the remainder within two years.

So now Pahom had land of his own. He borrowed seed, and sowed it on the land he had bought. The harvest was a good one, and within a year he had managed to pay off his debts both to the lady and to his brother-in-law. So he became a landowner, ploughing and sowing his own land, making hay on his own land, cutting his own trees, and feeding his cattle on his own pasture. When he went out to plough his fields, or to look at his growing corn, or at his grass meadows, his heart would fill with joy. The grass that grew and the flowers that bloomed there, seemed to him unlike any that grew elsewhere. Formerly, when he had passed by that land, it had appeared the same as any other land, but now it seemed quite different.

III

So Pahom was well contented, and everything would have been right if the neighboring peasants would only not have trespassed on his corn-fields and meadows. He appealed to them most civilly, but they still went on: now the Communal herdsmen would let the village cows stray into his meadows; then horses from the night pasture would get among his corn. Pahom turned them out again and again, and forgave their owners, and for a long time he forbore from prosecuting anyone. But at last he lost patience and complained to the District Court. He knew it was the peasants' want of land, and no evil intent on their part, that caused the trouble; but he thought:

"I cannot go on overlooking it, or they will destroy all I have. They must be taught a lesson."

So he had them up, gave them one lesson, and then another, and two or three of the peasants were fined. After a time Pahom's neighbours began to bear him a grudge for this, and would now and then let their cattle on his land on purpose. One peasant even got into Pahom's wood at night and cut down five young lime trees for their bark. Pahom passing through the wood one day noticed something white. He came nearer, and saw the stripped trunks lying on the ground, and close by stood the stumps, where the tree had been. Pahom was furious.

"If he had only cut one here and there it would have been bad enough," thought Pahom, "but the rascal has actually cut down a whole clump. If I could only find out who did this, I would pay him out."

He racked his brains as to who it could be. Finally he decided: "It must be Simon—no one else could have done it." Se he went to Simon's homestead to have a look around, but he found nothing, and only had an angry scene. However, he now felt more certain

than ever that Simon had done it, and he lodged a complaint. Simon was summoned. The case was tried, and re-tried, and at the end of it all Simon was acquitted, there being no evidence against him. Pahom felt still more aggrieved, and let his anger loose upon the Elder and the Judges.

"You let thieves grease your palms," said he. "If you were honest folk yourselves, you would not let a thief go free."

So Pahom quarrelled with the Judges and with his neighbors. Threats to burn his building began to be uttered. So though Pahom had more land, his place in the Commune was much worse than before.

About this time a rumor got about that many people were moving to new parts.

"There's no need for me to leave my land," thought Pahom. "But some of the others might leave our village, and then there would be more room for us. I would take over their land myself, and make my estate a bit bigger. I could then live more at ease. As it is, I am still too cramped to be comfortable."

One day Pahom was sitting at home, when a peasant passing through the village, happened to call in. He was allowed to stay the night, and supper was given him. Pahom had a talk with this peasant and asked him where he came from. The stranger answered that he came from beyond the Volga, where he had been working. One word led to another, and the man went on to say that many people were settling in those parts. He told how some people from his village had settled there. They had joined the Commune, and had had twenty-five acres per man granted them. The land was so good, he said, that the rye sown on it grew as high as a horse, and so thick that five cuts of a sickle made a sheaf. One peasant, he said, had brought nothing with him but his bare hands, and now he had six horses and two cows of his own.

Pahom's heart kindled with desire. He thought:

"Why should I suffer in this narrow hole, if one can live so well elsewhere? I will sell my land and my homestead here, and with the money I will start afresh over there and get everything new. In this crowded place one is always having trouble. But I must first go and find out all about it myself."

Towards summer he got ready and started. He went down the Volga on a steamer to Samara, then walked another three hundred miles on foot, and at last reached the place. It was just as the stranger had said. The peasants had plenty of land: every man had twenty-five acres of Communal land given him for his use, and any one who had money could buy, besides, at fifty-cents an acre as much good freehold land as he wanted.

Having found out all he wished to know, Pahom returned home as autumn came on, and began selling off his belongings. He sold his land at a profit, sold his homestead and all his cattle, and withdrew from membership of the Commune. He only waited till the spring, and then started with his family for the new settlement.

IV

As soon as Pahom and his family arrived at their new abode, he applied for admission into the Commune of a large village. He stood treat to the Elders, and obtained the necessary documents. Five shares of Communal land were given him for his own and his sons' use: that is to say—125 acres (not altogether, but in different fields) besides the use

of the Communal pasture. Pahom put up the buildings he needed, and bought cattle. Of the Communal land alone he had three times as much as at his former home, and the land was good corn-land. He was ten times better off than he had been. He had plenty of arable land and pasturage, and could keep as many head of cattle as he liked.

At first, in the bustle of building and settling down, Pahom was pleased with it all, but when he got used to it he began to think that even here he had not enough land. The first year, he sowed wheat on his share of the Communal land, and had a good crop. He wanted to go on sowing wheat, but had not enough Communal land for the purpose, and what he had already used was not available; for in those parts wheat is only sown on virgin soil or on fallow land. It is sown for one or two years, and then the land lies fallow till it is again overgrown with prairie grass. There were many who wanted such land, and there was not enough for all; so that people quarrelled about it. Those who were better off, wanted it for growing wheat, and those who were poor, wanted it to let to dealers, so that they might raise money to pay their taxes. Pahom wanted to sow more wheat; so he rented land from a dealer for a year. He sowed much wheat and had a fine crop, but the land was too far from the village—the wheat had to be carted more than ten miles. After a time Pahom noticed that some peasant-dealers were living on separate farms, and were growing wealthy; and he thought:

"If I were to buy some freehold land, and have a homestead on it, it would be a different thing, altogether. Then it would all be nice and compact."

The question of buying freehold land recurred to him again and again.

He went on in the same way for three years; renting land and sowing wheat. The seasons turned out well and the crops were good, so that he began to lay money by. He might have gone on living contentedly, but he grew tired of having to rent other people's land every year, and having to scramble for it. Wherever there was good land to be had, the peasants would rush for it and it was taken up at once, so that unless you were sharp about it you got none. It happened in the third year that he and a dealer together rented a piece of pasture land from some peasants; and they had already ploughed it up, when there was some dispute, and the peasants went to law about it, and things fell out so that the labor was all lost."If it were my own land," thought Pahom, "I should be independent,and there would not be all this unpleasantness."

So Pahom began looking out for land which he could buy; and he came across a peasant who had bought thirteen hundred acres, but having got into difficulties was willing to sell again cheap. Pahom bargained and haggled with him, and at last they settled the price at 1,500 roubles, part in cash and part to be paid later. They had all but clinched the matter, when a passing dealer happened to stop at Pahom's one day to get a feed for his horse. He drank tea with Pahom, and they had a talk. The dealer said that he was just returning from the land of the Bashkirs, far away, where he had bought thirteen thousand acres of land all for 1,000 roubles. Pahom questioned him further, and the tradesman said:

"All one need do is to make friends with the chiefs. I gave away about one hundred roubles' worth of dressing-gowns and carpets, besides a case of tea, and I gave wine to those who would drink it; and I got the land for less than two cents an acre. And he showed Pahom the title-deeds, saying:

"'The land lies near a river, and the whole prairie is virgin soil."

Pahom plied him with questions, and the tradesman said:

"There is more land there than you could cover if you walked a year, and it all belongs to the Bashkirs. They are as simple as sheep,and land can be got almost for nothing."

"There now," thought Pahom, "with my one thousand roubles, why should I get only thirteen hundred acres, and saddle myself with a debt besides. If I take it out there, I can get more than ten times as much for the money."

V

Pahom inquired how to get to the place, and as soon as the tradesman had left him, he prepared to go there himself. He left his wife to look after the homestead, and started on his journey taking his man with him. They stopped at a town on their way, and bought a case of tea, some wine, and other presents, as the tradesman had advised. On and on they went until they had gone more than three hundred miles, and on the seventh day they came to a place where the Bashkirs had pitched their tents. It was all just as the tradesman had said. The people lived on the steppes, by a river, in felt-covered tents. They neither tilled the ground, nor ate bread. Their cattle and horses grazed in herds on the steppe. The colts were tethered behind the tents, and the mares were driven to them twice a day. The mares were milked, and from the milk kumiss was made. It was the women who prepared kumiss, and they also made cheese. As far as the men were concerned, drinking kumiss and tea, eating mutton, and playing on their pipes, was all they cared about. They were all stout and merry, and all the summer long they never thought of doing any work. They were quite ignorant, and knew no Russian, but were good-natured enough.

As soon as they saw Pahom, they came out of their tents and gathered round their visitor. An interpreter was found, and Pahom told them he had come about some land. The Bashkirs seemed very glad; they took Pahom and led him into one of the best tents, where they made him sit on some down cushions placed on a carpet, while they sat round him. They gave him tea and kumiss, and had a sheep killed, and gave him mutton to eat. Pahom took presents out of his cart and distributed them among the Bashkirs, and divided amongst them the tea. The Bashkirs were delighted. They talked a great deal among themselves, and then told the interpreter to translate.

"They wish to tell you," said the interpreter, "that they like you, and that it is our custom to do all we can to please a guest and to repay him for his gifts. You have given us presents, now tell us which of the things we possess please you best, that we may present them to you."

"What pleases me best here," answered Pahom, "is your land. Our land is crowded, and the soil is exhausted; but you have plenty of land and it is good land. I never saw the like of it."

The interpreter translated. The Bashkirs talked among themselves for a while. Pahom could not understand what they were saying, but saw that they were much amused, and that they shouted and laughed. Then they were silent and looked at Pahom while the interpreter said:

"They wish me to tell you that in return for your presents they will gladly give you as much land as you want. You have only to point it out with your hand and it is yours."

The Bashkirs talked again for a while and began to dispute. Pahom asked what they

were disputing about, and the interpreter told him that some of them thought they ought to ask their Chief about the land and not act in his absence, while others thought there was no need to wait for his return.

VI

While the Bashkirs were disputing, a man in a large fox-fur cap appeared on the scene. They all became silent and rose to their feet. The interpreter said, "This is our Chief himself."

Pahom immediately fetched the best dressing-gown and five pounds of tea, and offered these to the Chief. The Chief accepted them, and seated himself in the place of honour. The Bashkirs at once began telling him something. The Chief listened for a while, then made a sign with his head for them to be silent, and addressing himself to Pahom, said in Russian:

"Well, let it be so. Choose whatever piece of land you like; we have plenty of it."

"How can I take as much as I like?" thought Pahom. "I must get a deed to make it secure, or else they may say, 'It is yours,' and afterwards may take it away again."

"Thank you for your kind words," he said aloud. "You have much land, and I only want a little. But I should like to be sure which bit is mine. Could it not be measured and made over to me? Life and death are in God's hands. You good people give it to me, but your children might wish to take it away again."

"You are quite right," said the Chief. "We will make it over to you."

"I heard that a dealer had been here," continued Pahom, "and that you gave him a little land, too, and signed title-deeds to that effect. I should like to have it done in the same way."

The Chief understood.

"Yes," replied he, "that can be done quite easily. We have a scribe, and we will go to town with you and have the deed properly sealed."

"And what will be the price?" asked Pahom.

"Our price is always the same: one thousand roubles a day."

Pahom did not understand.

"A day? What measure is that? How many acres would that be?"

"We do not know how to reckon it out," said the Chief. "We sell it by the day. As much as you can go round on your feet in a day is yours, and the price is one thousand roubles a day."

Pahom was surprised.

"But in a day you can get round a large tract of land," he said.

The Chief laughed.

"It will all be yours!" said he. "But there is one condition: If you don't return on the same day to the spot whence you started, your money is lost."

"But how am I to mark the way that I have gone?"

"Why, we shall go to any spot you like, and stay there. You must start from that spot and make your round, taking a spade with you. Wherever you think necessary, make a mark. At every turning, dig a hole and pile up the turf; then afterwards we will go round with a plough from hole to hole. You may make as large a circuit as you please, but before the sun sets you must return to the place you started from. All the land you cover will be yours."

Pahom was delighted. It-was decided to start early next morning. They talked a while, and after drinking some more kumiss and eating some more mutton, they had tea again, and then the night came on. They gave Pahom a feather-bed to sleep on, and the Bashkirs dispersed for the night, promising to assemble the next morning at daybreak and ride out before sunrise to the appointed spot.

VII

Pahom lay on the feather-bed, but could not sleep. He kept thinking about the land.

"What a large tract I will mark off!" thought he. "I can easily go thirty-five miles in a day. The days are long now, and within a circuit of thirty-five miles what a lot of land there will be! I will sell the poorer land, or let it to peasants, but I'll pick out the best and farm it. I will buy two ox-teams, and hire two more laborers. About a hundred and fifty acres shall be plough-land, and I will pasture cattle on the rest."

Pahom lay awake all night, and dozed off only just before dawn. Hardly were his eyes closed when he had a dream. He thought he was lying in that same tent, and heard somebody chuckling outside. He wondered who it could be, and rose and went out, and he saw the Bashkir Chief sitting in front of the tent holding his side and rolling about with laughter. Going nearer to the Chief, Pahom asked: "What are you laughing at?" But he saw that it was no longer the Chief, but the dealer who had recently stopped at his house and had told him about the land. Just as Pahom was going to ask, "Have you been here long?" he saw that it was not the dealer, but the peasant who had come up from the Volga, long ago, to Pahom's old home. Then he saw that it was not the peasant either, but the Devil himself with hoofs and horns, sitting there and chuckling, and before him lay a man barefoot, prostrate on the ground, with only trousers and a shirt on. And Pahom dreamt that he looked more attentively to see what sort of a man it was lying there, and he saw that the man was dead, and that it was himself! He awoke horror-struck.

"What things one does dream," thought he.

Looking round he saw through the open door that the dawn was breaking.

"It's time to wake them up," thought he. "We ought to be starting."

He got up, roused his man (who was sleeping in his cart), bade him harness; and went to call the Bashkirs.

"It's time to go to the steppe to measure the land," he said.

The Bashkirs rose and assembled, and the Chief came, too. Then they began drinking kumiss again, and offered Pahom some tea, but he would not wait.

"If we are to go, let us go. It is high time," said he.

VIII

The Bashkirs got ready and they all started: some mounted on horses, and some in carts. Pahom drove in his own small cart with his servant, and took a spade with him. When they reached the steppe, the morning red was beginning to kindle. They ascended a hillock (called by the Bashkirs a shikhan) and dismounting from their carts and their horses, gathered in one spot. The Chief came up to Pahom and stretched out his arm towards the plain:

"See," said he, "all this, as far as your eye can reach, is ours. You may have any part of it you like."

Pahom's eyes glistened: it was all virgin soil, as flat as the palm of your hand, as black as the seed of a poppy, and in the hollows different kinds of grasses grew breast high.

The Chief took off his fox-fur cap, placed it on the ground and said:

"This will be the mark. Start from here, and return here again. All the land you go round shall be yours."

Pahom took out his money and put it on the cap. Then he took off his outer coat, remaining in his sleeveless under coat. He unfastened his girdle and tied it tight below his stomach, put a little bag of bread into the breast of his coat, and tying a flask of water to his girdle, he drew up the tops of his boots, took the spade from his man, and stood ready to start. He considered for some moments which way he had better go—it was tempting everywhere.

"No matter," he concluded, "I will go towards the rising sun."

He turned his face to the east, stretched himself, and waited for the sun to appear above the rim.

"I must lose no time," he thought, "and it is easier walking while it is still cool."

The sun's rays had hardly flashed above the horizon, before Pahom, carrying the spade over his shoulder, went down into the steppe.

Pahom started walking neither slowly nor quickly. After having gone a thousand yards he stopped, dug a hole and placed pieces of turf one on another to make it more visible. Then he went on; and now that he had walked off his stiffness he quickened his pace. After awhile he dug another hole.

Pahom looked back. The hillock could be distinctly seen in the sunlight, with the people on it, and the glittering tires of the cartwheels. At a rough guess Pahom concluded that he had walked three miles. It was growing warmer; he took off his under-coat, flung it across his shoulder, and went on again. It had grown quite warm now; he looked at the sun, it was time to think of breakfast.

"The first shift is done, but there are four in a day, and it is too soon yet to turn. But I will just take off my boots," said he to himself.

He sat down, took off his boots, stuck them into his girdle, and went on. It was easy walking now.

"I will go on for another three miles," thought he, "and then turn to the left. The spot is so fine, that it would be a pity to lose it. The further one goes, the better the land seems."

He went straight on a for a while, and when he looked round, the hillock was scarcely visible and the people on it looked like black ants, and he could just see something glistening there in the sun.

"Ah," thought Pahom, "I have gone far enough in this direction, it is time to turn. Besides I am in a regular sweat, and very thirsty."

He stopped, dug a large hole, and heaped up pieces of turf. Next he untied his flask, had a drink, and then turned sharply to the left. He went on and on; the grass was high, and it was very hot.

Pahom began to grow tired: he looked at the sun and saw that it was noon.

"Well," he thought, "I must have a rest."

He sat down, and ate some bread and drank some water; but he did not lie down, thinking that if he did he might fall asleep. After sitting a little while, he went on again. At first he walked easily: the food had strengthened him; but it had become terribly hot, and he felt sleepy; still he went on, thinking: "An hour to suffer, a life-time to live."

He went a long way in this direction also, and was about to turn to the left again, when he perceived a damp hollow: "It would be a pity to leave that out," he thought. "Flax would do well there." So he went on past the hollow, and dug a hole on the other side of it before he turned the corner. Pahom looked towards the hillock. The heat made the air hazy: it seemed to be quivering, and through the haze the people on the hillock could scarcely be seen.

"Ah!" thought Pahom, "I have made the sides too long; I must make this one shorter." And he went along the third side, stepping faster. He looked at the sun: it was nearly half way to the horizon, and he had not yet done two miles of the third side of the square. He was still ten miles from the goal.

"No," he thought, "though it will make my land lopsided, I must hurry back in a straight line now. I might go too far, and as it is I have a great deal of land."

So Pahom hurriedly dug a hole, and turned straight towards the hillock.

IX

Pahom went straight towards the hillock, but he now walked with difficulty. He was done up with the heat, his bare feet were cut and bruised, and his legs began to fail. He longed to rest, but it was impossible if he meant to get back before sunset. The sun waits for no man, and it was sinking lower and lower.

"Oh dear," he thought, "if only I have not blundered trying for too much! What if I am too late?"

He looked towards the hillock and at the sun. He was still far from his goal, and the sun was already near the rim. Pahom walked on and on; it was very hard walking, but he went quicker and quicker. He pressed on, but was still far from the place. He began running, threw away his coat, his boots, his flask, and his cap, and kept only the spade which he used as a support.

"What shall I do," he thought again, "I have grasped too much, and ruined the whole affair. I can't get there before the sun sets."

And this fear made him still more breathless. Pahom went on running, his soaking shirt and trousers stuck to him, and his mouth was parched. His breast was working like a blacksmith's bellows, his heart was beating like a hammer, and his legs were giving way as if they did not belong to him. Pahom was seized with terror lest he should die of the strain.

Though afraid of death, he could not stop. "After having run all that way they will call me a fool if I stop now," thought he. And he ran on and on, and drew near and heard the Bashkirs yelling and shouting to him, and their cries inflamed his heart still more. He gathered his last strength and ran on.

The sun was close to the rim, and cloaked in mist looked large, and red as blood. Now, yes now, it was about to set! The sun was quite low, but he was also quite near his aim. Pahom could already see the people on the hillock waving their arms to hurry him up.

He could see the fox-fur cap on the ground, and the money on it, and the Chief sitting on the ground holding his sides. And Pahom remembered his dream.

"There is plenty of land," thought he, "but will God let me live on it? I have lost my life, I have lost my life! I shall never reach that spot!"

Pahom looked at the sun, which had reached the earth: one side of it had already disappeared. With all his remaining strength he rushed on, bending his body forward so that his legs could hardly follow fast enough to keep him from falling. Just as he reached the hillock it suddenly grew dark. He looked up--the sun had already set. He gave a cry: "All my labor has been in vain," thought he,and was about to stop, but he heard the Bashkirs still shouting, and remembered that though to him, from below, the sun seemed to have set, they on the hillock could still see it. He took a long breath and ran up the hillock. It was still light there. He reached the top and saw the cap. Before it sat the Chief laughing and holding his sides. Again Pahom remembered his dream, and he uttered a cry: his legs gave way beneath him, he fell forward and reached the cap with his hands.

"Ah, what a fine fellow!" exclaimed the Chief. "He has gained much land!"

Pahom's servant came running up and tried to raise him, but he saw that blood was flowing from his mouth. Pahom was dead!

The Bashkirs clicked their tongues to show their pity.

His servant picked up the spade and dug a grave long enough for Pahom to lie in, and buried him in it. Six feet from his head to his heels was all he needed.

Editorial

At the End of the Day...

We are deeply disappointed, even discouraged, when life deals us a cruel blow; when years of work evaporate, but will it matter at the end of the day?

We try to deal honestly with all men and live above reproach, only to find we have been misunderstood and our name besmirched, but will it matter at the end of the day?

We open our heart to one whom we believe is worthy of confidence, only to find that our heartfelt utterances are floating on the breeze, but will it matter at the end of the day?

We hope to make a positive contribution to a local project, only to see our valid suggestions consistently voted down or ignored, but will it matter at the end of the day?

We find we are being shunted to a siding when sickness or accident deprive us of our strength and must look on while others take up our cause, but will it matter at the end of the day?

We make a purchase, or a sale, and find we have been maliciously defrauded, but will it matter at the end of the day?

We go out on a limb to give someone a chance in life, only to find that our efforts to help create a future have instead created a barrier, but will it matter at the end of the day?

We dream of a time when the uphill climb and struggles we daily face to make ends meet will yield fruit and permit us to enjoy the amenities of life as the sun sinks lower, only to realize this will not happen, but will it matter at the end of the day.

When health issues curtail our mobility and pain and discomfort become our constant

companions, it becomes clear there will be no River Jordan or Pool of Siloam, but will it matter at the end of the day?

The end of the day is the Mount Pisgah of the just. For some it comes, literally, at the end of each day. For others it comes in special moments, and yet for others in a true "mountaintop experience." For some, however, the end of the day is not a mountaintop, but a deep valley of bitterness, a swamp. It is today we define our end of the day.

The end of the day is a small plot some six feet from head to heels. Our rest will be determined by what mattered to us during life.

Brazilian Wildlife

The Electrician Monkey

Monkeys in a zoo are one thing. In the wild another. Especially if the "wild" happens to be your backyard.

Recently we had a power outage. Before calling the power company I like to find out if any of our fuses are down. They were. A whole bunch of them, as we are on a three-phase line. Checking at the bottom set of barns my hired man told me the culprit was a monkey that climbed the transformer pole and shorted out all three phases on the 13,800 KV line.

Before you say it sounds like monkey business, listen to the rest of the story. That monkey lived to tell the story. According to my hired man he found it on the ground acting groggy. After a bit it got up and trudged off into the woods.

All the fuses were blown at both the bottom and the top barns, at our residence, as well as up the line for a ways—probably at least a dozen. Can any of you good readers explain how a monkey can pull a stunt like that and be around to tell about it?

The Worshipful Monkey (and Kitten)

Let's go back to when we still had church in Dick Toews' shed (nearly 50 years ago). One day when we were out on a wild pig hunt, we ran across a mother monkey with the cutest (I can't believe I called it cute) little monkey hanging onto it. The mother had something the matter with her. She was almost dead. So I took the baby monkey home and gave it to Mim Burns (now Dirks). She raised the little creature and apparently instilled in it a religious fervor.

Anyway, one Sunday Mona (now an adult monkey) apparently decided it had been left home just once too often. So it struck out for church – on foot. It wasn't very far. Seeing the door wide open, it came right on in and with uncanny instinct, headed directly for the preacher's wife.

Alas, the preacher's wife's tender mercies did not extend to a primate attempting to see the world from atop her shoulders. And so, until a rescue operation was launched by the monkey's mistress, the sanctuary lost most of its solemnity. It must be pointed out, however, that most of the worshipers—especially children—took a more charitable view of the "monkey business."

Then another day a little kitten decided to attend worship service. In a much more reverent attitude than the monkey, it sedately walked up the middle isle, gently waving it's little tail. Showing the same uncanny instinct, it walked right up to the rostrum (at least where there should have been a rostrum) and snuggled up to the preacher where he sat facing the congregation. Who could resist such an overture?

Not John Penner, the gentle preacher. He reached down, picked up the little visitor, placed it on his lap, and gently stroked its fur as he viewed the worshipers.

Yep, those were really the good old days. Days to be remembered.

Chicão Takes a Ride

Chicão was the gadabout monkey the Wildlife Society brought to our place hoping it would settle down. It sort of did at one of the neighbors upstream from our place, although it didn't give up making an occasional visit to the Monte Alegre School, much to the delight of the students.

Chicão loved getting into trouble (that's why Ibama brought him out) and soon he was getting into trouble at his new adopted home. When no one was at home, he would really cut up. He learned how to open the window from the outside, would get into the house, have a royal party, strewing macaroni all over the floor, opening a margarine can, getting his feet all smeared up with the stuff, and then tracking it all over the house. Even worse, when he found a hen with little chicks, he would send them to their happy hunting ground.

The neighbors were no longer seeing a lot of humor in Chicão's antics, so they locked it in a storeroom and asked that our boys go there and pick it up so that we could return it to Ibama.

Catching a monkey isn't like catching a cat or a chicken. Their agility is three-dimensional. They can climb up most anything but a bare wall, jump to a light fixture or hide under a cupboard. The boys finally caught Chicão and brought him home in an old birdcage. The next morning when Otávio opened the birdcage door a crack to feed it, Chicão saw his chance and in a split second was free again. Soon he was back at the neighbors pestering the living daylights out of them.

The boys went back a second time and recaptured Chicão and jailed him in the birdcage. The next morning, our day to go to town, we loaded him into the back of our hatchback car and headed for town. The Ibama office is on the way into town, so it would be a simple matter to stop there and hand over the jailbird.

Not all plans work out. About half way to town we heard a different sort of noise in the back of the car. We looked back and found that Chicão once again had flown the coop. Now he was loose in the car…or, and I think this is more accurate, he was now in a larger cell with two fellow prisoners.

I must give Chicão credit for being a well-behaved jailbird. He started exploring the interior of the car and was soon sitting on Faith's shoulder. But what if he panicked? I tried to prepare myself for any contingency. Good old Chicão, he actually seemed to enjoy the ride to town, at least the last half.

We got to Ibama and stopped in front of their office. I managed to slip out of the car, went inside and told the people that Chicão was at their disposal.

I don't suppose any of you good readers have ever tried to catch a full grown monkey in a car. If you ever do, you'll have a new appreciation for the term *monkey business*. We hit on the idea of putting a ripe mango in an open cage, place it against the window, and then roll it down. The idea—really quite brilliant—was that jailbird Chicão would be tempted by the forbidden fruit, go after it, and presto, we would drop the cage door, and he would once again be incarcerated.

It wasn't to be. Chicão saw the fruit and desired it. He headed right up to the open window and quick as a flash hopped in and out—before the door could be dropped. Now he delightedly was jumping around in the car eating the juicy, overripe mango.

It was obvious that our little game could go on for a long while, and we had an appointment we needed to meet, so I suggested we open the back hatch and extend a blanket that he would jump into. Once again Chicão patiently tried our patience. All of our efforts to lure him into our clever trap didn't work. Until finally Houdini—that would fit him much better than Chicão—saw we had our guard down. And he was free indeed! In a jiffy he was up a nearby tree.

Another monkey, a middle-sized monkey Ibama left with us has returned to the wild. We began to turn it loose each day in the same tree with the macaw. The parrot and the monkey were soon close friends. One day towards evening the monkey decided it was time to return to the wild and we haven't see it since.

Zip and Zap

The two little monkeys we raised were called Zip and Zap—the male Zip and the female Zap. Watching these "nonhuman primate mammals" (AHD) grow up was an educational experience. Because of their human resemblance, it's inevitable that one will end up making some comparisons. Just for example…

Have you ever tried to eat a ripe mango? They're delicious, that is if you overlook the fact that they are usually stringy, squishy, sticky and slippery. So when children eat mangos they peal them with their teeth, inevitably ending up with their faces all smeared. So do ladies. And so do gentlemen, except that if they have a beard, due to the law of gravity a certain percent of the juice trickles down, makes the beard stringy, squishy, sticky and slippery.

On I.Q. tests, human beings normally score somewhat higher than nonhuman primate mammals. There are a number of reasons for this, one of which is that humans make up the tests, which means they obviously use self-serving criteria (which in itself is a sign of a substantial I.Q.) But if man ever permits primates to set some of the standards for I.Q. tests, he may learn a thing or two.

The other day our son Otávio decided to serve Zip and Zap some ripe mango. He went under the tree where they spend most of their time and called them. Quicker than you can shake a stick, they swung down to a branch just above his head. He offered them each a piece of mango…

Now let's watch Zip and Zap. Remember they're not even three months old and have

spent very little time around other monks. When they see Otávio offering them pieces of mango, they both wrap their tails around the branch on which they're sitting, drop the rest of their body down, upside down (obviously), and their little hands reach out for their portion and start eating. Where does the excess juice go? Onto their face? Into their beards (yep, they both have tiny little beards)? Naw… It all drips down to the ground, as they daintily eat away.

But, like we have said, humans don't put that kind of stuff in the I.Q. tests they make.

Progress

GO174 Highway

The GO174 highway is the one that goes past the Colony and that we take to town. When this road was built some 40 years ago, there was very little traffic. As more and more land was cleared and put to crops or pasture, the flux of vehicles became more intense. The road was well-made, but had no shoulder which created an extremely dangerous situation. Vehicles needing to pull over had to stop right on the road. Small branches are quickly stripped from nearby trees and scattered behind the stopped vehicle for a hundred or hundred and fifty meters. These branches are recognized as flares indicating there is danger immediately ahead.

As traffic escalated tenfold, so did accidents. In fact, it became known as "a Rodovia da Morte"—the Highway of Death. This was especially true during the night.

Then we heard that passing lanes were to be added. Our first reaction was skepticism. But, as work began a brighter picture began to emerge. Approximately a meter of earth was removed where the passing lanes were to be built, then replaced in small layers and thoroughly packed, leaving a half meter that was filled with gravel mixed with asphalt. The highway itself was ground up and mixed with generous amounts of cement. The final step was several layers of asphalt.

Those of you familiar with the GO174 highway will readily understand the importance of the passing lanes on the long approaches to the Rio Verdinho. Instead of getting hung up behind a heavily-loaded truck traveling at 20 or 30 kph. and having to repeatedly hit the patience button, travel to town is quicker and safer.

The last six or seven kilometers into town were not done. It is said that stretch will be turned into a 4-lane highway. May what we hear be true.

Thinking Out Loud

Speech Lessons Learned in the Dental Chair

Over the years my ability to hear and understand what people say has deteriorated. Interestingly, when some people talk I can understand almost everything they say. And others, almost nothing (which isn't always bad). Surely there must be a reason for this. I think maybe my dentist—and yours too—can give a few pointers.

So, here we go with dental speech lessons:

Rule 1: OPEN YOUR MOUTH. When I am sitting in the dental chair, my dentist

alternately tells me: "*Abre a boca*," and "*Fecha a boca*." (Open your mouth and Close your mouth) When dentists say, "Open your mouth," they are giving us the first and most important lesson in articulate speech.

Amazing. We open our mouth to eat (and sometimes chew). We open our mouth to snore. We open our mouth when astonished. We open our mouth when we ought to keep it shut. But when we talk, especially in public, we open it just enough for our words to ooze out through semi-clenched lips.

Rule 2: USE YOUR LIPS. After a session in the dentist's chair when your lips are still partially anaesthetized, it is kind of hard to talk, isn't it? Then we understand that our lips are essential to proper enunciation (*manner of uttering, articulating, or pronouncing especially as regards ease of perceptibility* —AHD). We can't articulate properly without proper use of our lips. And others can't understand what we say.

Most hearing-impaired individuals consciously, or unconsciously, lip-read. So when lips resemble the flattened line on the ICU monitor indicating the patient has gone into cardiac arrest, speech becomes unintelligible.

Rule 3: LOOK AT YOUR INTERLOCUTOR. My dentist wants me to look at her while she is working on my teeth. It sort of makes sense. What doesn't make sense is to speak to someone and look at anything and everything, except the person with whom we are supposed to be having a conversation.

A microphone is a dreadful thing. At times it seems its raison d'etre is to amplify the mumbles of the speaker. Even more amazing, it creates an uncontrollable urge to speak to one's own belly, with only sporadic frightened glances at the fearful mike.

(Do you any of you more ancient readers remember the preacher who always looked at the ceiling when in the pulpit? Beside the point, but better the ceiling than the belly.)

My dentist wants me to look right at her when working on my teeth. We hard-of-hearers share that sentiment. If you have anything worthwhile to tell us, have the courtesy of looking at us when speaking.

Rule 4: DON'T COAST. When my dentist goes to drilling my teeth, she hits the pedal to drill and then lets up. She doesn't slowly ease up on the pedal and let the drill whirl in slow motion while checking her work or removing it from my mouth.

Too many people coast their sentences. The first several words come out loud and clear and the rest lose steam as they coast to an almost inaudible close.

Rule 5: DON'T RUSH IT. My dentist doesn't act like she is an emergency worker responding to a call. She works slowly and methodically, which is actually the fastest way to work. Very few people have the ability to talk at 120 mph and still be understood (President John F. Kennedy was one of them). The rest must keep within speed limit. For some that is 40 mph, for others 50 mph and yet for others 60 mph. This is especially important in public speaking. The quickest way to get something said is speaking slowly and distinctly.

Rule 6: SAY WHAT NEEDS TO BE SAID. My dentist clearly and concisely tells me what I need to know. She doesn't say, "Now, in just a bit I am going to ask you to close your mouth." She says, "Open your mouth, please."

Again, you more ancient readers, do you remember the days when vehicles had the three-speed shift lever attach to the steering column? And did you ever get stuck in mud or snow and attempt to get out by doing the back and forth, up and down ritual? It

was clutch/reverse…clutch/first gear…clutch/reverse…clutch/first gear… as the vehicle would slowly edge ahead (or backward), until it finally got unstuck. Well, that is how some people talk. They are not sure what they want to say, so they go back and forth and back and forth, rather than thinking just a bit and then saying what needs to be said in a half dozen words. To borrow from the Apostle, it is better to speak five words with understanding, than to gush out a torrent of disjointed phrases that can't be understood.

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH. My dentist knows that my maxilla muscles don't take kindly to extended periods in the open position, so she says, "Okay, this is enough for today."

And I say the same. Do you wish for the hearing-impaired to understand what you say? Then follow these simple rules our dentists teach us.

Cosigning

I recently had three dental implants done. My dentist, Dr. Thales Martins Cruvinel, is a young man with a master's degree in his speciality of *implantodontia*. I can highly recommend him to anyone needing a dental implant.

I was curious about his last names, as they are both of traditional families here in Rio Verde. I discovered I knew quite a few of his relatives on the Martins side of the family, and one on the Cruvinel side, his uncle Joaquim Cruvinel, who many on the Colony knew some 40 years ago.

Joaquim Cruvinel had a rice processing plant on Avenida President Vargas and in those days, when rice was still planted on the Colony quite a few of the Mennonites sold rice to him.

Rice buyers had the reputation of being shrewd businessmen, to put it mildly. However, I never heard one word of complaint about Joaquim. He was always a gentleman and totally honest.

Back in those days when a short-term loan was needed from the Banco do Brasil, as well as other banks. their way of securing the loan was to ask for a cosigner, even though they knew there was no danger of default—bank rules. For some reason the Banco do Brasil suggested Joaquim Cruvinel as a cosigner they would accept. And so it was that American after American made a call to his business and asked if he would cosign for them. The answer was always the same, a big smile and a signature. He never questioned the amount or raised an eyebrow. Not once did he have to make good one of these loans.

All this made sense since Joaquim was a quite wealthy man and could have paid up should someone have defaulted. But what happened next made absolutely no sense. During the years I had my feed and vet supply store in town, the bank sent people from the Colony to me for my signature. The bank knew full well I had no way to make the loans good should they not pay up. However, because of the reputation of the Colony people, they knew there was no danger of my ever having to pay. So, they kept coming to the store for my signature, and like Joaquim, I signed, no questions asked. I never had to dish out one red cent.

Would I recommend other people doing this? Of course not! Would I do it again. Of course! I was dealing with some of the most honest people in the world.

This & That

Our schools follow the Brazilian schedule, so vacation is the months of December and January, with variations. There is a shorter vacation during the month of July. Also, in our church schools we have a week vacation during the second week of revival meetings. The year-end programs are interesting, mainly in Portuguese, but with some English.

The beginning of the rainy season, in the past, we listed as September 1. However, I recently found out that October 1 is officially recognized as the onset of the rainy season, so that is the timetable I am now following. Our initial rains this year were small, but well-spaced and crops did well. Now it has been raining almost every day, with several heavy rains. So far, in two and a half months, we have gotten about 17 inches (this, of course, varies from place to place). Crops are beautiful.

Our church Annual Meeting takes place on the first of January, with a youth rally and program the evening of December 31. The morning session on the first consists of financial and activity reports, plus elections. The afternoon is dedicated to issues that need to be considered and decisions made. The evening session is dedicated to talks on relevant subjects. The location of the meeting alternates between Monte Alegre and Rio Verdinho Congregations. The youth rally and program is at the congregation where the Annual Meeting is not being held.

Joint first Sunday evening of the month services. For decades it has been tradition for Monte Alegre and Rio Verdinho to alternate their services between the two congregations. Now the Rio Verde (town) Congregation has been included in this rotation. Every third first Sunday the services will be in town. I believe this will have a very positive impact on all three congregations.

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