

# Brazil News



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Editorial

## **The Foolishness of Preaching— and Other Foolishnesses**

We would be appalled if we knew how many souls have refused or rejected the “way” because it looked foolish to them. Seldom will they give this as the reason, possibly because they themselves aren’t consciously aware of this, but down deep they are repulsed by the foolish ways of God’s people.

Throughout the Bible the word foolish or foolishness carries a negative connotation, the foolish virgins being a prime example. However, in his first epistle to the Corinthians, chapter 2, Paul parenthetically uses foolishness in a different sense, almost ironically, giving it a quasi virtuousness. Let’s notice:

*It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.*

*But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise.*

*But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him.*

### **The foolishness of revivals and preaching**

Local businessmen must shake their heads in amazement as some of their best customers attend revival meetings evening after evening for several weeks each year. Why? They are honest and upright in their dealings, don’t smoke, don’t drink, don’t swear, don’t make trouble in the community. Their amazement would be compounded if they could be present in an expression meeting and hear these same customers lament their depravity and ask for forgiveness and prayer.

Revival meetings have their own vitality, a vitality that permits them to adapt to changing times. During the first half of the last century, evangelists frequently assumed the role of the Old Testament prophets, painting sin in all its colors and leaving absolutely no doubt about where wayward members would spend eternity.

After two or three weeks of this, or until they felt the fold was again heaven-bound,

they would level their sights on the unconverted and the prodigals. The pulpit would seem to shake and smoke like Mount Sinai. That is what it took back then to bring about a revival.

In retrospect, it looks foolish to go to church night after night in zero weather on snowy roads for five weeks to attend revivals. It wasn't easy, especially for mothers with small children. It wasn't easy for anyone. How could the evangelists find something to preach about after the third week?

This was an important time in the history of the Holdeman church. During the first years, there were far more difficulties and obstacles than members. But the seed was sown and the numbers slowly grew. Then came harvest time—the time we have just described. Many were converted in revivals, up to a hundred at a time. Yes, some of these fell by the wayside, but others—many more—became girders in the structure. And that is what those revivals were about, foolish as they may have seemed to neighbors who saw a stream of cars heading to church, and returning several hours later, practically every night for five weeks straight.

We enjoy reading success stories. We here in Brazil enjoy telling about the many difficulties we went through to get the Colony running on all six cylinders. We forget the pain and remember the gain. Similarly the foolishness of those revival meetings shines as a beacon when we see the fruit produced.

With the passing of the years, revivals became shorter. Today they seldom run over two weeks; sermons hardly give a reading on the Richter scale. The preaching is directed largely to the church, not the outside. In today's setting it makes sense. A spiritual congregation will be a drawing to the world, not only during two weeks of revivals, but during the entire year. Once again we can look at results. The many non-Mennonite last names showing up in the *Messenger* tell us there is an ingathering. The majority didn't learn to know the church at revivals, but through brothers and sisters, including young people, who carried their revival in their hearts throughout the year.

The foolishness of revivals. They may be foolish, but they are the power of God unto salvation.

### **The foolishness of confession**

A brother recently told of an experience on his first haul after being hired by a trucking firm. He stopped at a filling station to ask for directions. Upon leaving he saw several short bolts protruding from the concrete where some pumps had been removed. Unless he would do some difficult maneuvering, the back trailer tire would run over the bolts. But since they were short and rounded on top, and he was carrying no load, he believed the tires would ride over the bolts. But they didn't, and a tire was ruined.

This was a less than auspicious way to begin a new job. But orders were to call the boss if there was any kind of problem, so that is what the brother did. After explaining that he had a ruined tire on the trailer, the boss's first question was, "Did you bump the tires before leaving the yard?"

“I sure did.”

That’s all the boss wanted to know. He told the brother where to get a new tire and charge it to the firm’s account.

The brother felt relieved. He came through with flying colors. Best of all, he didn’t tell the untruth. But as time went by, he realized that the relief he felt was a bit elusive. Total relief clears the conscience, but this relief didn’t. And as revivals began to approach, his relief turned into a sand castle. It was true he had been absolutely honest with his words, but untruthful with his silence. There was but one solution: Go back and make things right with his boss.

It’s seldom easy to go back and confess, but it’s easier than carrying a guilty conscience, so this brother went to the office and asked his boss if he could talk to him alone.

This type of conversation was normally reserved for very serious problems, and the boss’s face showed he was prepared for the worst.

“Do you remember that time I ruined a tire on my first trip?”

“Yes, I remember. What of it?”

The brother then explained what really happened and asked for pardon.

This boss was prepared for most anything, except for a confession about a flat tire. It must have looked mighty foolish to him, and yet if it would have been possible, at that moment he would have hired all Mennonites to run his rigs.

In most societies, and religions, it is customary to “live down” mistakes, not confess them. We don’t believe that confession should be made “because confession is good for the soul,” but because certain sins and failings need to be corrected to establish or maintain peace with God.

One of our revival ministers this year told of when, as a lad, he went back and confessed something that possibly would not have been necessary. He concluded by saying that he would far rather confess something unnecessarily than to not confess something that could estrange him from God.

Many of us could tell experiences of how we found peace only after obeying the Still Small Voice that said, “Go make that right.” To the world it looks foolish, but down deep we’re glad for the privilege of being foolish.

### **The foolishness of only half an education**

As a general rule we attend school for eight years. Someone who goes to high school and college goes for 16 years, or more, depending on the course.

Why have we arbitrarily decided that eight years in school are sufficient? Why eight?

Have you ever stopped to think what kind of a contribution we could make to society if we would drop this foolishness of only an eighth grade education? Mennonite dedication and a college education would surely produce some of the finest professionals around.

As I rub shoulders with brethren and observe their natural talents, I often find myself imagining them as a professional—as an engineer, a doctor, a lawyer, a teacher... They would be tops.

Yet there they are, driving tractor, pounding nails, digging holes, driving trucks, welding iron, fixing motors—men who could be scientists and help establish a better world order. Oh yes, some of them could become politicians and show the world what honesty in public office can do.

This world doesn't understand why we deliberately take a scissors to our natural abilities and travel through life at half throttle, or maybe at an idle. It looks foolish.

I suppose it is foolish. But folks, when a man grows old and comes to the end of his life with no degrees, with no public achievements, with no “educated” children, but with a contented, clean heart...well, that may be foolishness, but can you think of a better way to catch the exit?

### **The foolishness of being non-resistant**

We hasten to point out that we're not talking about not going to war, although that can be part of it. We're looking at the pristine sense of non-resistance, which we will call *a willingness to be trampled on*. Admittedly it's not a very sophisticated definition, nor attractive.

At times—maybe at home, at church, at work—we are verbally assaulted. At that moment a little grenade forms on the tip of our tongue. With just a quick flick we could effortlessly—indeed, gleefully—hurl it at our antagonist. The exploding grenade would put things in their right perspective. But we remain silent. And depending on the situation, look very foolish. That's grassroots non-resistance.

Teenagers at times become exasperated with their parents inability to do business.

A fairly new tire goes shot. Dad takes it back to the place of purchase to see if the warranty will cover at least part of it. The salesman takes a quick look at the tire and gives the verdict: “You hit some sharp object with that tire. That's not covered by the warranty.” Dad tries to explain that he was on the Interstate when it happened and is quite sure he didn't hit anything. With a slight edge to his voice, the salesman repeats: “You hit something. There's nothing I can do for you.”

Dad says, “How about selling me a new tire? Could you do that?”

The salesman's voice becomes friendly.

At home son asks, “Did you get a new tire, Dad?”

“Yes, I did.”

“They replaced it, right?”

“No, I had to buy a new one?”

“You *bought* a new one? Why?”

Dad stirs a bit uneasily. “Well, the salesman said he was sure I hit something...”

“Did you tell him you didn't?”

“Yes, I did, but the man started to get a little huffy, so I...”

“So you just caved in and dished the money for a new tire...”

“I guess that's what happened.”

“Do you know what I would have done? I would have said, “Mister, between our car, truck and farm machinery, we probably buy six or eight tires a year. We have been

buying most of them from you, but if you don't need our business anymore, I'm sure your competitor will be glad to do business with us."

Dad shuffles his foot in the gravel. He took a beating from the salesman. And now from his son. But down deep he feels happy. It may be foolish, but he'll keep on buying tires at the same store. The price of a tire isn't all that high a price to pay to be able to leave a small witness.

When discussing non-resistance with those unfamiliar with this doctrine, the conversation often funnels to the classic question: "And so if someone would break into your house and begin to molest your family, you'd just stand there and not do anything?"

There is no model answer to this question that squelches all doubts. The answer the Spirit places on the tip of the tongue often bounces off the worldly heart. It sounds foolish.

Young Christians should think twice before criticizing the old-fashioned (read as: foolish) ways of the older generation, lest they disdain some of the most beautiful lessons of non-resistance.

### **The foolishness of wearing blinders**

Work horses and race horses often wear blinders ("A pair of leather flaps attached to a horse's bridle to curtail side vision." —AHD). Needless to say, the horse doesn't choose to wear blinders. When wearing blinders, a horse has tunnel vision (An extremely narrow point of view; narrow-mindedness." —AHD).

There is nothing complementary about being narrow-minded. At least not in the traditional sense of the word. Yet a good work or race horse must be narrow-minded. If it is to work efficiently, it can't be distracted by the scenery on either side of the road. More exactly, blinders are put on horses so that they will see only what their owners or jockeys want them to see.

When the Bible enjoins us to have a single eye, it doesn't mean we must pluck out one eye; it means we should wear blinders so that we will only see that which the Master determines. It is this concept of the single eye that the world and much of Christendom is fighting with tooth and nail. The order of the day is to broaden ones horizons, to see everything, but judge nothing. That is the new law of love. To be otherwise is seen as intolerance, as bigotry, as lack of love.

To wear spiritual blinders and willingly forfeit ones side vision is foolishness.

### **The foolishness of taking the Bible literally**

We believe that when God inspired men to write their particular portion of the Bible, He directed their mind and their pen. We believe that for the spiritual mind, there are no doctrinal errors or contradictions in the Scriptures. We further believe that natural phenomena related in the Bible need no props or scientific explanations.

In the book of Genesis we read that the universe and all that lives was created in six days. We believe that.

Also in the book of Genesis we read that there was a flood that covered the earth and that only eight souls were saved in an ark. We believe that.

In Exodus we read that the children of Israel passed through the Red sea on dry land. We believe that.

The book of Exodus also tells us about the manna God sent from heaven to the Israelites during their 40 year sojourn in the wilderness, which was their basic food. We believe that.

In the book of Joshua we read about how the children of Israel crossed the Jordan River on dry ground. We believe that.

The Beatitudes in the book of Matthew are momentous not only for what they say, but also for the absence of exceptions. They don't say "If..." or "In case of..." We are not given the right to call time out when the going gets tough. We believe that the Beatitudes mean what they say.

When writing to the Romans, Paul said that "the wages of sin is death," we believe that.

The Bible teaches a literal heaven and a literal hell and that every soul will spend eternity in one place or the other. It also teaches us that during this life we must choose whom we will serve, that there won't be a second chance. We believe that.

A lot of what we have just said is foolishness to the world. And to much of Christendom.

Sometimes we talk with someone who is discouraged, or with someone who is thinking about getting converted. We can feel both a desire and a reluctance, a reluctance that often the person himself isn't able to express. We wonder what the problem really is. It may be the foolish factor. If that should be the case, we should gently point out that the foolish factor is part of the cross which we must bear, tell them that the wise virgins probably looked foolish to the foolish virgins. ▲

## Revivals

*by Brent Dirks (Scott City, KS)*

### **What Happened to the Lawnmower?**

Revivals 2002 for the Sunrise View Mennonite Congregation are history. Now we dig back into real life and try to bask as long as possible in the warm, fuzzy glow that revivals left behind.

All too often one looks back in a few short months and wonders what happened to the sun that was just beginning to rise. Feebly we begin to paw at the leaves of the sin vines that are blocking the view of the horizon, only to jerk back with howls of pain as thorns of negligence draw beads of blood. Licking our wounds we whimper around for consolation and soon spy others who are acting worse than we.

Comforted, we settle down in a bed of grass to sleep and think awhile. The

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grass grows, but doesn't get mowed and soon even our buddies in whom we found consolation are but ghosts of opinion on the horizon.

The bed is soft. The glow is very, very dim. Our Bible wonders why we've fallen asleep even while we were holding it in our hands. Suddenly someone shakes us awake and begins speaking. We listen in unbelief.

"You mean revivals are starting tomorrow? How can it be? It seems like... like...oh, well, never mind..."

One thing is sure. To get through revivals all the tall grass must be mowed.

"Honey, could you find the gas can so I can get the lawn mower going? Mable, which one of you children played with those hedge trimmers last?"

"Dad..."

"What, Mabel?"

"Ah, if I remember right, Pete saw one of the neighbor children using it to dig a hole in his backyard."

"Well, that's some really good news. Send Pete over there pronto to bring back what's left of the trimmers. He'd better get back fast. What ever ailed those children to use an expensive hedge trimmers as a posthole digger?"

"Deary..."

"What?"

"I can't find the gas can."

"It should be right beside the lawnmower. Did you look there?"

"The lawnmower isn't there."

"The lawnmower isn't there?! I suppose one of the neighbors has it."

"Not really. Don't you remember? It's in the mechanic shop."

"Just why is it in the mechanic shop?"

"I don't know. I don't believe Mike ever called back to tell us what the problem is."

"What's Mike's number? I'll call him right now and find out what is going on."

"Hello, Mike's Patch It Service."

"Mike, how are you getting along with my mower?"

"The motor on your mower is totally shot; it's not worth fixing."

"Now you tell me. I sure wish you would have called me sooner."

"I tried, time and again. Each time you were out or the line was busy."

"Couldn't you have left a message?"

"I tried that too, but your answering machine never came on. Maybe it's shot too..."

"Come to think of it, that answering machine has been out of commission for quite some time. Anyway, Mike, what's the problem with my lawn mower?"

"It's locked up solid...and not a drop of oil in the crankcase."

"Mike, that's impossible. I seldom use that mower without checking the oil. Anyway, what does a new motor cost?"

"They're expensive. A new engine for your mower will cost two thousand dollars. If you decide to go this route, I'll have to order the motor, but in a week I can have your mower going."

“Mike, two thousand dollars is outrageous. Man, that will take all the money we’ve saved up for our vacation. Can’t you come up with a better price than that? Even a couple of hundred bucks less would help.”

“What I can do is order you a smaller engine. You will immediately notice that it has less power than the original motor.”

“But will it still cut grass?”

“Oh yes, it will still cut grass, but you’ll have to drive considerably slower, especially in tall grass.”

“I don’t see that I have any option, so order that new motor.”

“Will do. I’ll call you when the mower is ready.” Click.

“Honey, did you check the oil every time you used the mower?”

“I checked it every single time, dear.”

“Well, then who ran it out of oil?”

“I don’t know. Maybe it happened when you loaned it to Marvin...”

So it goes with the revival Christian. Each year at revival time the Lord gives us all the sin trimming tools we need to keep things in order during that year. Alas, some of those tools we don’t as much as take out of the package. Others are used to dig holes—holes in which we end up burying our newfound convictions.

The lawn mower, the machine that we do our work with, runs on the fuel of God’s forgiveness toward us. We forget His grace toward us and run the engine dry of the oil of love and forgiveness toward our brethren.

Suddenly revivals are upon us and we struggle to find our tools and get our place into shape. But alas, we have been so busy with our natural work and plans that we fail to make contact with the Holy Spirit. To reestablish this contact, we discover that costly repairs will have to be made—repairs that will upset many of our cherished projects.

With fits of dismay we look around for the faults of others. We desperately look for scapegoats for our own problems. These are easy to find, which means that we end up not replacing the engine that would get our lawn mower going. Then we wonder why the lawn is so hard to mow right after revivals.

What are your plans after revivals are over? ▲

## **The Roller Coaster**

A roller coaster—we’re talking about the “coaster” part, has no motor, no brakes, no steering wheel, no engineer or conductor. It runs on a rail that goes nowhere. Passengers get off exactly where they got on. Absolutely nothing practical is accomplished on a roller coaster.

After purchasing a ticket, the passengers wait their turn to board the “coaster.” They are secured in place by a lap bar, or some other safety device, and then, when everyone



is in place, they are towed up a steep incline to the top of a high “hill.” That is where the ride really begins, when the cars reach the summit, detach themselves from the source of power that pulled them to the top, and now, powered by gravity, plunge down as the rail drops almost vertically. A tremendous speed is achieved that carries the cars up more hills, around curves, and in some cases, through vertical loops. As the ride progresses, speed drops, until the cars finally coast up to the starting point.

Why do people ride a roller coaster? Because it’s exhilarating. It’s a sharp break from their often dull routine.

Some Christians go through life on a roller coaster. Why? Because Christian life has become dull and by getting pulled up the big hill once a year, they believe they can come up with enough momentum to carry them along for another 12 months.

How does this work?

We have said a roller coaster Christian has a dull life. Bible reading is a chore, praying doesn’t come natural, because prayer doesn’t really change anything. Spiritual conversation is a strain simply because there are so many other more interesting things to talk about. Sermons tend to be boring, especially those that aren’t richly illustrated. Sunday School is tolerable so long as the ball rolls out of bounds in either left or right field. Devotions are a tremendous inconvenience (and frequently missed, sometimes for a week or more). Church literature is seldom read. Almost always a critical spirit either lurks in the shadows, or boldly, a self-appointed public prosecutor of the brethren. Money is grudgingly placed in the offering plate in homeopathic doses. School taxes, especially for those without children in school, are equated with income tax—pay as little as possible (and then consider it as tithing).

This kind of Christian gets to revivals and instead of opening the hood on his own car to see what shape the motor is in, hops into a roller coaster car. Each evening he is pulled higher on the hill. He begins reading his Bible, prays, makes a confession or two, maybe even a visit, and even starts a spiritual conversation after the benediction: “That sure was a good sermon.” “That preacher can really preach.” “These are the best meetings I’ve ever been to.”

The car is pulled higher and higher up the hill. And as the brother rises, he beholds some of the beauty of Zion. He seems to be sincerely impressed.

Then comes Communion. The revival ministers leave for home. The car unhooks from the towing device and begins its descent.

As the roller coaster Christian picks up speed, he may have time for a testimony or two, but real quick he bottoms out. He looks around and everything looks like it did before revivals. It sort of worries him, so he prays and God seems to answer his prayer, because his car is heading up the next hill. When he reaches the summit and again gets a glimpse of Zion’s beauty, he gives another testimony. Just as the car heads back down.

So it goes, up and down, up and down, but surely, surely, more down than up. Until finally the roller coaster Christian coasts into the station again. Something tells him this routine isn’t quite what it out to be, so he looks about for a higher roller coaster. He finds one and has a new experience to tell. It doesn’t sound all that bad.

Then one day, during harvest, the Lord tells the roller coaster Christian, “This is your last ride. Prepare to enter my station.”

In panic, he shouts, “Lord, where are you?”

He says, “I’m up here.”

“Lord, none of the hills are that high. How can I reach you?”

The Lord replies, “For such as you there is another station at the bottom of the hill...”



## Brazilian Stories

by Mário de Moraes

### Newsboy 007

*[Just a word before listening to Moraes’ story. In the larger Brazilian cities, newsboys like to ply their trade on busy intersections when the light turns red and brings traffic to a halt. These young entrepreneurs, some not even in their teens, have the agility of a ballet dancer, the courage of a tiger hunter, the timing of an air controller and the wit of a comedian, as they thread their way between the cars selling their papers. In their work, there is no margin for error.]*

Paulinho [the diminutive of Paulo] sort of has the big head. He sees himself as an authentic James Bond, to the point where he has bought himself a magnifying glass to get a better look at fingerprints. But it was pure happenstance that got Paulinho his 007 rating. (This happened during the time that James Bond was the rage.)

Paulinho is a newsboy in the Zona Sul part of Rio de Janeiro. Instead of selling his papers in a newsstand, he gets an armful and begins threading between cars while the light is red. He yells out the headlines, “Downtown hotel catches fire!” Normally he makes up his own headlines. His regular customers don’t care; all they want is the paper. Once in a while some hothead will look at the front page and yell, “I don’t see anything about a plane crash.”

“Look inside and you’ll find it,” he patiently explains as he slips away between cars. The light turns green and his problem is solved.

Paulinho is 12 years old, but he is mature far beyond his age. He lost his parents at an early age and was raised by his grandmother who was so busy washing clothes for others that she never had time to give him the needed discipline or teach him anything.

Dark complexioned with beautiful white teeth, he always seems to have a smile on his face, a likeable chap.

One day he offered a paper to a sullen looking fellow who drove a Ford car. Something about the unsavory looking man looked familiar. Where had he seen him before? He didn’t buy a paper, but as he pulled ahead, on impulse Paulinho took down the license plate number of the Ford.

When he was down to three papers, he couldn’t manage to sell anymore. So as he did in a situation like this, he sat down on the curb and opened one of the papers to the sports

and police section. While reading about the latest transgression of the law, he suddenly saw the photo of the man in the Ford car. That was why he looked familiar. Probably he got a glimpse of the man when one of his customers opened the paper purchased to the police section, but since working the cars on a busy street leaves no time for wondering thoughts, he promptly forgot the face. Now he read the police report, which said he was a professional car thief who the day before killed his girlfriend and wounded a cop who tried to arrest him.

“What do you think you’re doing here?” asked the burly policeman in the police station, barring his way so he couldn’t get in.

“I need to talk to the chief of police.”

“You can talk with me.”

“Okay.” Opening his paper, he showed the policeman the photo of the car thief and said, “I can tell you something about this fellow.”

Quick as a wink Paulinho was ushered into the chief of police’s office. He told his whole story and ended up by handing over the license plate number—which, incidentally, had been stolen that very day. An all-cars alert was sent out and in a short time the Ford was located on Penha Street. Seeing he had no chance, the criminal gave up without resistance.

All this happened because Paulinho was good at remembering faces. From that day on he was known as Newsboy 007, which he enjoyed immensely. ▲

## **Buck 007**

They say that a dog is man’s best friend. The February 2 police section of the Goiânia daily tells a sad, yet interesting story. Read it and decide for yourself if Buck was his owner’s friend.

Alonso Alves da Cruz, a mason’s helper, was only 23 years old. He and another member of his immediate family were constantly at odds. One day, at approximately two o’clock in the afternoon, things got so bad that Alonso ended up committing a horrible crime.

There were witnesses and Alonso knew the police would be there in minutes, so he took out on foot, followed by Buck, his loyal dog.

Police Captain Sérgio Ricardo Caetano, threw 25 of his men into the search. For two hours they scoured the neighborhood, but to no success—that is, until Alonso’s uncle, Antônio Alves Correia, who was helping the police in their search, saw Buck on a construction site some three blocks from the crime scene. He immediately informed Captain Caetano about the dog, who had his men cordon off the block. Minutes later Alonso meekly surrendered. Asked why he had committed such an atrocity, he replied, “I lost my patience.”

When asked how he felt about his dog having betrayed him, Alonso said he wasn’t upset about it, adding, “Buck has always been my best friend.” The dog followed the

police to the local precinct, came in and curled up at his master's feet. When the time came to transfer Alonso to jail, Buck had to stay behind. Captain Caetano said it was almost more than he could take to see the dog scratching at the door and whining, desperate to be reunited with his master.

The Captain says that this is one case in which a dog was more of a friend to the police than to its owner. In a large color photo, the dog is shown with lowered head, a picture of utter dejection, even while the Captain offers him something to eat.

If Buck could think like a human, he probably wouldn't be proud of himself, like Paulinho, for having played the part of Agent 007 ▲

## An Old Story

by H. Hervey

### The Cobra's Revenge

*[This is a very old story. The literary style would indicate it took place at the beginning of the last century.]*

Snake Bite? Yes, I have had some experience of snake-bites, show me the medico in India who has not; but I do not think that any one, not even the senior surgeon in the Service, can speak of a practical acquaintance to equal the following, which happened to me not very long ago.

While I was civil surgeon of Krishna an epidemic of cholera broke out in the western parts of the district. Temporary hospitals in charge of medical subordinates were established at various places, and to inspect these I set out one morning from the little civil station of Bezvada, on the northern bank of the river from which the district takes its name. Famine also stalked through the land, and famine relief camps sprang up with fungus-like rapidity at every rural centre of importance. What with cholera and famine combined, the state of the country can be imagined.

In the course of my tour I reached a village called Taikmutla; I trotted up to the Travellers' Bungalow, and learnt from my servants—who had preceded me with my kit—that one wing of the building was occupied by a Mr. Stanmore, the relief officer in charge of the neighbouring famine camp. Mutually actuated by that peculiar spirit of *camaraderie* that is so inherent in the Anglo-Indian, we soon fraternised, clubbed breakfasts, and sat down to the meal in company.

He was a young fellow of about five-and-twenty, and his diction, appearance and manners at once proclaimed the gentleman. He told me that he had been in the country only two years; came out as an assistant in a Calcutta house of business; but not liking the work—in its Indian setting, that is—he had jumped at the Government invitation for men to take up famine relief berths. He was immediately accepted, and had been sent for duty to the Madras Presidency.

“And how do you like it?” I asked.

“Well, it is not altogether a bed of roses; but the work would be preferable to mugging at a desk in that vapour bath, Calcutta, were it not for one thing.”

“And what is that?”

“Snakes.”

“A cobra?” I queried.

“Aye! A cobra, a special one that haunts this bungalow. I tell you, Dr. Mansfield, that that one snake makes life a veritable burden to me; I am in fear of it morning, noon, and night!” He spoke earnestly, and while doing so cast his eyes nervously about the room.

“Does it inhabit the building?”

“Yes, or it lurks somewhere in the vicinity; I have often seen it.”

“But there may be a nest of them; how do you know that you always spot the same snake?”

“I will tell you. I have been here for the last fortnight. On arrival, I found this bungalow crammed to the roof with grain and provisions, sent up for famine use. With the aid of the civil authorities I speedily ran up the bamboo and cocoanut leaf store sheds first, and directly they were completed I caused the stuff to be cleared out of this; for having no tent I was obliged to occupy one of the out-houses as a temporary measure. I commanded plenty of willing labour in the persons of the starving villagers, only too anxious for me to open the camp, so the transfer was effected by the afternoon of the following day. During the process we unearthed all sorts of vermin, and noxious insects; rats, lizards, bandicoots, scorpions, centipedes, tarantulas, and armies of ants of every conceivable shape, size, and colour. I had the place well cleaned out, and took possession that same evening.

The morrow was a busy one; I passed the whole day at the camp, completing the shelters, setting things going, and inaugurating the system of relief. I returned here at five, feeling weary, and longing for a cup of tea. I had no sooner thrown myself into a chair when I heard a slight sound; it came from under my bed. Looking there I saw a long black streak in movement; it was a snake: this was my first encounter with one. As it wriggled clear of the bed, I threw one of these chairs at it, dashed out into the verandah, and looked in through the window. The chair had evidently struck the reptile near the tail, for a few inches of its end dragged limply after the body. It hissed and writhed about, but as soon as it saw me it reared its head and expanded its hood, whereby, remembering what I had read on the subject, I recognised the serpent to be a cobra.

Well, before I could summon the servants, before I could get hold of a stick to go and kill it with, the brute scuttled across the room, into the bathroom, and passed through the water-vent. We searched everywhere for the snake, but in vain. It had no doubt taken to one of the many holes and crannies in the foundations, and I was furious at its escape; but when, through my English-speaking butler, I told the villagers that the snake was a cobra, and that I had wounded it, they one and all commenced the most vehement lamentations, bidding me beware of my life; for as sure as the sun

shone in the heavens they said that snake would wreak revenge on me. I laughed the idea to scorn; called them a parcel of idiots and so forth. But will you believe me, Dr. Mansfield, that on no less than five occasions within the last thirteen days has that cobra come into this room? I am telling you the solemn truth; I recognise it by the wound. On returning here I have found it either quite or partly through the water-vent, or lying coiled up on the bathroom floor. I have invariably tried to kill the brute; but it is always wide awake, and manages to elude me. At night I have the vent plugged with a piece of wood, and I close the doors; but then, you see, the snake could come in on me by any other ingress of which I am not aware, and I therefore live in the direst dread, not knowing when I might feel its fangs in my flesh.”

“The natives, of course, wouldn’t help in its destruction, being snake-worshippers,” I said, “but your own servants? what are they?”

“Christians: I have asked them, threatened them, and blackguarded them; but they one and all are too afraid; they say that they dare not lift a finger against the snake.”

“No Mohammedans about the place? they are no respecters of serpents?”

“I know; and have inquired; but there’s not a single Moslem in the village or camp.”

“Why have you not tried to shoot the cobra? Sit where you command the water-vent, don’t plug it up, and then let fly when the animal shows its ugly head.”

“I have no fire-arms, I had to sell everything before leaving Calcutta.”

Unfortunately, I had left my rifle and revolver behind me, as I did not anticipate any use for them in a settled country like this.

“Do you credit this native idea—that snakes are revengeful?” inquired Stanmore.

“I know it to be a deep-rooted belief among them, but I look on it as one of their many superstitions. For your own sake, however, the cobra ought to be destroyed, and I’ll help you, if you like.”

“Will you?” he exclaimed, his eyes lighting up with gratitude. “‘Twould be the kindest act you could do me. I believe that you are more experienced than I am in the matter, so say on; I place myself entirely under your guidance.”

“All right. In the first place, we must try and find a snake-charmer.

“Why?”

“To decoy the brute within striking distance. Send over to the village and camp and inquire.”

While the messenger sped on his errand, we passed the interval in conversing on various topics, hoping that the man would return with the individual we wanted; but we were disappointed; the messenger brought a note from Stanmore’s native assistant saying that the only snake-charmers for miles around had long since fled from the stricken district.

“Have you any musical instrument?” I asked.

“A flute; I play it,” he replied, eagerly.

After cogitating for a few moments I devised a plan.

“Look here,” I continued, “the thing is to inveigle the snake into the room, and cut off its retreat. From what you say, it apparently sticks to the water-vent.”

“Yes; I have never actually seen it use any other route.”

“Well, while you sit here with doors closed and play away on your flute, I will keep watch outside with the plug in my hand. As soon as the snake’s body gets right through the vent, I’ll slap in the wood to prevent it from getting away; and all you’ll have to do is to kill the reptile. I’ll come round immediately to help you if necessary. Take care to arm yourself with a reliable stick, for a cobra at bay is a formidable antagonist, I can tell you.”

Stanmore thought it rather a rush for him, but he determined to try it.

“And will the sound of the flute lure it in here?” he asked, excitedly.

“It ought to. From your description it is evident that its habitat is somewhere close by. Suppose we begin directly the servants clear away?”

He agreed; the servants were summoned, and they did the needful. We made our arrangements: Stanmore fished out his flute, and, arming himself with a stout bamboo stick, sat facing the bathroom, and commanding a view of the water-vent. I donned my helmet, went round outside the bathroom, picked up the wooden plug, and took post behind a tree-trunk a few paces distant. The matter had ‘got wind’; for I observed the ‘compound’ wall to be lined with faces: Stanmore’s message anent the snake-charmer had aroused general curiosity, and this was the result. The relief camp officials stood amongst them, as evidenced by their *salaaming* to me one after the other. But no one spoke; the onlookers as well as our servants, grouped in the outhouse verandah, maintained a profound silence. I kept my eyes fixed in the vicinity of the bathroom orifice; occasionally ranging them to the immediate right and left along the base of the house, while Stanmore tooted away inside.

Presently, after watching for about a quarter of an hour, I sighted the sinister shape of a snake’s head protruding from a bole in the foundation, it emerged, slowly followed by the hideous body; sneaking along the wall, it came abreast of the vent, where, rearing itself against the masonry, it reached the aperture, and dragging in its entire length finally disappeared. Now was my time! Rushing forward, I clapped in the plug. As I did so, the tooting ceased; I heard a tremendous thwacking as I raced round to the front; I threw open the door to find Stanmore in the act of crushing the head of a disabled snake under his heel.

“Bravo!” I shouted, “so you’ve got him at last!”

“It’s a cobra no doubt,” he said, “but not the one I want.”

“Why? how do you make that out?”

“Because this one does not bear the wound near the tail.”

A fact; the identifying mark was not there, and further corroboration was furnished by the natives who now flocked in and pronounced the defunct reptile to be a female cobra.

“Then your *bête noir* is still at large,” I said; “we must try and entice him in as well.”

Clearing out the crowd we set to and repeated our tactics, keeping them up till dusk; but to no purpose, the male cobra was evidently too wily, perhaps he had already had dire experience of snake-charming, and knew the meaning of music. At last we gave it

up; but before the spectators dispersed several of the villagers and Stanmore's officials sought an audience, which was granted.

"Your honours," said the spokesman, an educated brahmin, one of my friend's native assistants, "though we, as snake-worshippers, naturally deplore the destruction of the cobra, still we do not desire your honours to come to any harm by the act. With us it is well-known that the cobra is the most revengeful of all serpents; you have killed the female, and your honour may rest assured that the male will speedily endeavour to repay you. We implore your honours to be wary, and take every precaution as long as you remain within ten miles of this spot."

They all *salaamed* and withdrew. Stanmore regarded me anxiously and apprehensively.

"What do you think?" he asked, when we were alone.

"All bunkum!" I laughed, with a carelessness which in my inmost heart I did not feel. "However, they do but express their convictions, and advocate common prudence; so it is as well to be careful. I shall sleep with a stick by my side to-night, and keep a light burning. But don't be nervous," I added, noticing his trepidation, "it may be—as I say—all bunkum."

"Is the sting fatal—in all cases?"

"Not if taken in time and antidotes are promptly administered: I have them all with me in my medicine-chest, and know what to do; so if the cobra comes and nips you, just sing out, and I'll set you right in a jiffy."

Not a single servant of whatsoever denomination would touch the dead snake, so we lugged it out in the "compound," and, collecting some brushwood, burnt the carcass to ashes.

We had dinner, during which we arranged to go early in the morning to inspect the camp. Before parting that night we proceeded together and carefully shut the two bathroom water-vents with their plugs, and hammered stones into all holes and crannies that suggested a possible passage for snakes. Then, bidding each other goodnight, we retired to our respective wings.

There was no sleep in me; the air was intensely sultry, while the muttering of thunder presaged a downpour. And it proved; close upon midnight the rain pelted, the lightning flashed, thunder roared, and the wind blew like a hurricane. I tumbled and tossed for some time till I could stand it no longer; an indefinable sense of dread possessed me, and I finally decided to go and keep Stanmore company in his room. So I rose from my bed, and was shuffling about for my slippers when there—on the ground close to me, with several inches of its length erect, its hood half expanded, in the attitude of striking—I saw a cobra! What is more. *I noted the tail end lay at an abrupt angle to the rest of the body!*

With a nerve begotten more of desperation than of courage I seized my stick, and in a flash brought it down full on the reptile, following with a shower of blows as it wriggled and hissed, till I had pounded it almost to a jelly. Breathless and elated, I shouted for Stanmore, once, twice, half a dozen times, but no answer came; the raging of the storm drowned my voice, so, putting on my overcoat, taking the lantern in one



hand, and carrying the dead snake on my stick with the other, I went out and traversed the verandah to the door of my friend's room. I knocked, I called; silence! With my heart in my mouth, and with a dire foreboding of evil, I burst open the door and entered. The light was burning, and on the bed lay Stanmore; his contorted attitude told me the awful truth, he was dead! As soon as I recovered from the first shock of the discovery, I called for the servants; more lights were brought, and I examined the poor fellow, when I found on the throat the fatal punctures of the cobra's poison fangs. It was the identical snake that Stanmore had mauled with the chair, and must have been the mate of the female that we had killed during the previous day.

Truly had the natives spoken of the reptile's revengeful disposition! for here had it stolen in on Stanmore and stung him while asleep, and then, with an astuteness worthy of that infernal being who is accredited with assuming ophidian guise, it had then found its way into my room, where, had it not been for the chance of my being awake at the time it would have doubtlessly claimed me for a victim as well. ▲

## **This & That**

The Annual Meeting of the church in Brasil was held on January 1, at the Rio Verdinho Congregation.

January visitors are too numerous to mention. Some of them included the Mato Grosso settlement in their itinerary. Some went down south to the Iguaçu Falls.

Monte Alegre Congregation's revival meetings began on January 6, with Dean Becker and Linford Holdeman as evangelists; communion on the 20th.

On January 17, Bert & Ada Coblentz celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary.

On the 26th, Emma Burns turned 80. On the 25th the Burns family had a churrasco; the afternoon of the 26th was open house.

John & Sheila Kramer, missionaries in Acaraú, had a girl, Elena.

Rio Verdinho Congregation's meetings began on the 27th. The evangelists are Richard Koehn and Randy Unruh.

David Miller will be replacing Clinton Unruh as tract superintendent.

Teresa, Arlo & Priscilla Hibner's daughter, left for the Acaraú mission after meetings, where she will be teaching the missionary's children.

## **Facts & Figures**

### **Temperatures**

High	35.6°C	96°F
Low	16.6°C	62°F
Av high	31.3°C	88°F
Av low	20.1°C	68°F

## Rainfall

231.5 mm — 9.3 inches

## Exchange Rate

One US dollar buys 2.43 reals

## Are you tired of those wicked little sugar ants that get into absolutely everything?

Of course you are! Who isn't? And it isn't that you haven't tried to get rid of the pesky things. You buy boxes of K-Otrine, and other products that are supposed to be death on sugar ants, but about a week later there they are again. You take a deep breath...and wish Adam and Eve wouldn't have eaten of the forbidden fruit...

Cheer up! Take courage! It is no longer necessary to have sugar ants in your jelly, and on your Devil's Food cake, and in the bathroom sink. No more being mortified when sister Susie (whom you have invited for Sunday dinner) opens your cupboard door and says, "Ohhhhhhhh" and acts like she's about to faint. (Not to worry. It's all put on. Her cupboards are full of the things too.)

Anyway, when it happens, you can now become a hero by saying, "Oh, Susie, did you hear? From henceforth only people who want ants will have ants. CALL EDINEI. He'll be out in a jiffy and send the whole tribe to the happy hunting grounds. Oh, Susie, I'm so thrilled. Aren't you too?"

That number is: 612 3448 or 9987 0921. When he or Janete, or whoever, answers the phone, give your name loud and clear and shout, "**Código N.A.M.**" (**Não aguento mais**). He'll be right over. ▲