

ONE DAY AT MY OFFICE.

Balmoral Mission Station,

Paulpietersburg,

Natal, So. Africa,

Jan. 12th, 1921

Dear Highway:

Just to give you an idea of the routine at my office door, I will jot down some of the doings of this one day.

Before I am dressed comes the first knock. It is Sala, one of our kitchen girls, who lives on this farm. A school girl, Madelina, is leaving for her home, across the Pongola, and wants \$2 that she had loaned this girl. Sala now hopes to borrow this from me. Her brother is also working here, earning, so I suggest that she ask him, which seems to please her.

Our shepherd boy, Jelemiya, comes next, bringing "Pump," another native boy about his own age, twelve years. He has stolen twelve cents worth of sugar, offers to share it with a friend who has told on him. The friend, Manindolo, that is, one who is smeared or badly soiled with mud, had refused to share the stolen booty and advised its return.

And Pump declares that he did return the sugar. But as it had not appeared, all seemed to eblieve him guilty of eating the whole, alone. It was settled by his attone-ment: He bought and returned more than he had stolen, eighteen cents worth.

A young man comes with his cut finger for treatment. George is now called, for he has this case in hand. The finger had the end cut off by a spear in a drunken fight. I note that the healing is going on nicely, and instruct George what to aply.

The post boy, I just hear, has run away. He was under agreement to carry our post for \$5 per month, making two trips a week. This was a high wage, for he did no other work. He has taken train for some town to seek employment, I am told.

I am not in the least surprised, as I know this boy to have great moral weaknesses, though he is one of our "seekers." My mind goes back to a time, three years ago, when he was working for me. Fowls had been stolen and he was suspected. A smart native girl helped in his detection. I was away from home, but arrived just in time to the end of the comedy. He, the fowl thief, had been impelled to show the contents of his stomach. Sure enough, there was the masticated fowl. He, on his hands and knees, had just finished his task, and was the centre of a circle of greatly interested spectators. One wonders how our Paul and this native girl managed to bring sufficient pressure to bear. But the truth is, our amateur thief has little sense of shame, even shame of being discovered.

At another time he brought me several nice fat goats for sale. They were stolen, and he must have known that detection would follow. Fortunately I suspected and made inquiry before any were killed.

Jerimia wants to buy a hat, with money he is earning as shepherd. His mother happens to be present, washing clothes, so she is called to give her consent. For just last week the boy who shepherds with him bought a cap, which evidently was not a need; for a few days later his mother came asking that it be returned.

Here are three small girls asking for

work and are put in the gardens. Then comes a boy, who agrees to help set out banana plants, a job Judson is superintending.

The two row corn planter is broken. Paul will mend this, but in the meantime the boys will use our single planter, as the season is most over.

A cow has a sore eye, and the native boy has neglected to treat it. George is instructed to caution the boys carefully, to have the eye washed in a proper antiseptic twice a day, and yellow ointment applied once a day.

Two gates reported broken. Judson looks into this matter. One, for the calf pen, can be repaired, he says, while that for the donkey kraal must be discarded and a new one made. He is told to send a native boy to cut the proper sized wattle poles for the new gate, while he, Judson, is repairing the old one.

Jantshi, one of our seekers, is in trouble and comes for help. In fact he arrived last night ust as I was closing the doors. The dog was barking angrily and I stepped out with my lighted candle to see the cause. There stood Jantshi, staggering drunk and asking for a place to sleep. I passed him the candle and sent him to sleep with our shepherd boys. This morning the cattle were late getting out, due to his keeping the little fellows awake with his gait.

His trouble is that people are calling him by the wrong name. So he is given a letter, properly worded and stating the name he is known by at his home and in the Magistrate's office. Faith is called in to write this letter. Also to administer medicine to a couple of cases.

The two sugar boys, "Pump" and "The-smurched-one" are now called up to report on a matter that has just reached my ears, viz., that they have run away from their land-lord. I question "Smurch," who had told Pump to return the stolen sugar. He not only acted honorably in that matter but has a much better looking face. He admitted all I had heard, but said in extenuation that they had as shepherd boys, been much under-fed and beaten cruelly and without cause. They were tied to trees and beaten with leather straps; the white man and his young son taking turns, for one would beat until he was tired. But they say the real cause was the wife, the Jezebel, who always urged on the man. So they are dismissed and I must write to the police regarding them.

Ah, here they come, these sugar boys. Zephania, a Christian young man, in our employ, is with them. And now here is another long interview. They have been fighting. Native boys always carry sticks, like canes, to fight with. 'Tis a curious sequel to the first affair. This time, it transpires, that Jeremiah had a bright thought and left the sugar in charge of Pump, the thief. After a time, Smurch leaves Pump shelling corn while he goes to their room. Upon his return he reports that some of the second lot of sugar has been spilt. ('Twas just a little that Jeremia had let fall when he was taking some out). Pump, however, immediately suspected Smutch of stealing and said, "Why did you go there when the sugar was left in my charge?" The reply was, "I just went to bring my cane."

"Well," says Pump, "You have been stealing some sugar." And they were soon at it, fighting with their sticks. When Zefania arrived, Smurch had his knife drawn and ready to strike. Pump had thrown and bitten him, so the row was stopped just in time to save blood letting.

I am sorry I have no more time today for writing. A native worker, Jonson, has arrived from an outpost, forty miles distant and I must have a long interview with him. Mrs. Sanders has tooth ache and wants me to fill her tooth, but this, too, must wait until tomorrow.

Jan. 12th, 12.45 p. m.

Here I am, back to my writing, where I hope to finish telling of yesterday's office work.

There was nothing of special interest in the report from Jonson. He wants to work at Johannesburg, where wages are high. He is a young man, hoping soon to marry, and wishes to buy the eleven needed cattle. He also asks for 15 dollars for present needs.

"Sala has run away." All day we had missed her but supposed she had just gone to her home. Now her mother comes and tells me she feels like cutting her own throat because her twelve-year-old daughter, Sala, has run away. I try to point her to the great Helper, and send a message to call her son. She goes home to bring her husband and soon returns. We discuss matters and send the son in pursuit.

Another girl, Madalina, who had been here at school, was starting yesterday for her home and must have persuaded Sala to desert and go with her.

I had better tell you that this morning the boy returned with both girls. I sent for the father and asked, "Have you punished your daughter or shall I?" I had him cut a switch, and, a thing I seldom do, gave both girls ten strokes. Then the father followed with a lecture, saying if he had beaten them or a Dutchman had done it they would have been bleeding. Madailne is now to remain at the school until her father (who has been sent for) comes for her. I would not bother you with such sordid details, but the missionary must teach the almost raw heathen savages that sin brings its reward. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reay," is God's law. The parents of both girls expect me to act as I did, and trust their children to my care.

Faith held the afternoon class, while every other member of our staff was busy at some other work.

Arrangements must be made for a post boy in place of Nglama, which takes quite a time and much talking. The day is getting to a close, and I think, as I have so often done, how unevenly work is divided in this world. My children come with their small matters and must be turned away. The post bag is to be made up.

My wheel taxes are due; the Ford car, \$25, while all other vehicles are 25 cents per wheel and the dog \$1.25. Lunch gotten for the post boy, instruct children and natives that it is bed time, tell the little children how much they need over them—"Just one thickness as the night is hot"—lock doors and retire.

Mrs. Sanders is reading an article in our newspaper about the stars: "It takes

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