

# THIS FIRST-AID BUSINESS

By Mary Scott

"ONCE July has started, it doesn't seem so long till the end of the winter," I ventured to say the other day. It was a mistake. The man of the house looked pointedly out of the window at leaden skies and barren landscape and remarked, with that gloomy relish peculiar to even the cheeriest of farmers, "Not long? It isn't half way through yet. Spring never really starts up here till towards the end of October." I sighed; nearly four months more; it was a chastening thought.

But he was thinking of winter from the point of view of stock rather than of his wife. From an ordinary human and optimistic point of view the beginning of September really does bring a change, even in the high bush country. The farmer's wife is well aware of that fact and merely smiles at masculine pessimism and says to herself, "In two more months the days will be brighter and the weather warmer; there will be flowers in the garden and some vegetables will be beginning to grow. The children will not have such wet, miserable rides to school, and there will be a feeling of joy and hope in the air again. Anyway, whatever else fails, the golden wattle will be out."

For colour, you see, means so much in the bush, where for so many months of the year one looks out on unchanging green forest or grey-green paddocks. Up here the grass is slow of growing, storms are harsh and frequent, and one can forgive the farmer's pessimism when one remembers how severe the months of August and September are for stock, even if they are brighter for human beings. Lambing is in full swing by the middle of August; this, of course, should be a cheerful thought, but it has its darker side; for the ewes, exhausted by winter's hardships, are apt to throw their burden, particularly if it be a double one, upon the world at large.

And of course the world at large is just another name for the farmer's wife. No wonder she has allowed the lawn grass to go uncut for so long; from sad experience she knows that it will be well grazed for her before the spring flush of grass. In one corner will be tethered an old and very bad-tempered ewe. For the last three years she has presented the farm with twins and refused to mother more than one. This has gone very successfully so far, but now the

farmer's wife has drawn the line. "It's simply habit; she can feed them quite well. Why should I do her work for her? There'll be plenty of motherless lambs before the spring is over without feeding one for that fat old lump."

On the opposite corner of the lawn there lies a ewe that had been badly cast for several days before the farmer chanced upon her. Now, I hope that from the depths of my heart I am an animal lover; yet I must confess to disliking no work of mercy so much as that of "keeping an eye" on a cast ewe. "Just keep an eye on her, if you're not too busy," the men say. As a matter of fact, it is not my eye she needs—but most of my avoirdupois and all my muscle. She was found cast on her right side, therefore she has been placed upon her left; before the men go out for the day they set her optimistically upon her feet, look in at the kitchen door and say, "She seems all right, but you might just keep an eye on her and, if you've got time, walk her up and down a bit."

Well, no one is fonder of riding than I, but I do like to choose my own mount, and never would it be a very dirty and groggy old ewe. For that is what "keeping an eye" really means; when she tumbles over—which she does as soon as the men have shut the front gate—it is my humble part to remove my hands from the dough I am mixing and, uttering strange imprecations, dash out and lift her up. Then I must bestride the creature and walk her up and down to restore her balance and remove the cramp from her legs. She refuses to be guided, but spins rapidly in a drunken parabola and finally collapses abjectly between my feet. Then I start all over again, and at long last, having restored some measure of circulation, leave her swaying precariously as she snatches at the grass. Then I go back to the bread. This process is repeated five times during the kneading, and, when Aunt Agatha remarks pensively that I used to make such lovely home-made bread, and is my hand losing its cunning—that is the moment at which it is necessary to remember that a perfect lady never raises her voice.

When I am not acting as guide, philosopher and friend to these invalid ladies I am struggling with the old ewe who won't feed her twins. "I've given



"... You and the ewe collapse, while a lamb nibbles your ear"

them a good drink and I don't think you'll find them much bother," says the Man of the House—and stays not upon the order of his going lest I have time to get my breath. Have you ever tried to feed twins by forcible means? At such times the quietest old ewe becomes as frolicsome as any kitten; she will leap and prance and execute the most ungainly *pas seuls* until at last she strangles herself with her own rope and falls prone with one or both of the lambs beneath her. If she is not attempting to commit suicide she is doing her best to murder you. She rushes madly in ever-narrowing circles; you are the centre of that circle and round and round your legs are wound stiff layers of dirty rope. At last you give up the struggle, and you and the ewe collapse into each other's arms while a lamb nibbles your ear.

Meantime, lest time should hang heavy upon your hands there are always a few "pets" that need feeding at three-hourly intervals. Nothing in the whole world is quite so messy as a pet lamb. They can eject milk farther than the rudest little boy can spit, and they love to snuggle their dirty noses into your skirts between mouthfuls. Trying though they are at this stage I find them even more wearing in their maturity; for, like old soldiers, pet lambs never die, nor, from my own experience, do they even fade away. They are ever with us—like the mud and the rain and the soaking bush. Like, also, that promise of spring that weekly grows nearer and makes the farmer's wife perfectly certain that there is something delightful just round the corner.

## Boys and Girls...

*This corner, all you young folks, is for you and your interests. This is where we tell you, week by week, about what is being put over the air for you, just as the grown-ups have their own pages with their own programmes. So make sure that you, too, "Look Before You Listen."*

### Your Favourite Serials:

- "Coral Cave": Monday, 1YA 5.40 p.m.; Friday, 2YA 5.40 p.m.
- "Uncle Tom's Cabin": Monday, 3YA 5 p.m.
- "Richard the Lionheart": Tuesday, 2YH 5.30 p.m.
- "Westward Ho!": Saturday, 2YH 5.45 p.m.
- "Robin Hood": Monday, 3ZR 5 p.m.
- "Paradise Plumes and Head Hunters": Tuesday, 3ZR 5 p.m.

"David and Dawn": Tuesday, 4YZ 5.30 p.m.; Thursday, 3ZR 5 p.m.; 4YZ 5.30 p.m.

"Air Adventures of Jimmie Allen": 1ZB, 2ZB, 3ZB, 4ZB, at 6.15 p.m., Monday, Wednesday, Thursday.

### Empire Children's Hour?

The B.B.C. Empire Service Director (J. C. S. Macgregor) wants to know if listeners would like an Empire children's hour. In England the Children's Hour draws a bigger fan mail than any other feature, and there is plenty to show that it is popular in New Zealand. Mr. Macgregor would like to receive a lot of letters asking him to start a service for the whole Empire.

### Crickets on the Air

Bryan O'Brian, the ZB children's broadcaster, is keenly interested in animals, bird life, and natural history. Knowing this, his listeners send him their own experiences in these fields, ranging from tales of pit ponies in the Welsh coal mines of fifty years ago, to the story of a little boy who last week found a strange insect in his garden.

But that is not all. Bryan also has many live specimens brought to him at the studio, including hedgehogs, lizards, "walking-sticks," a turtle, crickets (which were broadcast), budgerigars, parrots, caterpillars, grubs, and chrysalids.

He is also called upon to advise upon the ills of everything from sick budgerigars to dying goldfish. Twice in one day he was handed dead budgerigars in the hope that he might be able to discover the cause of their death. Another day he was handed a dead sparrow-hawk which had been responsible for much destruction amongst local birds.

So you will see it is not so easy to be a big brother of the air.

### "Uncle Tom's Cabin"

Have you ever heard about Topsy, the little negro girl who "just grewed"? As many of you know, she is one of the children in "Uncle Tom's Cabin," the story of which has been read and loved by children for ever so long. If you tune in to 3YA Christchurch in the Children's Hour on Mondays you will be able to hear it for yourself and feel, too, that you are taking part in it.