



THE MAN ON THE LAND

And, This Week, His Wife As Well

Take a Note of these Talks:

- IYA: *The Fertiliser Act, from the Fields Division, Monday, at 7.30 p.m.*
Pasture Management, by J. E. Bell, Instructor in Agriculture, Auckland, Monday, at 7.40 p.m.
- 3YA: *Review of Journal of Agriculture, Thursday, at 7.35 p.m.*
Equipment for the Supplying Dairy, Friday, 7.35 p.m.
- 4YA: *Research and the Farmer, from the Fields Division, Monday, at 7.30 p.m.*
- 4YZ: *Spring Top-dressing, by F. D. Blomfield, Tuesday, at 8 p.m.*

THAT CALENDAR!

By Mary Scott

THE first fine sunshine after a week's rain! Truly, Joy cometh in the morning, reflected the farmer's wife as she woke to see a glimpse of pale golden sky. That was her first thought; her second was that it was a very heavy frost and bed a most attractive place. Then she remembered with amusement that her editor had once suggested an article on "A Frosty Morning in the Bush." He should have it.

The dreadful wrench over she peered out of the window and rejoiced in the perfect beauty of a frozen world. The scene was etched clearly in three colours—white, gold and black. Every cobweb on the garden fence, every dead leaf and barren twig, was glistening with fragile radiance; the yellow sky was clear of the tiniest cloud and promised that sunshine for which the world was pining; against this brightness only the bush stood dark and untouched.

A Quotation a Day

Just then her eye fell upon the calendar; it was not one for which she felt any great affection, being of that type that flaunts a quotation for every day. It had been presented by an aged relative who hoped she would find the quotations apposite. Since her first glance had naturally been at her own birthday, and she had there found that the calendar had tried to be funny (for what less appropriate than "Of every ill, a woman is the worst?") a prejudice against the calendar had resulted.

This morning it was wrong again. "Into each life some rain must fall. Some days be dark and dreary."

However, it was a little annoying to find the inside taps all frozen. Still there is something about a heavy frost that is almost an achievement. When her friends from other climates spoke of the continual rain on her mountain, she was apt to feel peevish. One is ashamed of a very wet climate. When people on the plains ring up and say, "Shrouded in mist again, you poor thing," she usually replies tartly and untruthfully that it is only pride of the morning. But she rather liked to boast about a frost. "At least 10 degrees this morning"; she would lift large pieces of ice off the pools and display them as if the farm had really produced something clever.

Devotion Its Own Reward

Still, with a large washing to do that had waited for a week, it was necessary to carry all the water from the hot taps. She was hard at work when a yell from the paddock sent her hurrying outside. Some calamity had certainly overtaken her household. Devotion met with a poor reward, for the bricks that paved the backyard were slippery as glass. They would have made a perfect skating rink; this she was able to prove as she executed an elaborate and involuntary pas seul before measuring her length upon their hardness. As she sat up, slowly and painfully counting her bruises, her husband's voice called from the far side of the hedge "Where are you? In the house? The Hereford bull has broken out again; I'll have to hurry down the road after him. I'll feed the horses when I get back." Then he added unnecessarily, "It's cold. You're lucky to be warm and snug in the house." She decided to omit her reply from the article on "A Frosty Morning."

The washing wore its weary way; she had just hung it on the lines when she noticed a cloud; it was like the Biblical one, no larger than a man's hand—but it was there and it foretold a change in the mountains. However, there the washing was and there it could stay. As she prepared to return to the neglected house she heard a wistful whinny from the horse paddock. Fidget was asking what had happened to her breakfast. Now, there was one plea that this woman could not resist—the hungry cry of an old horse. How neglect a friend that had worked so hard, carried children to school so faithfully, brought them back safely almost against their will, and who was now old and enduring a hard winter? Impossible to go into the house and think of Fidget hungry in a hard frost.

Anyone Can Feed Out Hay

Anyone could feed out hay; it was only a small stack, sacred to the horses and covered with a tent fly. You had merely to lift that and throw the hay down into the trough. But have you ever tried

to lift a tent fly that had been frozen hard? It keeps its own shape with extraordinary obstinacy and is as easy to handle as a giant coat of mail. After a tense and silent struggle she succeeded in flinging it bodily sideways. It sat upon the ground like some old-fashioned candle extinguisher. She had decided to put that into her article when the candle extinguisher heaved violently. She gazed appalled; was it possible that something was underneath its folds? Beneath her horrified gaze there suddenly emerged a red and angry face. It was the new neighbour from down the road into whose winter cabbages the Hereford bull had apparently broken overnight. The interview went from an unfortunate introduction to a painful conclusion.

The Storm Breaks

Feeling battered in body and spirit the farmer's wife crawled slowly back into the house. The cloud had grown larger and the frost was melting rapidly. Drips everywhere, she received a small shower bath down her neck as she slithered up the path. Then she stopped incredulous; it was no drip that met her at the back door but a tidal wave. Peering into the kitchen she saw that the lighter furniture had just started to float; through the bathroom door flowed a torrent. The water had melted in the tap an hour ago and the plug had been left in the bathroom basin. Even as she stood there the cork bath-mat swirled gaily past her, making at last for the great open spaces.

Two hours later she sat on a small island of boxes and sacks, grimly typing her article upon "A Frosty Morning." As she reached the concluding paragraph heavy rain lashed the windows. In the distance she could see that her largest sheet had given up the struggle and was swinging by one peg. As she watched another collapsed silently into the mud. She wrote on. Then a thought struck her and she reached for the calendar; she would know the worst about tomorrow. The quotation was from "The May Queen":

"I thought to pass away before and yet alive I am." The calendar had justified itself at last.



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