

THE DRAMA OF THE MILK

IN the suburb where I live there is a farm, and here there is enacted daily a drama that I look on as the Miracle of the Milk—the busy activity that leads to the presence of a sealed bottle of milk on your doorstep before 7.30 a.m. in summer and 8.30 a.m. in winter.

The characters in this milk drama are: 55 to 60 cows; 1 bull; 2 farm mares-of-all-work; 2 milk-cart horses; the farmer with his 2 dogs; 1 land-girl; a milk-roundsman and his son; and, off-stage, various other milk-roundsmen, lorry drivers, factory workers, and office workers; and, back-stage, wives who rise while it is yet night to make 4 o'clock, 5 o'clock, any o'clock breakfasts . . .

Stage-properties: A four-cow milking plant, cooling apparatus and refrigerator; washing buckets and stripping pails; dozens of cans and hundreds of bottles; 2 delivery carts; 2 delivery vans; lorries attached to the pasteurising and bottling plant (known as the treating house); gum-boots (with luck, a pair each for the on-stage workers); hose pipe, yard brooms, and water, water, water, always water running on the concrete floors; farm implements of various kinds; harness and stable gear.

Time: 20 to 22 hours round the clock.

Place: The action moves from the farm to the treating house (in the city) and back to the farm; and from the farm to all the houses on the round.

The farm is of 100 acres, 10 in hay, 3 in sweet corn, the rest in pasture. About 15 subdivisions allow for rotation of hay and corn crops as well as for rotational grazing; thus the herd is always on comparatively fresh pasture. The farmer's day is filled with 2 milkings—and 202 activities for the maintenance and renewal of the herd, the pastures, the crops, the buildings, the implements, the fences, the water troughs and the gates. The first milking is at 6 a.m., the second late in the afternoon; and in between there are no idle moments for the farmer or his assistants—or for the cows.

You will see them standing idle just before milking-time; but watch them as they come from the bails: heads down, intent, they make for the gate; then all in the same direction they move slowly over the paddock and mow, mow, mow the grass down. Listen, and you will hear the steady, regular sound of tearing grass: the cows are at work, filling-up for the next milking. This is their job, twice a day, every day of the week, every week of nine or ten months of the year, every year of four or five or perhaps even nine or ten years of their lives.



And this they do, for the most part, in silence: perhaps we hear them bellow for a couple of days each year when a one-day-old complaining calf has been taken away to end its brief acquaintance with this green world. The rest is silence—unless you count the swish of the torn grass, the gulp of that visible two-way swallow, the belly rumble as the cud goes home.

Perhaps it's the regularity that keeps them contented.

* * *

Let us say the milk-roundsman's day begins at 5.30 p.m. This is when he goes to the farm—by bicycle—to whistle in the milk-cart horses, Charlie and Joe, off the hill where they have been grazing since 8.30 or 9 a.m. Down the steep and muddy hillside they come, Joe first, Charlie second, world without end; into the yard they go, Joe first, Charlie second. The first bucket of chaff goes in the square box; Joe begins; the second bucket in the round drum; Charlie begins—the same every day, world without end. Joe's face is very long from the eyes down (even for a horse) and he looks as if he knows all the answers (but to somewhat old-fashioned questions); Charlie is self-effacing unless there are apples about.

The milk roundsman goes home to a 6.30 meal and to an evening with his account books; on a good night for arithmetic he gets to bed by 8.30, on a bad night perhaps not till 11. At 1 a.m. he has to yawn himself awake; by 2 a.m. he is in the city collecting a van load of bottles and cans of pasteurised

(continued on next page)

MATCHLESS

Trufit

MULTIPLE FITTINGS

CONSIDER Trufit Quality.
Consider also TRUFIT correct individual fitting for Arch, Width and Length.



FASHIONED IN NEW ZEALAND BY
DUCKWORTH TURNER AND CO. LTD.