

"... Ever hear of a watersider doing that?"

it is not easy, out of Wellington, to forget it.

We were sitting round the fire one night discussing the subsidiary farm industries—poultry, bees, small fruit—when my host said suddenly:

"I wonder if those fellows in Wellington ever saw a colony of bees at work. That's an efficient industry."

"Not very efficient in New Zealand," I argued. "About every third year bees starve if they are not fed."

"That is because we interfere with them. If we left them alone they would store enough honey in a hollow tree in a good season to last two or three seasons. Wild bees sometimes have honey in reserve that is three seasons old."

I could not think of the answer for a moment, and when in a few moments I did I hesitated to ask about the drones, about the complete lack of liberty in the hive, the blind surrender to the queen, and the absolute annihilation of individuality. Though nothing could be more hateful to a liberty-loving farmer than such a system, he had not thought of that. His mind was still on the smooth running and unflagging industry of the hive, for in a moment he went on to tell me about a neighbour who worked so hard getting his crop in that he had not enough energy left to get himself a cup of tea.

"He finished the paddock about one o'clock and, as his wife was away, went into the house and put the kettle on. Then he lay down on the sofa to wait for the kettle to boil and woke up at seven next morning. Did you ever hear of a watersider doing that?"

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[I]t is not easy, but necessary, to remember this attitude, and very necessary to think how to change it. But the first thing to do is to understand why farmers are so suspicious.

My host's case is typical of a very large number. The land to which he has devoted his life was thrown open for close settlement in 1901. More than 50 farmers were settled on it by ballot and they put into it all they possessed. Then in 1902, before any of them had a chance to get established, wool dropped to 2½d and half of them walked off ruined. Three others in succession tried this farm and found it too tough a struggle, and when the present owner decided to buy it his friends told him he was crazy. Perhaps he was, he now says; but for 38 years he has wrestled with all the problems of drainage, shelter, sourness, and world slumps, and mastered them one by one. Now the thought that he is not free, not sure where he stands, not able to build a shed or drive a truck or hire or fire a man without the authority of someone 150 miles away whom he has never seen and who knows nothing about his situation—well, it drives him mad; or it would if he had not an active sense of humour.

For I have done him wrong so far. I have presented him as a rather solemn fellow, slightly querulous. In fact, he is an outrageous leg-puller. The day I arrived he had a copy of *The Listener* in his hand open at a page showing a drawing of a farmer—a little less than upright and jovial.



"Tell your artist," he said, "that farmers used to be upright and used to go to their work whistling and singing. Now they are bowed with the weight of all the townies on their backs."

## WILD LIFE

IN spite of the length of time it has been running now, the ZB feature *Wild Life* remains at a consistently high level. Dr. R. A. Falla, director of the Canterbury Museum (whose photograph appeared on our cover last issue) knows how to make natural history exceedingly interesting. His broadcasts are so effortless that it is difficult for listeners to appreciate the amount of work that is put into them. Recently, for example, he joined forces with some experienced deer-stalkers in order to secure first-hand information about winter conditions in the North Canterbury back country. He was chiefly interested in the big herds of deer and the chamois on the higher ranges. These are creating a serious problem because of what they are doing to unprotected native plants and, therefore, to the surface of the land. On the same

trip Dr. Falla observed how the hardier native birds, as well as insects, support themselves in snow and low temperatures. It is field work of this kind that makes *Wild Life* so distinctive and refreshing a programme. It is heard from the ZB stations on Tuesday and Thursday evenings.

Among "People in the Programmes" this week is a photograph of Bandmaster William Baylis, conductor of the Dunedin City Salvation Army Band, which recently celebrated its 62nd anniversary. This band will broadcast regularly from the studio of 4YA on the first Sunday in each month in future. A programme of brass band music will be heard from 10.15 to 10.45 a.m., and the first of these broadcasts will take place this Sunday, August 5. Brigadier M. C. Goffin will compeer the programme.

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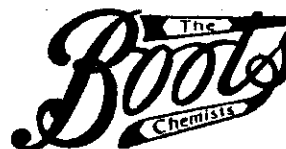
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