

# Dairy-farming in Lion Country

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**L**IONS kill her cows and her husband kills the lions.

Leopards and jackals stalk the calves, but the herd grows bigger and better.

From milk-shed to market is 125 miles, but the cans arrive full every day.

It sounds like the patter of some cheap film, but it is the sober truth of the life of the quiet, cultivated, cheerful woman whose photograph appears on this page. Her name is Macfarlane, though she owes that to her husband, and her home is 300 miles north of the Victoria Falls—not very far, as distance counts in Africa, from the country in which Livingstone lived and died 75 years ago.

I put so many questions to her during our too-brief interview that she had no opportunity of answering any of them fully; but her story is something like this.

She went to Northern Rhodesia 28 years ago, married, and then began the incredible adventure of converting her husband's 3,000 acres into a dairy-farm in darkest Africa. To-day she is milking about a hundred reasonably good Friesians.

"Our bulls," she told me, "are more than reasonably good. They are very good, but they are very expensive. We send all the way to the Union for them, and they cost about £150 each when they're not much more than calves."

"Expensive meat for lions," I suggested, but she explained that they dare not expose the bulls to lions. They are stabled at night, and carefully watched by day.

"Do you use native cattle as foundation stock?"

"No, but there are certain possibilities there. Native cows give rich milk, but not much of it. They are, however, spreaders of cattle disease."

"Is that a serious trouble with you?"

"It would be very serious if we neglected it. Ticks, for example, are a standing menace. We dip every week."

"Do you mean that you actually dip your cows as we dip sheep?"

"Yes, we immerse them—every beast every seven days. If nothing excites them it doesn't take long, but, if one animal gets nervous, hysteria will run through the whole herd."

"Are ticks your worst trouble?"

"No, we have others that are harder to control—mastitis and abortion and several blood infections that I think you don't get in New Zealand at all."

## Labour Difficulties Too

"Have you a veterinary service to help you?"

"Yes, but of course it is not so readily available as yours is. Veterinary officers do come to see us, and we are most grateful for their advice, but they have vast areas to cover and we can't expect frequent visits."

"Milking is all hand work?"

"Yes, so far. We have tractors for cultivation, but no milking machines yet."

"You at least have unlimited labour?"

"No, you mustn't think that. Our labour is like yours—farming is the last job it will turn to."

"What other jobs are there?"

"Mining chiefly. Once natives have worked in the mines they're lost to farming. I suppose it is the same with you. Farming can't compete with industries in which the hours are shorter and the wages higher and there are opportunities every week for spending them."

"Not even in Central Africa?"

"No, not even there."

"Not even among people who have herded cattle since the beginning of time?"

"No, they like films and holidays too. Sometimes we're lucky, of course. We have one boy now who has not had a holiday for two years, and who doesn't want one. But the majority like the more exciting though harder life of the mines. When we can we get Barotse boys, natives from further west who have always been a pastoral race. But in general Africa is now like Australia and America. The new ways have come, and farmers have to adapt themselves."

## Isolated But Not Lonely

I noticed from some photographs Mrs. Macfarlane showed me that her buildings were very good. "Your cow-barn, as you call it, is better than any I have seen in New Zealand. I notice, too, that it is built of brick. They're sun-dried bricks, I suppose?"

"No, we have a kiln. We burn our own clay and do our own building."

"But you don't show your own films?"

"Not yet. Some day, perhaps, we shall have to do that too."

"But it's a good life all in all?"

"A lovely life. Isolated but not really lonely. We have our anxieties, of course, but you have yours, too."

"How do you educate your children?"

"As so many farmers still do in New Zealand. We send them away to boarding-schools."

"What does that mean where you are—a hundred miles away, a thousand, or what?"

"Our children are now grown up, but when they were young we sent them to Bulawayo, 600 miles to the south. Some go all the way to Johannesburg or Cape Town."

"They get home for holidays?"

"Yes, every term. With us that meant three times. But some schools have four terms a year, and the pupils of those come home only twice."

"By the way, how did you get to New Zealand?"

"Well, coming was easy. I took the train to Cape Town and there caught a steamer that came all the way to Wellington. But it's not going to be so easy going back. I shall have to fly first to Sydney and then to Melbourne, take a steamer to Lourenço-Marques in Portuguese East Africa, take train to Johannesburg, and then go home from there. Fortunately, African trains are very good. We have sleepers and dining cars, and very good service. Meals



MRS. E. O. MACFARLANE  
*Lions kill only when they are hungry*

and tips cost about fifteen shillings a day."

"But to get back to the lions and the leopards again. Do they come within sight or sound of your home?"

"A few months ago a lion passed within three or four hundred yards of the house. It was evening, and I watched it till it got out of sight. But lions don't roar much when they are hunting. They go silently and stealthily. It's the jackals and hyenas that make a noise at night."

"Then you feel grateful for your strong brick walls?"

## High Value of Bulls

"We're not worried ourselves, but we are thankful to think that our bulls are safe. It's bad losing a cow, but we can buy four or five cows for the price of even a young bull, and the money is not the only loss. It takes many weeks to get a replacement and that can be serious where one of the problems is so to regulate the birth of calves that we're never without a steady flow of milk."

"How do you regulate the supply of feed?"

"By growing green stuff and making ensilage. We have about a thousand acres under cultivation."

"Can you grow English grasses?"

"So far we haven't, but it's not impossible that we could. We depend chiefly on maize, legumes, and sweet potatoes."

"Can you grow the ordinary European vegetables—cabbages, carrots, peas, beans, and so on?"

"Very easily. And most of the European fruits, too. But we also grow tropical and semi-tropical things—paw-paws, mangoes, pineapples, and especially Avocado pears."

"You're not vegetarians?"

"Oh dear no. We eat a lot of meat, but not as much mutton as you do."

"You do get mutton?"

"Yes, but it's not nearly as good as yours. The only sheep we have are the fat-tailed variety, which are a poor substitute for your fat lambs. African sheep are more like goats than the sheep New Zealanders know."

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