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ON HEDGES

By DORIAN SAKER

I had never occurred to me before this morning how much trouble could be saved by a little ingenuity and humanitarianism. Our hedge is an unending nuisance; in fact it is the bane of my life. I am always tinkering at it, either with clippers, with shears, or even, on occasions, with a sharp pocket-knife, but never yet has it ever looked like a hedge, that is, like a hedge of the traditional English type. And yet this morning I saw a solution to all my difficulties.

A Hindu's bottle-cart was drawn into the gutter, and his horse was standing in the middle of the footpath, eating the leaves of a taupata hedge. And what a hedge! It looked as if it had been trimmed by using a microscopic vernier! But only in the region accessible to the nag. Elsewhere it was ten times worse than mine has ever been. For some people are regrettably careless about hedges. The City Council lays down beautiful swards all through an avenue, and then trees are planted, which, if they survive the attacks of small boys, grow into hardy forest giants. And yet how often do we see the sward left to grow into a jungle? And how ugly it is.

The Problem

But the question still remains, how is the visit of the Hindu's horse to be conveniently arranged? Obviously I cannot go up to the Hindu saying: "Please Sun-jaw-hat do you think you could starve your horse until he arrives at my hedge—and could you make it convenient to pass every Tuesday?"

He might reply that his horse always seemed to be in a state of starvation,

but I know that I have seen horses quite close to a luscious-looking hedge and yet they have nobly refrained from cropping it. And he might well ask what remuneration would he have for this favour he was conferring on me. "Have Mister any bottle, any sack—old clothes?" As I am strictly a teetotaler, and an unbeliever in patent medicines, I would have to answer that I could not promise a weekly supply of bottles. As for old clothes, we give them to the Patriotic Societies.

The position seems to be hopeless. And the trouble is, or would be that Scott at the end of the road, whose hedge is the worst I have ever seen, would certainly notice things, and since he drinks like an oyster, he could easily bribe the Hindu to stop near his hedge.

"Dear Horse . . ."

But would it be a good idea to attract the notice of the horse himself in some way? Would a notice do? "Dear horse, this hedge is specially planted and grown for your edification. Use it!" Or this: "This hedge is flavoured with chaff and oats every morning." But if I did this I feel sure that every horse would be attracted to such a delicacy, and not only would there be no hedge left, but I should get into trouble with all the drivers for causing their animals to go astray.

I'm afraid I can't think of a way out, but if you, with your greater mental capacity, can conceive of a way, please let me know. Our hedge is in such a mess.

GREETINGS TO THE FORCES

A NOTABLE programme, specially compiled "For the Forces" was presented over all the ZB stations on Christmas Day, many well known personalities, including the Minister of Defence, the Hon. F. Jones, coming to the microphone to extend greetings both to returned soldiers and to those serving at the present time.

The first speaker was Captain J. J. Clark, ex-Dominion President of the South African War Veterans' Association, who spoke to veterans of the Boer War. He was followed by the Hon. W. Perry, President of the New Zealand Returned Soldiers' Association; Commodore W. E. Parry, R.N., Chief of the Naval Staff, who extended greetings to the Navy; Group-Captain H. W. L. Saunders, Chief of the Air Staff; Matron Willis, Matron-in-Chief of the New Zealand Army Nursing Service, who greeted all nurses who wore the Red Cross, in the last war and in this; Captain F. A. Macindoe, of the Merchant Service Guild of New Zealand; Colonel A. E. Conway, Adjutant-General of the New Zealand Military Forces; and finally Mr. Jones, as Minister of Defence.

The programme was interspersed with suitable martial music, many rousing old war tunes being played.

YOUR GARDEN AND MINE

By Ann Earncliff Brown (No. 54)

"A Lazy Garden"

FOR nearly three years I struggled against the temptation to make the raised garden into what a stern nurseryman terms "a lazy man's garden." Now I hope I've come to a reasonable compromise with both my conscience and the nurseryman. The raised garden, as perhaps I've already told you, is really a very long sand bank with a low retaining wall of bricks—four deep. The garden faces east, and has a break-wind of poplars to the west with a neat manuka-fenced fence up which I once could grow lovely sweet peas.

With a top dressing of leaf mould and almost constant spraying the garden grew also wallflowers, carnations, iceland poppies, bearded iris, lavender and veldt daisies. Each year has found the growing more difficult and the results less pleasing, for the roots of the trees have come burrowing and robbing, and the soil appears more and more like the sand of the desert—hot, arid and unsuited to such plants.

For a Background

True, a wistaria is battling along quite well, each year creeping further afield, and in time I have hopes of a really effective background. The nurseryman pooh-poohed my suggestion of mesembry anthemum—all shades. "Don't you think they are quite lovely?" I demanded.

"Yes! Quite, where you can't grow anything else—but a lazy man's garden when all's said and done."

Meekly I ordered one Donard's seedling, cheering up as I pictured the lovely hybrid broom in flower; one Cotoneaster-thymifolia—the red berries allured me; one Crataegus Angustifolia—you remember the soft grey green foliage and gay orange berries; a demure rosemary for its aromatic scent and dainty wee flowers; and a red manuka. As advised I had very wide deep holes dug and filled with good leaf mould and soil.

Quite Good Growth

Last Autumn we planted those hardy shrubs and they have all made quite good growth and promise to thrive well, but because I still hanker for the splashes of bright colour I've lately planted pieces of mesembry anthemum at intervals along the low wall, and I suspect that I'm going to enjoy my lazy garden quite a lot. When the sun shines on hot sand covered with thick green fleshy ice plants, they'll look and feel happier there, where at present only the veldt daisies flourish in the heat.

To-morrow I must give a final earthup to potatoes that threaten to lift the soil with their abundance. Also I'll make a sowing of peas, French beans, and lettuce. The tomato plants are just leaping ahead in the long hot days, and seem to take a perverse delight in growing side-shoots that I must pinch out.

No wonder I like my lazy garden best.

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