

was vanity, affectation, theft. He had seen someone else groomed like that, and thought he could safely steal the fashion. He was a pretender, a humbug, a sham. Stand beside him in the last ditch and you would find yourself suddenly alone. And so on. There was a pen of cattle between us, and I could not say anything to him, but seeing him there changed in front of me gave me the kind of annoyance a dyspeptic has when he sees a child enjoying a piece of cake.

The more I think of it the more crazy I know I was—and the more representative.

DECEMBER 16 moved when people do unexpected things because they are unexpected by us. We have been surprised, caught off guard, proved dull and slow, and taken in. It is the other side of the kind of resentment we show when too much is taken for granted. I have a friend, Christlike in most of his attitudes, who gets angry if the barman says to him, "The usual, Mr. . . . ?" Or his tobacconist, without waiting for the order, produces the customary brand of cigarettes. It is a quite irrational anger, but when I spoke about it once I was told, a little shortly, that people should not assume that they know what we want before we ask for it, or deny us the right to change our minds.

Without these assumptions social life would be difficult. With them it is often tyrannical and unreasonable. Unless we can take a great deal for granted, every moment of every day, our thoughts as well as our actions will show a spluttering uncertainty like the antics of an engine sparking on only half its plugs. If we take too much for granted—assume that what has been must continue to be till God calls a halt—we shall often find ourselves as silly as I was today at Addington.

* * *

BECAUSE I have no ram-paddock, or more accurately, no ram-holding fences, I have three new lambs this month, only one of which I saw coming. One of the three was still-born. One came from a very big and very fat ewe that I assumed to be dry. The expected one illustrates the will to survive and perpetuate themselves in 99 per cent of potential mothers.

DECEMBER 18 She is a three-legged mother who would have been destroyed if I had been a commercial farmer. Somewhere on the long train journey from Otago, or the short truck journey from Addington, she dislocated a hip, and a week or two later lost all her wool (having apparently nearly died). I wrote her off as a possible breeder, but finding the will to live still strong in her, I decided to let her take a chance of surviving the winter. Once or twice when the flock was penned I examined her for footrot, but did not realise till Jim told me that she had a dislocation. A few weeks ago I was surprised to notice that she was possibly going to have a lamb, and when I was coming down the hill this morning she was lying in the shade of a macrocarpa with her ten-days-old lamb nibbling at her ear.

(To be continued)

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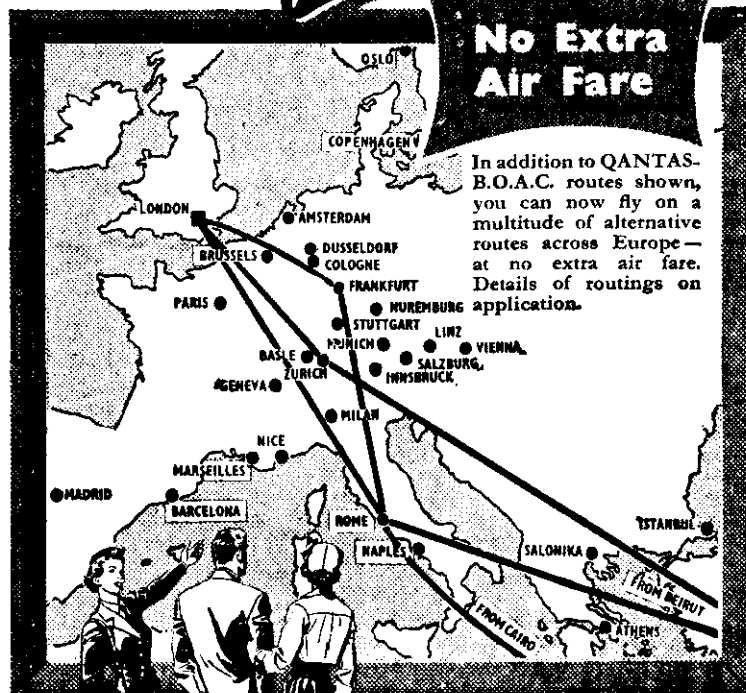
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