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"YOU" "YOU" "YOU"

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AN observant visitor from Essex asked me the other day where all the sheep are that produce the Canterbury lambs. It was the middle of the day and the sheep were, of course, under the trees. Next day he asked me the same question in the Mackenzie Country, and I could not say this time that he would find the answer under the trees. When we came to Central Otago he had given up asking questions. The Island, he could see, was a continuing and dismal joke with fences here and there to prevent the

JANUARY 3 farmer from losing his morale. It was not necessary to ask any longer why two out of three of the inhabitants had escaped to the North Island. The question was: How had this depressing heap of shingle ever supported life at all?

I am, of course, on the side of the questioners wherever they come from: as long as they remain questioners. When they start "telling" me I can be as ridiculous in my resistance to facts as they are in speaking without them. I travelled once from Mt. Cook to Timaru with an A.D.C. to a Governor-General. No one was ever more anxious to please or more successful in raising my hackles. He knew the history of Canterbury, the needs of Canterbury,

the blunders of Canterbury, the possibilities when it changed its ways—and he gave them to me all the way to Washdyke. When we stopped for a cup of tea at Tekapo the farmer-owner of the car took me aside and begged me "to shut that silly blighter's mouth before I pull his nose." What the "silly blighter" was saying was a re-hash in irritating English of a series of articles I had myself written in days when smartness was sweeter to me than truth.

But the man from Essex was not smart. He was not arrogant or affected or loud. He was a modest traveller in a strange country in which the stones cry out if the traveller doesn't. In 200 miles he did not see 200 sheep, and when we camped among the rocks that surround Alexandra it amazed him to notice that the rocks were fenced in. It amazes everyone who sees them for the first time and has eyes to see them properly. But to see them as they are it is necessary to forget a good deal and imagine a good deal. I am writing this note at daybreak at the foot of Conroy's Gully, and the rocks are now populated. Without having to change my position I can see seven sheep moving across the face above me and nibbling as they move. When the sun gets up they will not be there. They will have settled down under over-hanging rocks, retreated into shadowed hollows, crept into pockets of cool shade. It will go

on everywhere as far as I can see, two or three sheep on one face, half a dozen on another, and all happier and healthier than the shapeless bags of mutton on the plains stuffing themselves with wet grass and worms. A sheep is a goat as surely as a dog is a wolf, and I never see one fenced into a small paddock with hundreds of others without feeling a twinge of shame.

[F I were a sheep I would like to live in Central Otago. Would I like to live somewhere else if I were a cow? No. But I would like my line to be cast in the pleasant places. From Lindis Pass to Rae's Junction I did not see one cow that was not fat and contented. But I did not see a cow on the hills. I saw them in small paddocks of clover: over their fetlocks in grass.

JANUARY 5 beside poplars and willows: tethered in the corners of orchards; chewing the cud on the banks of rivers. Cows accept confinement more cheerfully than sheep: especially cows in milk. It is sufficient for them if they have water and grass and 20 square feet of flatness on which to lie and ruminate. But sheep like to wander. They like to climb hills and clamber round rocks and jump down banks. They like nibbles better than