

LEFT: "Polo in the Waikato is the sport of working farmers"

## Shepherd's Calendar

# LIMITED LIABILITIES

by "SUNDOWNER"

LAST year I asked a veterinary surgeon to help Elsie to deliver her calf. This year she preferred the old-fashioned way, and was so quick about it that if the surgeon had been here in advance he would have had no time to wash his hands. It was neither her hour nor her place, neither a day of vigilance on my part nor a period of unrest on hers. She stood chewing the cud while I was milking Betty, and was still

(continued from previous page)

bellowed, as with a glaring blue, glittering eye he observed her scuttle from the room dropping hairpins as she ran.

He slid his teeth into the mug of water on the cabinet, and wound his watch, and then, beginning to fume, he reached for his stick at the head of the bed and thumped the floor without pause but closed his eyes and foxed until he had been supplied with brandy and hot bottles.

"And eighty-nine next June," he boasted when she had gone for the last time, and he sat up and looked at himself in the mirror and stroked his moustache and swallowed his brandy and recalled how he had battled with the bull, when suddenly, he heard the verandah window breaking and the noise of glass splintering inside his head. "The devil, what's that?" he cried, and poked into his ear, but in spite of his strong will and his patriarchal pride and arrogance again the window broke; and broke and broke and broke inside his head as if once was not enough to impress Joseph Valentine with the wonder of his aged body that still had breath in it; but finally, as a warning voice that is carried out to sea by the roar of waves the tinkling of glass grew fainter and fainter, became a small echo wandering through colossal caves and then was lost so that at last the old man was able to rest.

With the sheet to his chin he lay staring and staring at a fly that buzzed inanely round and round in slow circles round and round above his snowy plumed head until the noise of Joseph's triumphant sleep filled the whole house with a mighty crescendo of thanksgiving.

there when I took the milk inside. An hour later the calf was on its feet, shaking its head, and making a not altogether ridiculous attempt to play. Elsie was mooing gently on her own feet, and was not in the least disturbed when I went close to ask if it was a boy or a girl.

It proved to be a girl, the second so far in a family of five, and at this early stage the least attractive to look at. But Shorthorn-Jersey is a good cross. I like it better than Friesian-Jersey or Jersey-Ayrshire, and since we don't this year require Elsie's milk, I am leaving the calf with her to be fed and educated. Physically I am sure she will make a job of it, but if she neglects to send her girl to Sunday School we may have to take a hand ourselves and withdraw her from circulation every Saturday night. That would give us a little more cream for our Sunday porridge, and a little less fear that a calf allowed to run wild every day in the week might end in a bovine borstal.

I WOULD not choose, if the issue were put to me, to make a long train journey with sheep rather than with men and women. The worst mannered men are more considerate, all in all, than the best mannered sheep, which are not considerate at all. But I could not help thinking, as I

APRIL 13 travelled through the night on the Limited, that there would be some compensations travelling with sheep.

Sheep don't get drunk. They don't ask you to drink from a bottle that they have already slobbered over and slobbered into. They don't try to rest their feet on your knees. They don't slump across you when the carriage jolts and get belligerent when you push them off. They don't sing at midnight. They don't ask impertinent questions, or drop their dentures, or lose their way when they go to the lavatory and maul you when you help them back. They are not odourless, but the least fragrant sheep is primroses and violets beside a man who has drunk too much, smoked a filthy pipe, overheated himself, and not had his boots off for 48 hours. Nor have I ever

seen a sheep lie on its back and place two heavy feet on the shoulders of a sleeping woman of seventy.

I don't propose, when I next go north, to ask for a corner in a sheep truck. But I have travelled many miles in a cattle truck, sitting on a bale of hay, and the only unpleasantness, all night was the smoke of the tunnels.

SOMETIMES wonder, when I pass the polo grounds in Hagley Park, where the ponies and players have gone. But they gave me the answer in the Waikato. Polo has disappeared from Canterbury because it was the sport of gentlemen, a shrinking army everywhere

whoever gains entry to APRIL 14 it. Polo in the Waikato is the sport of working farmers. To play there, I was told, the only qualifications are temperament and skill. The ponies are the best they can breed or buy, and since there are financial restrictions in both cases, every step is carefully considered. If a pony means no more to you than writing a cheque, one player said, you will not watch it as closely or train it as carefully as the man whose mount means saving and hard work. With a few exceptions, he assured me, the polo players of the Waikato groom the ponies that carry them to victory and milk the cows that pay for them. They know their ponies and their ponies know them, see them every day, and live in close contact with them. Gentlemen players have longer strings of mounts, but working players know better where the weak strands are.

To me personally polo has been nothing but a thrilling spectacle robbed of some enjoyment by my social antipathies. I have never been the size or the shape or the weight or the type to play, never had the eye or the nerve or the seat or the money, or the inclination to participate in such a gilded sport as I have always supposed polo to be. If I had spent my youth in the Waikato I would still have been a spectator only, and not always a sympathetic spectator. But I had not realised, until I began prowling among J. M. Ranstead's books, that it is the oldest of the stick and ball games, the progenitor of hockey and hurling, and probably also of golf and cricket. Polo in England is still only a baby, not yet a hundred years old; which makes its social pretensions even more ridiculous than I have always thought them. But polo in Asia is 2000 years old at least, and probably older, so that what the Waikato farmers have done has been to democratise a game from which the humble have been excluded for 20 centuries.

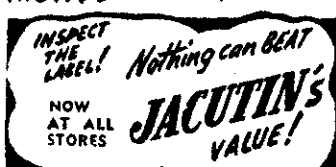
I don't suppose they did this for the best reasons. But we did not abandon slavery for the best reasons, and have no difficulty today in feeling virtuous when we look back. I hope they realise in the Waikato, when the ponies come in with the cows, that what rank could not do in the old world and money in the new world, these ponies are now doing for the brotherhood of sporting man.

(To be continued)

10 TIMES MORE DEADLY THAN ANY SUBSTITUTE!



PROTECTION FOR A SEASON 3/9  
**KILLS FLIES MOTHS**  
Nothing science has yet discovered is as effective and economical as Jacutin Fumigating Sticks to wipe out entirely the fly menace in your home.



N.Z. Distributors: Chemical Imports Ltd., P.O. Box 102, Christchurch

## The forthcoming publication The OXFORD JUNIOR COMPANION TO MUSIC

by Percy A. Scholes

This is a book of entertainment as well as of information, and will be valued by musicians of all ages. It is an illustrated encyclopedia of music, profusely illustrated with musical examples, drawings, engravings and photographs. It will be a magnificent volume, size 10 by 7 1/2 inches, containing 421 pages. Publication is expected at the end of 1954, and the New Zealand price will probably be 36/-. Place your order NOW or write for an illustrated prospectus to

A. H. AND A. W. REED,  
P.O. Box 6002, Te Aro, Wellington.

Protect YOUR TEETH

Dentists agree that the main damage caused by dental decay occurs within 30 minutes after meals. Avoid this — use specially impregnated Inter-Dens and have healthier teeth, firmer gums and sweeter breath. Recommended by your Dentist.

Ask your Chemist for

INTER-DENS



**MEDICATED GUM MASSAGER**  
Easily carried in handbag or pocket, 5/9 (packet of 5 books) containing 125 Inter-Dens.  
Distributors: Early Bros. Trading Co. Ltd., Box 508, Wellington.