

Queensland's Big Fence

by "SUNDOWNER"

I HAD no sooner written my last note than I picked up *The Great Australian Loneliness*, by Ernestine Hill. It is an old book but in sections still fascinating—especially the chapter on the riders of the Big Fence, the "only fence in the world that cuts a continent into two mighty paddocks." That fence was erected as a barrier against rabbits — after

JUNE 18 the rabbits had crossed.

It is 1200 miles of wire netting, 42 inches high and with a mesh of an inch and a quarter, and every Australian believes it to be the longest fence in the world. But I have just read in a Brisbane paper that Queensland is pushing ahead with plans for a 3200-mile fence, strong enough and high enough to stop dingoes. This will not be an ocean-to-ocean fence, but a ring fence round most of Queensland's sheep country—an area about as big as New Zealand lying west of the Great Divide. I have seen no estimate of the cost, but since the dingo's annual toll on sheep farmers is said to be about 500,000 sheep, or two million pounds worth of wool, Queensland could spend twice as much on this project as New Zealand has earmarked for the Roxburgh power scheme, and still be on the safe side of good business.

I HAVE had one brief attack of homesickness since I came to Australia, and that was when I met Elsie's double. We had stopped at a small township before the world was

JUNE 20 awake, and there she was bearing down on us through the mist, and heading. I was almost foolish enough to believe, straight for me. But she had more sense

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concert) and *The Firebird*, both composed by 1911. His post-1918 music says little to most concert-goers.

Is the taste of music-lovers lagging hopelessly behind? Or has Stravinsky himself been side-tracked into mere experiment, mere ingenuity?

It may need the sons and grandsons of the present generation of concert-goers to sort out such questions. Today's chronicler can only point to his unsurpassed influence on other musicians and to the world's changed recognition of Stravinsky himself.

Now he is saluted as a high priest of music. His every word is revered and studied. And he plays up to the part. In London he "out-Garboed Garbo," as one newspaper commented. After he had received his gold medal the orders went out: no interviews, no photographs.

Forty years ago this same Igor Stravinsky was reputed the bad boy of music, the dangerous revolutionary. The transformation must amuse Stravinsky, if he has a sense of humour. But considering that he once inscribed a work "Composed to the glory of God and dedicated to the Boston Symphony Orchestra," I don't suppose he has.

N.Z. LISTENER, JULY 2, 1954.



THE DINGO

than that. She was heading for a gate leading into the hotel garden, which she was quick to see someone had left open. To make sure that she was safe she walked round the building, pausing at the open windows and, as any sentimentalist could see, listening carefully at each. Then she turned to the lettuce and cabbage. At that point the train moved on again, and I don't know how long her luck held. But for one wild moment I was chasing her round my own garden and calling out "Whoa!"

I MET a man today whose occupation is what he calls "crabbing"—a horrifying business but apparently very lucrative. He goes alone into the mangrove swamps and, if he is lucky, comes back a few days later with fifty or a hundred giant crabs tied up in the bottom of his boat. To catch them he lures them into a wire cage, but to secure them when he takes them out of the water he holds them down with his bare foot and passes a loop of string round their legs and claws. Carelessness at this point

JUNE 23 can mean a lost finger or toe, since these creatures don't let go once they take

hold, and are strong enough, I was told, to break the bones in a man's wrist. I had no difficulty in believing it after seeing one of them dead.

But there are compensations. A crab is worth from four to six shillings, and this man had brought home 1500 in 16 days. But those 16 days had meant four or five journeys into lonely swamps infested by mosquitoes and loathsome crawling things, sleeping on the job most of the time, and exposed all the time to unnerving accidents. Though I have never eaten crab meat, I have once or twice been tempted to try it. Now I am safe. But I can't help thinking what a strange occupation it is in a country not much older than our own and crying aloud for men to develop it.

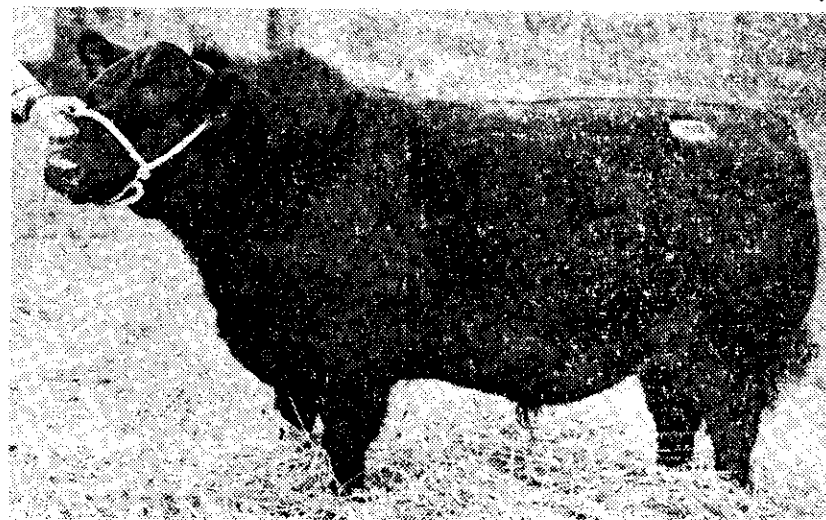
I USED to believe, and if I ever see Colac Bay again, or Manapouri or Te Anau or Milford Sound, I shall no doubt believe once more that our sandflies are the most pestiferous in the world. But they can at

JUNE 24 least be seen as well as felt. The sandflies of this

part of Queensland are invisible. You see nothing and hear nothing, then an hour or two later you develop itching lumps that annoy you for days. They are as near as living creatures can be to Euclid's definition of a point. If they have magnitude it is below the register of septuagenarian eyes. If they could not achieve position I would not have a dozen mildly septic sores where their caravans have rested.

(To be continued)

★ IT'S IN THE BLOOD . . . ★



THE British pedigree livestock industry is discussed in *Blood Will Out*, a BBC programme to be heard from 2YA at 9.30 a.m. on Sunday, July 11, and later from other National stations. There are 15 separate breeds of horses and ponies, 24 breeds of cattle, 33 breeds of sheep and 12 breeds of pigs indigenous to the British Isles, and the programme includes the views of experts on the breeding of sheep, cows and pigs. The secretary of the British Livestock Export Group tells how the group was organised to overcome the physical difficulties of getting animals to their new homes overseas; and L. E.

Rowson, one of two men responsible for developing a new artificial insemination technique, summarises its possibilities. The livestock breeder, the exporter, the buyer and the stock farmer all give their own pictures of various aspects of the industry. Listeners are also given glimpses of the livestock sales at Perth, in Scotland—Mecca of breeders from all parts of the world, and of the annual show of the Royal Agricultural Society of England. The Aberdeen Angus bull, shown in the illustration, was supreme champion at a recent Perth Show, and brought 7000 guineas at the show auction—its destination, the Argentine.

WITCH DOCTORS AND HOODOOS

Primitive man is surrounded by fears. The witch doctor has only to put a hoodoo on him to make him wilt and die. His cunning, courage and strength avail him nothing against the apparently uncanny powers arrayed against him. This seems incredible, and shows how human beings can be prisoners of fear.

Though we look upon the antics of witch doctors as so much nonsense, and pity their victims, time was when we, too, were victims of superstitions no less fantastic and cruel than those that terrify primitive man.

Women suspected of being witches were at different times burnt at the stake, boiled in oil, or torn apart. Physical deformities were thought to be due to the intervention of black magic. Even the Devil himself was credited with taking human form.

All this belongs to our past—yet not so far distant as not to leave vestiges that make us our own witch doctors. We very sensibly refuse to believe in black magic. Nevertheless, we can be hagridden by hoodoos of our own making. We impute an unpleasant meaning to something we do not fully understand, or to conduct we dislike. That is, we place a "stigma" on it. There is often no justification for it.

Consider mental sickness as an instance. Anyone is liable to be afflicted, even as they may suffer from a physical ailment. The sturdiest man or woman, subjected to prolonged strain, will break down. Neglected, their complaint will become worse. Add to it the "stigma" that makes them worry and try to conceal their illness, and the consequences are liable to be serious. But it is an illness and, above all, an illness that can be treated and cured.

Mental healing is a highly specialised branch of medicine. Nurses are required to undergo specialised training orientated towards mental sickness and the methods and art of mental healing. Both doctors and nurses are specialists in one field of sickness. This today is a world-wide development.

Medical recognition that mental illness is just a form of sickness, and that it can be cured was a jump that covered centuries. It was one of the greatest advances in understanding human behaviour ever made. It tore down the hoodoos that had dominated social and individual life for generations.

Psychological research and the development of medical science revealed the close affinity between mind and body—that they are not two distinct things shut off from each other. They are, in fact, one.

Equally important was the understanding of the mental life of healthy people, and how it is affected by worry, nervous strain, frustrated ambition, shock and disappointment. All these factors were seen as causes of mental sickness.

Modernisation of hospitals was an essential part of the new approach. A different type of accommodation, a new atmosphere, and a new character distinguished mental treatment.

The treatment itself is as revolutionary as the hope inspired by the new attitude. Mental science is winning out against superstition and ignorance. Medical science in all phases—medicine, surgery and psychiatry, is gradually laying bare the hidden causes of mental sickness and ways in which it can be cured.

Anyone today who believes the old-fashioned gossip about mental sickness is keeping a hoodoo on himself. People who believe the ridiculous and absurd prejudices about the organisation of the institutions where mental sickness is treated are doing an injustice to themselves, to their neighbours, and to the men and women who are healing the mentally sick. Furthermore, the use of such terms as "looney bin" is only perpetuating the injustice. Stigmas are cruel, stupid and dangerous to your mental well-being, and to that of the nation.

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