

FLY AWAY HOME

by "SUNDOWNER"

I CAN never decide what means most to me after a long holiday—the changes in my animals and trees or the challenge of the weeds. I am still child enough—childish enough if anyone prefers it that way—to be excited over the chickens that have become hens, the lambs that have become sheep, and the seedlings that have become rooted bushes or trees. But

SEPTEMBER 4 I am also lazy enough to have a sinking at the heart when I look at the orchard and garden. If I had not left such good neighbours behind me this time, the kind who do generous things

by stealth and are so difficult when you try to thank them that you never begin. I might be wondering now if it was worth while coming back. But the tasks that would have tried my spirit have been far more than half done. A few hours with the scythe (a tool I like), a few days with the spade (not so satisfying as the scythe, but easier to handle than the pen), and the rapidly warming sun will do the rest.

But it is not going to be so easy to recover the confidence—it was never affection—of our cows, sheep and fowls. I find it interesting, but not really comforting, that Tip, who has had less kind-



BELLA THE HIPPO

"There are uses in the East for the spare parts of a hippopotamus"

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confirmation of a widely held belief that the average New Zealander suffers from an appalling poverty of imagination in the use of his leisure hours. This is by no means indigenous to Hawera, which has a reputation, indeed, for being a step or two ahead of many places in the vigour of its community life. In a country which has legislated for leisure by shortening working hours and by making substantial provision at all stages of its educational programme for suggestion in the effective use of leisure the vital spark seems still to have eluded us. This more than anything else is the justification for a community centre, a place not just to rest or exercise, but to discover some of the sources of imaginative living.

In an admirable section in the *Hawera Social Survey* on "The Role of the Sociologist," H. C. D. Somerset describes a sociologist as "a person whose work is concerned with a scientific study of society." "The artist," he says, "while fully aware of the common relationships of mankind is always looking for the unique." Mr. Somerset inspired and developed New Zealand's most successful community centre. Better than anyone he will know that a community centre will come alive, not through science but through the creativeness of the artist.

The Hawera Community Centre will grow out of the uniqueness of the town and district. People, not figures, will be its foundation stones.

—O.J.

N.Z. LISTENER, OCTOBER 1, 1954.

me at once when I returned with an armful of hay. They have not read Virgil.

WE were looking at a big bush in Gayndah just breaking into bloom. "White hibiscus," a taxi-driver called out behind us, and went on without stopping.

We shouted our thanks and moved on, too, but in the opposite direction. "It's kind of him," Ng. SEPTEMBER 7 whispered, "but he's wrong. I know hibiscus."

"But these people must know it, too. We can't tell them the names of their own flowers."

There was another shout, and the taxi was behind us again.

"I am sorry," the voice said. "Not white hibiscus. White bohemian."

We thanked him a second time, and as soon as he was out of hearing Ng said: "There's no such plant. I suppose he means white baubinia."

I don't think he did. I don't think he knew. But I am sure he meant to be kind. It's a way they have in Queensland, and I wish we had the same way here.

* * *

WE were not told what it costs the Otahuhu publican to add the head and hoofs of a hippopotamus to his museum. That did not matter much. But I should like to know what the Chinese merchant gave for the hide. If it is true that the hide is to be cured and used as a rug, it would be interesting to know

SEPTEMBER 11 to what use the rug will be put—whether the owner will lie under it or on top of it, and what will happen to him if he rolls himself up in it. Unless Bella was as thin in the skin as she was weak in the back it will take a strong man to lift her hide, and many strong men to cure it. The usual thickness is an inch or more, and the usual future of a good hide is four or five hundred of the savage whips the Africans have known for ten thousand years.

There are, however, other uses in the East for the spare parts of a hippopotamus, as there are for the horn of a rhinoceros, and the antlers of our own red deer. The Superintendent of the London Zoo, in an appeal two or three years ago for the disappearing animals of the world, told a BBC audience that the horn of a rhinoceros was worth far more in some parts of the East than its total weight in gold, and that this frightful price on rhinoceros heads was one of the reasons for their decline in numbers. Everyone who has examined Eastern newspapers will have seen advertisements for tiger balms and other equally fantastic cures for debility: and most of us, of course, see those claims only that are made in English. But it is not necessary to go to Delhi, Singapore, or Hong Kong for these things. They are in our own newspapers every week, and no one would pay for the space they occupy unless someone else is paying for the trade they bring.

So I have my thoughts about Bella and her hide. Whether it becomes a rug or a cartload of siamboks it will be foolish not to shave it a little thinner, perverse not to soak it in grease till it becomes a little softer, and selfish not to ask when it arrives in the East whether its comfort should not be spread as widely as possible.

(To be continued)

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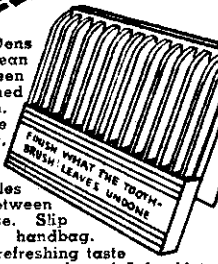
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