

HELP Tb. PATIENTS—

brighten their Christmas when you brighten your mail with

Tb. CHRISTMAS SEALS

OBTAINABLE FROM:
Chemists shops,
Booksellers,
Stationers and
General Stores
throughout
New Zealand.



ALL PROCEEDS TO YOUR Tb. ASSOCIATION

SHEPHERD'S CALENDAR

Dogs That Don't Bite

by "SUNDOWNER"

A CORRESPONDENT whose eyes are younger than mine, fresher, freer, more catholic, and more alert, has sent me a number of the *Wide World* magazine in which a contributor follows 2300 sheep and goats from a village near Marseilles to the "high alpine meadows within a stone's throw of Italy." It is a journey of approximately 200 miles, made in thirteen stages, and ending 8000 feet above sea level.

To escape traffic and heat most of the travelling is done by night, and if we forget the assistance given by the contributor himself and a photographer, the work is done by four men and six dogs, who are all footsore and very weary before they come to rest in the uplands. I, of course, knew nothing about this article when I referred in a recent note to the shepherds in *Don Quixote*, and I am slightly astonished to discover how little the life of a Mediterranean shepherd has changed in 400 years.

I suggested in that note, which arose out of something I had seen in a book on the evolution of the Merino, that 500 seemed to be too many sheep for one drover in the conditions in which Cervantes' shepherds must have lived and worked. But that is precisely the number the French shepherds follow today. They work in teams, as the author of the Merino book said the shepherds of Spain did centuries ago. And they travelled fifteen miles a day for a fortnight on end without dropping many sheep by the way. They lost no sheep at all, as far as I can judge, in the *Wide World* journey, but there was a truck for the transport of sheep which fell lame; and the young lambs were left behind. On the same journey a year earlier 50 sheep had been killed by lightning.

I WAS particularly interested in the dogs in the *Wide World* story, which are described by the author as "half sheep-dog and half wolf," but in the accompanying photographs look more like a cross between a sheep dog and a retriever. This, I imagine, could be a serviceable blend for dogs whose chief job is to keep sheep moving on dry, hot, steep roads. It would also be safer than the wolf mixture for guarding sheep by night. Wolves have not been a good foundation for dogs for ten thousand years and longer, and in any case, most of France's wolves today are in zoos. I suspect that the wolf cross in Europe is about as useful, and not quite as common, as the dingo cross in Australia. A few could be produced accidentally, and a few more experimentally, but the strain in both cases must soon disappear from animals

whose average life is ten years, or a little less.

It would appear, too, that the shepherds of France have about the same faith in tall stories as the shepherds of Australia and New Zealand, and the same luck in finding receptive ears.

NOVEMBER 13

Their dogs, they told our author, are taught to pinch but not to bite—to apply just enough pressure with their fangs to make the sheep obey, and they "must never break the skin." There is a fortune waiting at Addington for the first man to import one of them. But he should also, when he applies for his import licence, ask for authority to bring in one of the dogs that will "spend the whole day searching for a lost lamb and, when they find the wanderer, pin it down gently with their paws and then bark loudly to summon their master." Those lads, at least, came straight from Cervantes.

But noble though they are, and priceless—nine or ten thousand francs seems to be their value—French sheepdogs are not allowed the Australian and New Zealand privilege of mutton from the mob. While the shepherds devoured "rashers of home-cured bacon and great hunks of bread," the dogs were given a mess of polenta and "threw themselves ravenously on this thick yellow paste." I don't think we need further proof that the wolf has forgotten where he came from.

It is a long jump from the Alps to the mountains of Cumberland, and longer from Cervantes to Scott. But I had no sooner written my last note than the mailman brought me a *Countryman*, and as I always begin, once I have looked at the illustrations,



WALT WHITMAN

"If you could reduce the 'Leaves' to their elements you would see Sir Walter Scott unmistakably active at the roots"



CHOOSE A LAND AGENT

who is a

MEMBER OF THE REAL ESTATE INSTITUTE

An Institute recognized and protected by

Act of Parliament

Avail yourself of the knowledge, experience and integrity which are the requisites for membership of

THE REAL ESTATE INSTITUTE OF NEW ZEALAND (INC.)

"Look for the Crest—The Sign of Reliable Service"