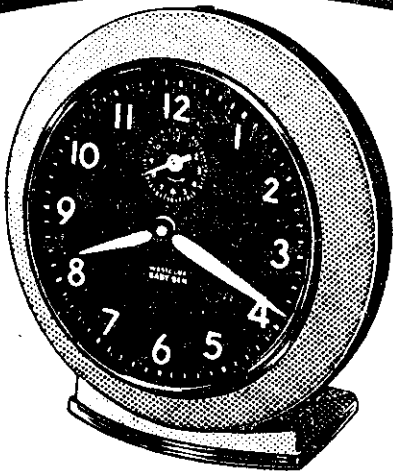


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SHEPHERD'S CALENDAR

Cowboys and Indians

by "SUNDOWNER"

BY the courtesy of a Cambridge correspondent I have been able this week to spend an hour or two every day looking at Brahman bulls. A Brahman is a Zebu, and a Zebu at home is the father of the hump-backed cattle of India; but even in the sacred writings of India there can be no more solemn words about bulls than I have found in these half-dozen

magazines from Texas. Fortunately for the Texans the penalty for ill-using their Brahmans is merely a loss of dollars. For killing a Zebu a Hindu "goes to Hell for three successive births," if I understand *The Markandeya Purana*. But the pains of Hell can follow much less serious neglect. Here are the words of Sumati "instructing" his father:

In the seventh birth preceding this, I was born in the Vaisya race. Formerly I obstructed the approach of kine to a reservoir. For that adverse action I was thrown into a dreadful hell, terrific with flames and abounding in iron-beaked birds; covered with mire of the streams of blood coming out from bodies crushed by instruments of torture and filled with the cries of sinners dropping down sundered. Thrown there and oppressed by powerful heat and thirst and burning, I remained a hundred years and more.

I can find nothing like that in *The American Brahman*, produced in Houston, or in *The Zebu Journal* and *American*

Breeds, both from San Antonio. But I know more about Brahman now than I was able to discover by merely gazing at the live animals in Queensland, and if I were a cattle-farmer in the tick-infested tropics I should certainly consider injecting a little Brahman blood into my Shorthorns and Herefords. Better still, I think, would be mixing the blood of polled Brahman, which Texas is now breeding, with polled Angus and polled Shorthorn. But I am not sure that I could rise to the American names for the crossbreds: Brangus (for Brahman and Angus), Braford (for Brahman and Hereford), Brahorn (for Brahman and Shorthorn). Those are honest names which I could perhaps persuade myself to accept if the crossing never went further; but what would a Brangus-Braford cross be called, or a Braford-Brahorn? The fashion is too dangerous for New Zealand. Although Brahman crosses will not worry us for a generation or two yet, we could easily catch the infection in the sheepyards and start selling Mercolns, Mercesters, Ryedowns, Merneys and Corfolks.

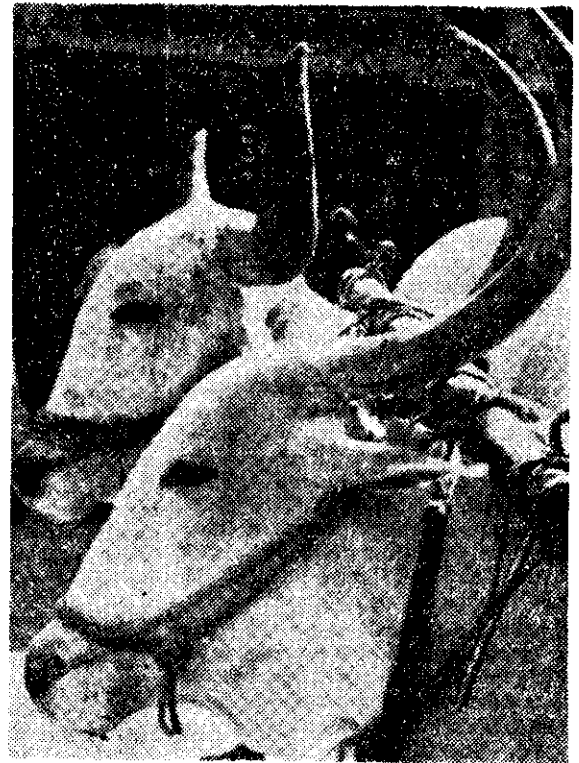
* * *

FOR the first time today I saw two warblers feeding an absurdly oversized cuckoo. They were just outside my window, first on a kowhai and then on a

silver wattle, and although the cuckoo was careful not to expose itself too freely,

I was able to watch the performance for several minutes. I think moths were the chief item in the meal, to which both warblers seemed to contribute; but it was more difficult to keep the little parents under observation than the big baby. When all three moved on, the cuckoo started off strongly to

FEBRUARY 11



ZEBUS AT HOME

the west, but turned quickly when the warblers went east and followed them into a row of quince trees.

* * *

I WAS pleased this week to receive a re-directed Christmas card from the founder of *The Countryman*, J. W. Robertson Scott, now in his 89th year. Age itself is an achievement, even when it is 70 per cent. the gift of healthy parents. Unless we show

FEBRUARY 13 some wisdom ourselves, and much moderation, our inheritance is likely to disappear. But Robertson Scott is one of that small, very small, band who not only keep alive but keep graciously and usefully alive long after they have passed their statistical limit. I have two correspondents in New Zealand who are over 90, both very much alive mentally. One of them writes about Montaigne to me, and Whitman, and Oliver Wendell Holmes, and the other, when I called on him last year, was reading the morning paper without glasses. I have never met, or seen, Winston Churchill and Bertrand Russell, and do not therefore know what age has done to them physically. Cameras can, and do, lie if we give them the necessary assistance; and it is quite possible that both these men would shock us if we met them face to face. The great

N.Z. LISTENER, MARCH 11, 1955.