

if a carver  
could palaver  
it would say



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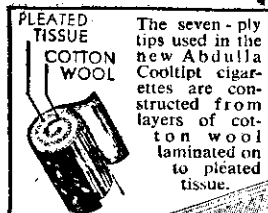
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## SHEPHERD'S CALENDAR

# A Gift from China

by "SUNDOWNER"

IF the O.E.D. would pass the expression—it will in a year or two—I would say that a New Plymouth reader has put me on the spot by presenting me with a young tree that I will have to live 50 years to see in its full glory; 20 years to sit under; and 10 to see, through a glass darkly, what it will one day become. But I can take that joke.

AUGUST 10

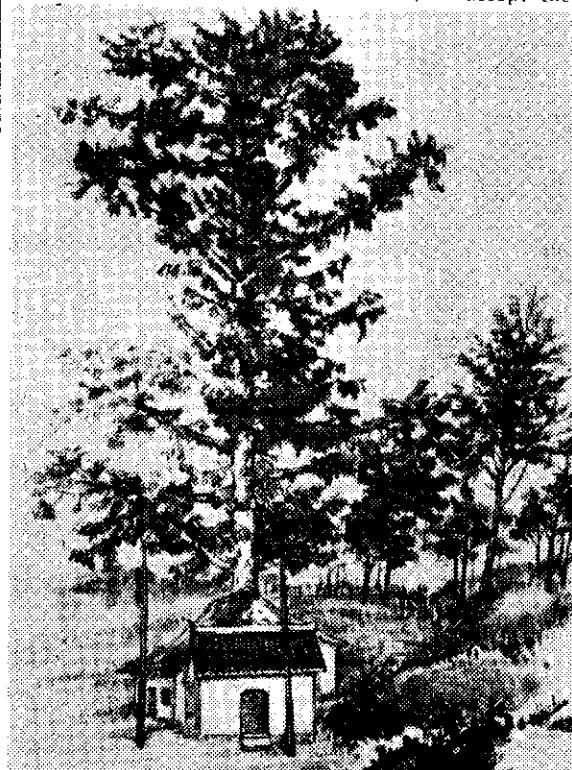
I accept the gift in the spirit in which it was made—I think that is the proper acknowledgment—grinning back if the sender grinned when he posted it, thinking seriously of my weight and my appetite if his purpose was to call me to plainer thinking; but in any case gratefully. Although trees grow too slowly for most of us, and live too long, only the rocks remind us less frequently of our mortality. I am informed, too, that this particular tree—*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*—was,

Tung to convert a landlord into a non-obstructionist.

AFTER trimming 500 hoofs during the last two days, and about the same number a few days earlier, I hardly know which surprises me most: the efficiency of a sheep's foot when it is healthy or its weakness when things go wrong. This has been a good year for feet in Canterbury, and only a small percentage of the thousand I have just examined and trimmed had anything seriously wrong. But when disease was present it had usually eaten away and deformed the whole hoof, so that the sheep, instead of walking firmly on two pads, was walking on one or none, walking on its heel with its toe turned up and back, or limping about on a shell full of putrefaction. I accept the pronouncement of experts that these conditions are avoidable, and curable when they have not advanced too far. But what farmer does avoid them if he is a buyer as well as a breeder? What farmer has facilities for dealing with them as thoroughly as eradication demands?

AUGUST 12

I have never seen a wild sheep with footrot, or a wild goat or deer, though I hesitate to say that it never happens. I think it would happen if wild sheep or deer used a muddy track recently infected by a badly diseased mob of domestic sheep, and kept on using it. To be safe goats and deer would have to walk on one toe, like a horse, and then they would often fall and break their necks, get bogged, or die lingering deaths with a foot caught in roots or creepers. As long as they walk on two toes sheep will get inflammations between the toes and bacterial invasions, but it is the cloven hoof that gives them safety on steep faces and eases the burden of climbing and descending. It is not an accident that the Devil always has two toes like a goat, never one like a donkey.



*METASEQUOIA GLYPTOSTROBOIDES*

"Something from China that should lengthen my life by as long as it takes Mao Tse Tung to convert a landlord"

10 years ago, known only as a fossil. In 1948, however, one of those expeditions that only fanatics join and rich men can pay for found living specimens in a remote province in China. And here already one is growing (I hope) half a chain from my front door.

Well, we owe a lot to China—tea, silk, chopsticks, washed brains, and the stupendous folly and iniquity of the Great Wall. We owe Chiang and Chou en Lai, crackers, Confucius, dragons and rhododendrons, and more births and deaths every hour than any other country has ever recorded. It stimulates me that now I personally, though six hundred millions stood nearer at hand, have been given something else from China that should, and perhaps will, lengthen my life by as long as it takes Mao Tse

descending. It is not an accident that the Devil always has two toes like a goat, never one like a donkey.

WE were watching Elsie where I had just tied her in the garden to keep her under observation after an attack of what is wrongly called milk fever. Somehow or other we started to argue.

"I am sick of your persistent refusal to be serious."

AUGUST 15 "Why should I be serious?"

"Because life is serious."

"Who said so? Longfellow, of course, but who else?"

"All the wise men for two thousand years."

(continued on next page)

N.Z. LISTENER, SEPTEMBER 7, 1956.