

# Gents and Esquires

by "SUNDOWNER"

I WAS not sure, two or three weeks ago, whether the law recognises esquires in New Zealand, or regards them all as impostors and pretenders.

Now one of them has told me. "By your leave," he writes, "there are esquires in New Zealand.

In particular, barristers are esquires.

And he showed he was by right esquire—Wigs are white in the wan water.

(Quoted memoriter from a ballad in Sir Frederick Pollock's *Leading Cases in Verse*.)

Just as solicitors are in law gentlemen: I imagine the old description, 'A.B., gent., one of the solicitors of the Supreme Court,' must have persisted in New South Wales, to judge from the Bulletin's 'Gent. One.' I have read that when Sir George Grey was decorated he selected two Maori chiefs to be his esquires. They were Waka Nene and Te Puni. And I suppose all our C.B.Ees., O.B.Ees., M.B.Ees., and C.M.Gees. are like wise esquires. I admit that the popular free use of the term is debasing."

AFTER yesterday's note, if I were wise, I would lie low. But the wise and prudent die in their sins. It is safer to remain a babe and suckling. Now that I know where the esquires

are, I will adjust my

MARCH 2 sights, reluctant though I am to add C.B.Ees.,

O.B.Ees., M.B.Ees., and C.M.Gees. to my target. But if I did not know the kind of quadruped the law is, I might be anxious.

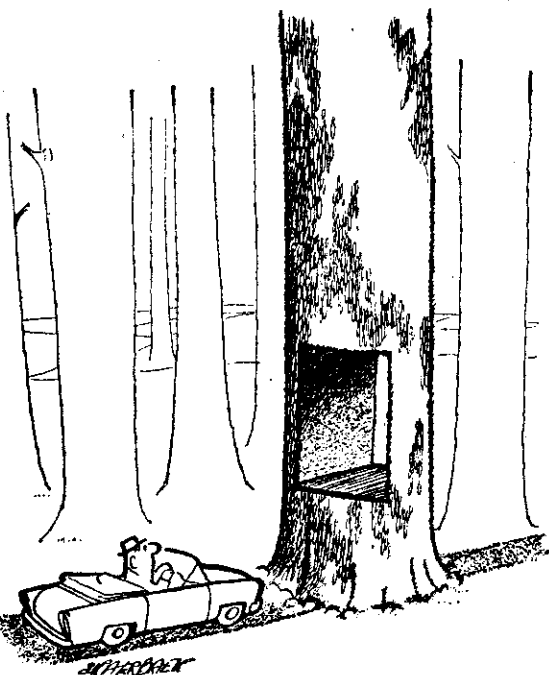
However, I am strengthened by a second letter from the son of a judge who regrets my restraint. He would abolish misters as well as esquires and strip us down to Tom Jones and Bill Smith. So would I, if I could, though I am happy to shoot one humbug at a time. I realise, too, that if they were all dead already these would be leaner days for wits. This is how my first correspondent ended his note:

And now I must do an envelope—a kittle task. Seeing that you are not a regular employer of labour you cannot with accuracy be addressed as "Master," or abbreviated as "Mr." I do not wish to be freakish and hold you out to the Post Office as "Yeoman ———." My only course seems to be to treat you as one of the Really Great, and put you into the same class as Oliver Cromwell, Julius Caesar, Judas Iscariot . . . to whose names, by general consent, neither prefix nor suffix is affixed. Do you recall

Charles Lamb's explanation of this sort of thing: Lamb, Charles Lamb, Mr Lamb, C. Lamb Esq., Sir Charles Lamb, Sir Charles Lamb, Bart., Baron Lamb, Viscount Lamb, King Lamb, Emperor Lamb, Pope Lamb (above whom is none higher but the Lamb of God)?

THOUGH there are pleasanter places in New Zealand than Addington on a rainy day, there are not many places where rain and mud are accepted with a better grace. In autumn especially, when many Canterbury farms are producing only thistles and fathen, rain on the roof at night is a

MARCH 5 stimulus instead of a drug, and fills Addington next day with reckless buyers. But I am allergic to mud at any season, and when my boots stick to the bricks in the yards or sink in the unpaved lanes I know that I will buy no sheep that day. I will loiter about listening to my



(C) Punch

(To be continued)

buoyant neighbours shouting "Yes" to the most fantastic suggestions from the auctioneers and rejoicing in the knowledge that they are fools. But it is wisdom, too. It is a succession of little mistakes warding off one big mistake—going home with nothing and knowing that the market next week will be no easier.

I am, of course, thinking about raw mud—the mud of Passchendale, not the mud of Timbuctu. Baked mud can be anything from a Kaffir hut to a palace. Even in New Zealand, where the sun is seldom very strong and the winds seldom very dry, there are mud huts here and there that have stood for a hundred years and are still habitable. But in the world's really dry areas it is mud heated in a hurry, caught with the water in it and not allowed to crumble, that has made civilisation possible. I have never lived in a mud city, and never, for more than a week or two at a time, in a mud hut. Bugs drove musterers and shearers out of the mud huts of Central Otago, and I refuse to allow my mind to dwell on the possibilities in clusters of huts numerous enough to hold people in thousands. One of my first sights in Africa—it is still clear after 55 years—

was a naked Kaffir sitting on an ant-hill delousing a dirty blanket. If I were asked to choose between wet mud and dry I should wish to know first where the dry mud was and what had been done to make it safe for democracy. But without it thousands, and probably millions of human beings would find it impossible, at their present stage of development, to live in vast areas of Africa and Asia, and even America. Though it is a long way from the two or three acres of Addington to the ten square miles of Omdurman I thought last week that the mood of both depends on mud, and in many ways their economy, too. . . And now for another attempt to buy a few old ewes at a price that will not ruin me if they die and make a fool of me if they live.

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## YOUNG FARMERS' LEADERSHIP CONTEST FINAL



AS we go to press, the annual Young Farmers' Radio Leadership Contest is in full swing, with area finals in North Auckland on March 19, South Auckland and Otago - Southland on March 20, and Canterbury on March 21. The Dominion final will be broadcast by YA and YZ stations at 6.55 p.m. on Tuesday, April 2. For this the judges this year (left) will be Bernard Beeby, Supervisor of Productions, NZBS; Sir Matthew Oram, Speaker of the House of Representatives; and E. G. Griffiths, agricultural advisory officer to the United Kingdom High Commissioner.

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