

SEVENTY YEARS ON

"YES," he said, when I told him that he was looking well for seventy, "I'm as good as I've ever been."

"When did you start wearing glasses?"

"Oh, I've had those for about 20 years."

"How is your hearing?"

"Not bad. Not bad at all. I can't hear the telephone very well, but I don't have much trouble when people are speaking to me."

"Could you run a 100 yards?"

"I might, if the doctor would let me. But he has told me not to run or do anything in a hurry."

"You still dig that nice garden, I suppose?"

"No, that's another thing the doctor told me to cut out. My boys do it now."

"You still eat two chops for breakfast?"

"I could, but I don't. It's hard work eating chops with artificial teeth, and chops are not what they used to be. It's these Romney sheep."

"Oh, well, I suppose you can still eat one?"

"No, I've cut them out altogether. I take porridge now, and a slice of toast."

"An egg, of course?"

"No, I've cut out eggs, too. The doctor says I'm too heavy."

"How heavy are you?"

"Thirteen stone six when I weighed last week."

"That's not bad for your height."

"That's what I say. But the doctor says it's too much. He wants me to get rid of another 12 pounds. I have to cut out puddings and cakes."

"Will you do it?"

"I've told him I will, so I suppose I'll have to. He says I must if I'm to get my blood pressure down."

"Oh, you have blood pressure?"

"Yes, so I'm told. I suppose doctors know. But I don't feel it myself."

"Do stairs worry you?"

"Oh, yes, a little. But we've moved into a single storey house. It's on the

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flat, and I've no climbing to do at all now."

"You find that a relief, I suppose?"

"A great relief. I used to sit reading late because I hated the stairs. One night I fell asleep in the armchair and stayed there till morning."

"But you're still as good as you used to be in other ways."

"Every bit as good."

"You don't eat so much?"

"No."

"Or dig?"

"No."

"Or climb the hill or the stairs?"

"The doctor won't let me."

"If he did would you?"

"I don't suppose I would."

"Or tear after a sheep in the yards?"

"No, I wouldn't do that now."

"Or lift a coil of wire out of the boot of your car?"

"No, I would leave that for the boy."

"And you wouldn't paint your roof?"

"I couldn't. I get giddy if I go up a ladder."

"And breathless if you dig?"

"Yes, a little breathless. That's why the doctor stopped me."

"And why he advised you to leave your big house?"

"Yes, that's what he said."

"He didn't tell you that you were as good as ever you were?"

"Doctors are not always right."

"Did you tell him?"

"Yes, I said something like that, but he took no notice."

"What did he say?"

"I don't think he said anything."

"Just examined you."

"He certainly examined me. Kept me half an hour stripped to the waist. Then he threw a thruppenny bit on the floor and asked me to pick it up standing."

"Could you?"

"No. See if you can. There!"

"No. I'm not going to try. I'm not as good as ever. I'm only as good as most men are at my age—good except for my eyes and my ears and my teeth

and my taste and my digestion and my weight and my leg muscles and my arteries and my head."

* * *

BECAUSE several other dogs, including three bitches, live within a quarter of a mile of his kennel, my dog wanders if I leave him too long off the chain. He stays at home if I stay near him, or let him see me occasionally, or hear my voice; but he can't resist loneliness, and boredom, and temptation simultaneously. In that

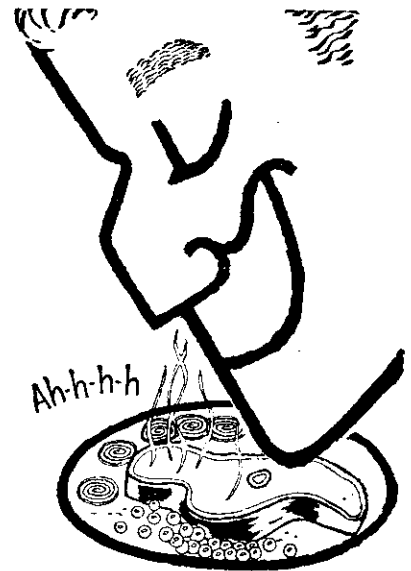
JUNE 13

he is very human. But humans can be reasoned with. They can be threatened. They can be told what will happen to them if they disobey, and some of them can be persuaded in advance not to take the risk. Dogs can't be told anything in advance. They can be disciplined if they are caught in sin, but not before or after the sin.

It is true that they often are punished after they have committed an offence; hours afterwards, and in the worst cases days afterwards. It is quite common for a shepherd to beat a dog tomorrow for something it did yesterday, and when I was a boy that was routine practice. The commonest offences were unauthorised hunting and forbidden courting, and in both cases the culprit often stayed away all day and returned during the night. Sometimes, therefore, it was a whole day before he was discovered, and in extreme cases—during mustering, for example—it could be two or three days; but no shepherd known to me then let the dog escape punishment. He had no conscience about the beatings he gave, but he would have been deeply ashamed of himself if he had allowed a dog to commit a crime and go free.

There has been a steady, but not a spectacular, advance in sanity and sensitiveness during the last 50 years, but I have not myself advanced to the stage of knowing what to do in such cases. To keep a dog all his free hours on a chain is almost as bad as kicking him for a reason that is no reason at all to him. I can get through such situations without raising my hand or my foot, but I do not always get through without raising my voice—and a senseless rebuke is not much better morally than a senseless blow.

(To be continued)



Ah-h-h-h

It's so good to

Breathe Again!

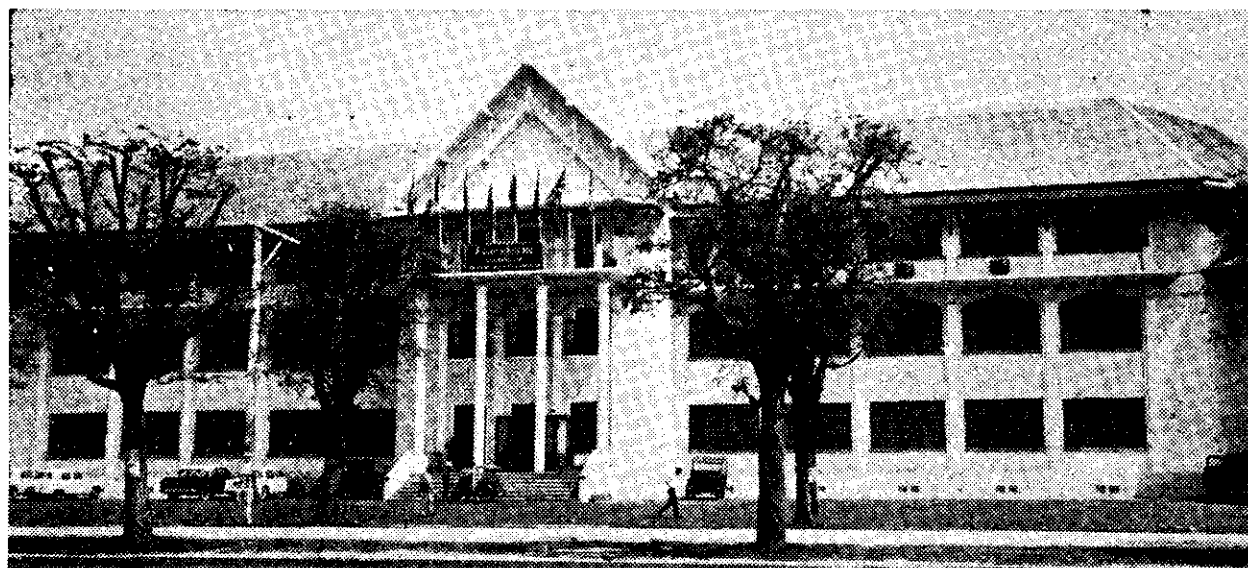
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JUST INHALE AND BREATHE!



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BANGKOK today has an international flavour, with headquarters for Seato (pictured above) and the UN Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East, and regional offices for other UN bodies. These organisations, and the New Zealand Embassy, have brought some 20 New Zealanders to Bangkok On Wednesday, July 10, in the National Women's Hour, Mrs Ann Lendrum, Mrs Valenska Dawson, Dr E. M. Ojala, and A. D. M. Curnow will discuss everyday life in that city.

N.Z. LISTENER, JULY 5, 1957.

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