

Is Thy Servant a Dog?

by "SUNDOWNER"

I WILL not say that I gloat as often as I see farmers attacked for cruelty to dogs, but if the attack is justified and succeeds I get a certain amount of unholy joy. I was therefore delighted when the headlines told me that a veterinary surgeon had fired both barrels in Dunedin at the owners of sheep dogs. Then I read the report and cooled down.

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Though the surgeon was right in general, I could not be sure that the farmers were wrong in this particular case, since I knew their defender to be above reproach himself. Now I feel like the man who jumps up in a tramcar to give an older man a seat and steps on the corns of an older man still.

But it is difficult to understand why dogs are so often treated shamefully by the people who are most indebted to them. It happens all over the world, but I think it happens more frequently in Australia and New Zealand than in other countries on the same civilisation level. I know that the situation is improving year by year, and I can't doubt that it will one day get into the heads of all farmers that the man who starves his dog to make it work is on the same level rationally as the woman who burns candles in her drawing-room to rest her eyes.

As far as I know we are now rid of the boundary dog, but we are not rid of the superstition that two feeds a week are all we dare give a dog in the busy season, that dogs like fleas, that they are not troubled by frost, or draughts, or filth, or loneliness, that they enjoy running on three legs, and that it is good practice when a dog runs away to turn the rest of the pack on him.



WORKING DOG

Still troubled by superstitions

A FEW mornings back, when the ground was white with frost, I saw a bumblebee flying vigorously among the tussocks. This morning I saw it again, within a few yards of the same spot, and think it likely that it has a nest in the locality.

But what are bumblebees searching for in July? Their story, as I have often read it, is suspended animation for the queen in winter and death before winter for all her associates and helpers. She does, I understand, emerge occasionally on a sunny day, but it is a mistaken awakening which, if it happened too often, would kill her, too. Is that all nonsense?

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If I were younger and more active and more curious I might give her a spot of white paint or a dusting with flour and try to follow her home. I don't think it would be a long journey or, if she crossed no gullies, impossibly fast; but if I did find the nest I could satisfy my curiosity only by digging it out, which might be difficult, and would certainly be repugnant. So I shall do nothing but keep my eyes and ears open for her next appearance.

But my ignorance worries me. I find myself wondering whether it is just a fairy tale that every colony of bumblebees is reduced to one each year and started again when the sun gathers strength. If that really happens it must be a myth that bumblebees are necessary for the fertilisation of red clover. There can never have been enough bees in any district in New Zealand to fertilise all, or nearly all, or any considerable section of the heads of clover growing there. Bumblebees must be one only, and not the most important, of the agents of fertilisation, which I suspect include wind, honey-bees, and perhaps butterflies, too; perhaps even white butterflies, which seem to visit every green thing that grows in summer and can hardly fail in their ceaseless hovering and darting and alighting and taking off to leave a trail of pollen behind them. However it is achieved the fertilisation of clover is too big a job for families of bees that die down to one impregnated widow every winter and never reach more than 100 or 200 individuals in summer.

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IF I lived near the British Museum I am sure I could find proof of a curious custom in the Middle Ages that cuts across everything we now think about dogs. I have read somewhere that boys were sometimes ordered to sleep in the kennels to keep their masters' hounds from feeling lonely. Who the boys were I can't recall, but the impression remaining with me is that they

were not the sons of serfs. Perhaps they were page boys, apprenticed knights or squires, or hangers-on in some other order of chivalry who were required to give such proofs of their devotion to their masters—living applications of the love-me-love-my-dog argument. The dogs would certainly be hunting dogs, hounds kept by the master for the chase, and allowed more liberty and privileges than his most faithful human servants regarded as sub-human. (I hate to think that these were ever loyal, but am afraid that they sometimes would be, most of us turning to worms when we are treated as worms.)

What makes me think that these kennel boys were not serfs is the fact that the masters would be unlikely to leave their hounds in such coarse company. But I wish I could remember where I read about this custom, and how long it lasted.

P.S.: After much searching I have found a footnote in a history of the Middle Ages which, though it is not what I am looking for, goes some distance in that direction. It is attributed to a book called *Master of Game*, of which I can find out nothing except that it was written by a Duke of York. Without extending my tongue too far into my cheek I commend what follows to the attention of shepherds and farmers:

I will teach the child to lead out the hounds to scombre twice in the day, in the morning and in the evening, so that the sun be up, especially in the winter. Then should he let them run and play long in a meadow in the sun, and then comb every hound after the other, and wipe them with a great wisp of straw, and this he shall do every morning. And then he shall lead them into some fair place where tender grass grows as corn and other things, that therewith they may feed themselves as it is medicine for them. Thus, since the boy's heart and his business be with the hounds, the hounds themselves will become goodly and kindly and clean, glad and joyful and playful, and goodly to all manner of folks save to the wild beasts, to whom they should be fierce, eager and spiteful.

(To be continued)

AUCKLAND'S BEST-SELLER

IT'S quite a publishing event, really.

Definitely best-seller class for New Zealand—128,000 isn't bad for one printing, with another eight and a half thousand people anxious to get it. It's a book crammed with good hard fact, and it weighs 1 lb. 9½ oz. True, it costs £16, but they give you a free telephone with every copy: it's the new Auckland Telephone Directory.

The 60,000 characters are tastefully laid end to end in alphabetical order. Thus, if you wish to ring up a Mr Abbot, or Abbatoirs, Manager only, you will consult the beginning of the book. Whereas the Zoological Park is, actually, under Z. (Not that it's always easy as this—the editor can give you a good run for your number: Auckland City Council says—see *under City*. A bit hard on some 15 Borough and County Councils listed *under Councils*.)

The editor—who can be the editor? He doesn't give himself a by-line anywhere. Mr Shand, I understand, is Postmaster-General. *Ex officio*, he must be editor-in-chief of this great work, and he is to be thanked for much additional information. For instance, there are 35 exchanges in the Auckland district. You can ring them all up for a few odd pence, the farther the more. But just suppose you don't like telephones. Suppose that not being an Auckland,

where they are apparently born with six fingers to manipulate the six-figure numbers, you are frankly perplexed by Mr Bell's ingenious invention, or have run out of pennies—why, the editor-in-chief gives you a sporting alternative. You can write to any of the 35 districts, he tells you, for a flat rate of threepence sealed, tuppence flap-happy. This is on page 429. Nowhere, in fact, is anyone exhorted to Ring up More, or Use That Phone. And from a careful check of the 60,000 entries I have come to the conclusion that all wrong numbers are listed under the correct names.

Six-figure numbers I mentioned. Trust Auckland to be one ahead of the rest of us. But restrained little Mataura in the far south comes in first in the Zs. Auckland's grand finale is a mere Zwanzenburg: Mataura ran to Zwymfer.

Somebody complained about the telephone book that there were a darned lot of characters but no plot. But Auckland weaves a subtle thread of poetry into the top-of-page synopsis. Why, you could pick your baby's name from them: Foodstuffs - Forster, Fabian - Farmers, Cake-Camp, Brewer-British, Anzac-Armstrong. Then there's Regal-Remuera, Robb-Robertson. Yes, of course, and Smith-Smith, Smith-Smith; not to mention Piper-Police, Police-Potter, Hooley-Hospital and Humphrey-Hustler. Oh, in-



In "Book Shop" the other evening Denis Glover reviewed Auckland's new telephone directory. For bibliophiles who missed the review, or heard only part of it, or just want it again, here is the text

deed, they are good reading in themselves, once you sort them out from the advertisements that all the telephone books print only at the top of the page.

And there's fiction in it, too. Some of the names are obviously fictitious,

bearing no resemblance to any living person. Ring them up and find out for yourself. Some of them even insist on going in bold type, which costs more, but is a pardonable vanity if your name is Ironside Sugarcrafts.

Glad to see the aristocracy well represented. There are only two Barons, but there are 57 Knights, one of whom lives at Three Kings. Among the *hoi polloi* the score is Smiths 329, for Joneses 196 all out.

Oh you lucky Aucklanders! Any one of you can have 59,999 Phone friends, not counting the Late Additions who are no longer printed on Neophytic Pink. None of you need ever be lonely again. But, mark you, you can't transmit musical items over the phone, and unless your name is Count von Luckner you're not encouraged to tear the book in half, though lesser people do attempt this feat, one page at a time, in the public phone boxes.

Everyone with £16 or over is in this book, the goodies as well as the phonies. This present edition is not yet a collector's piece (though I bet Vol. 1, No. 1, of the Directory is), but it will be well and thoughtfully thumbed.

One suggestion to Mr Shand. It is not always easy to remember the owner's name, so I think it would be a good idea if our racehorses could be listed alphabetically. And this, of course, should be in a section right at the front.