



## Henri Wintermans

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## SHEPHERD'S CALENDAR

# Shots in the Arm

by "SUNDOWNER"

WAITING for cows to calve is like line-fishing in deep water: you never know what you are going to see. But you are in the wrong job if you don't care. You should be making bridges or bicycles or wheelbarrows or lawnmowers. Though it was not foreseen that our three cows would all

**OCTOBER 23** calve in the same week—the gestation table spread the arrivals over three week—and though Elsie refuses this year to take Betty's calf as well as her own, life is already more exciting as well as more laborious. Calves, lambs and chickens—we have no other periodical arrivals—are shots in my arm; stimulants as well as tranquillisers; reminders that nature still knows her job if I don't always know mine; flowers in a crannied wall that I can neither explain nor understand, but accept when they appear as proofs that life is something and not nothing.

But Jim was right when he warned me that I would not persuade Elsie to take a second calf unless I removed the first calf. When she took Betty's calf last year it was a month old, and her own already three months old. She took it in desperation: because it pursued her, pestered her, confused her, sneaked in as often as the big calf began to drink, and for three days gave her no peace until she surrendered. So far I have been working on her for only two days, but she repudiates the second calf violently. Even when I tie her up and leg-rope her she conveys threats and undying hostility to the thief, as well as a look of wordless contempt for me. I persist only because she has far more milk than her own calf can drink and I am determined to avoid milking her myself. But if I had a gambler on the premises his money would not be placed on me. Nor would I, if I loved God, struggle so hard to mock Him.

\* \* \*

MOST of us have heard what we call circumstantial stories—all the evidence with all the witnesses—of underground mysteries revealed by water diviners. This one comes through a brother from a man I have known as long as I have known my brother

**OCTOBER 25** and believe with as little hesitation. It did happen, he firmly believes, and it was told, I as firmly believe, as it then came to me.

### Parking Metres

### GOING AWAY FOR CHRISTMAS?

*I WILL arise and go now  
To somewhere across the sea,  
And find me a tiny cabin  
Beneath a coconut tree,  
And live on fish and bananas,  
And wear clothes made of grass,  
And gaze with a cool, unenvied eye  
At all the ships that pass.*

*I'll go to some lonely atoll  
And take a perpetual lease,  
Where there ain't no Inland Revenue  
And a man can get some peace.  
And if anyone sends me a tax return  
I shall render it null and void,  
By describing my occupation  
In the words—self-unemployed. —R.G.P.*

Here it is. John was a farmer who was always listless and tired. At last he became so tired that he could not do his work, and his doctor, after hearing his story, told him to sell his farm and get out of his house before it killed him. He took the doctor's advice and recovered. Then the man who bought the farm sickened in the same way, and called in a water diviner, who reported that the house had been built on a danger spot but would be safe to live in if it was moved a few chains left or right.

The rest I don't know, since I simply listened without asking questions. But one fact dropped on the way was the good health throughout of John's wife.

Now I am not going to say that the story from beginning to end is nonsense. I will say only that it sounds to me like nonsense—that John's symptoms had another cause and that the water diviner deceived himself, too. I have never met a dishonest diviner, or one with scientific training. The half-dozen I have encountered personally have been neither arrogant nor mercenary: one in fact refused to "divine" for money, believing that it was wrong to sell a gift that came from God, and equally wrong to refuse its aid to those in need of it. But not one of them had the knowledge, the training, or the capacity to follow cause and effect through a complicated set of circumstances.

I have little doubt that John's diviner was in the same class; but as long as he lives, and although he is 77 now, I hope it will be for many more years, no one will persuade John that he was deceived; as no one for a long time yet will convince the considerable number of public bodies who employ diviners that it would be cheaper to make trial bores.

\* \* \*

I AM jealous of every man whose sheep may safely graze by running water. If the water is a river, and carries a name that I know, my jealousy can be pathological. I can refuse to pray for that man while he is living and for the repose of his soul when he is dead. In the meantime I torment my own soul with vain, stubborn, and selfish questionings. But I don't let him know.

I have never met the man who sent me this note yesterday:

*Fifty miles away we have a quiet place of trees and river, bush and rough grass, where we run our 100 sheep and enjoy our never-ending contest with gorse and possums, blackspot and couch grass, stragglers and inertia, broken fences, and warm afternoons.*

I may never meet him. If I do I will greet him as a brother, admire his (continued on next page)

N.Z. LISTENER, NOVEMBER 15, 1957.