

Old-fashioned Elsie

by "SUNDOWNER"

SINCE I have never told Elsie about Dr Read she is still old-fashioned about labour and birth. She has now had eleven calves and ten have been born behind my back. The eleventh was in fact her smartest performance and the most secretive. I could see that something was going to happen and

Jim, troubled no doubt by my rough grass, said to me years ago that the lawn makes the garden. Andy has decided that edges make it. Both are right. But my heart sinks when I consider where they are driving me.

WE have known for three years that Crummet has only one working teat and that if she presents us with twins we must take one away. In the past, with one exception, she has kept herself (and us) out of trouble. But this year she has shown no caution at all. I saw that the worst (as I thought it then) had happened when I went hastily through the flock yesterday morning,

but as I had to go to the city I decided to leave her alone for the day and remove the weaker lamb when I returned in the evening. Then there were three—all lying apart from her and from one another, all washed, but only two fed. Now we have what we were hoping to avoid—an addition of two to our absurd collection of pets.

And it will be luck if that is the end of the story. We are getting as many twins as singles, though our ewes were never flushed, and there is not one of the sixty-nine whose production of milk can be more than a few ounces daily. When I see the bulging udders on Jim's side of the road I wonder how my lambs survive; but so far only two have died. I suppose the milk of half-breds grazed on dry hills is more concentrated than the milk of Romneys running on lush grass, which must contain much water. Jim's lambs are bigger to begin with, grow faster, and play sooner than mine, whose play, when it begins, makes me think of the games played by underfed children in a slum. The surprise of course is that they play at all.

I HAD an unpleasant experience today, which, if this is to remain an honest calendar, must not be concealed.

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decided to watch, but she saw me watching and changed her ground. So I changed mine. I sat down on a bank behind an elm tree where I could see without being seen. When I had to return to the house Ng. took over my watch, but a visitor arrived, and Elsie was left to her own devices for about half an hour. It was sufficient. When I went back to my tree the calf, still wet and staggering but on its feet, was taking its first drink.

Elsie of course does not know that this dates her. She has never heard that the father of the calf should have been there with her to welcome it into this cold world, and she has in fact forgotten who the father is. I am afraid I can't change her now. But she may have heard, as I have, that Dr Read himself now dates.

ANDY, who will be eighty in a week or two, forgets his years when he looks at my garden. When he first came to stay with us he had to endure the sight: he had been ill, and was still too weak to use a spade. But my crooked rows and rough edges brought some superannuated ones, and I came back from a morning up the hill to find him

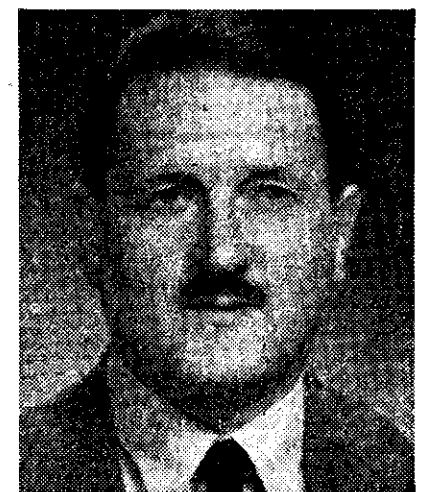
straightening an edge with a knotted line and a blunt spade. Now I have given up trying to restrain him. He has reduced lumps to crumbs and crumbs to powder; levelled surfaces that have never been levelled before; put plants in lines that a guard-man could not improve; and done things to my edges that make me wonder whose garden I am looking at when I get out in the mornings.

Distinguished Scholar

SIR RONALD SYME, New Zealand's most distinguished classical scholar, returned to New Zealand recently for a brief visit, and while he was in Auckland Cherry Raymond took the opportunity to prepare another *Portrait from Life*, to be heard in the National Women's Session from the YAs and YZs on Wednesday, October 21, and to be repeated later in the Sunday National Programme (on November 15).

Sir Ronald, who is Camden Professor of Ancient History at the University of Oxford, last year published his masterly and exhaustive two-volume study of Tacitus and this year was knighted in the British Birthday Honours.

Born in New Plymouth, he began studying at Victoria and was appointed lecturer in Classics at Auckland while still an undergraduate. He sat his final examinations as Acting-Professor. In 1925 he went with a post-graduate scholarship to Oriel College, Oxford, and four years later he became a Fellow of



Spencer Digby photograph

SIR RONALD SYME

Trinity, where he remained until 1949 when he went to his present position. He spent the war years first as Press Attaché at the British Embassy in Belgrade, then combined diplomatic and university activities in Turkey.

N.Z. LISTENER, OCTOBER 16, 1959.

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