

is not true. They remember longer than cows or sheep or cats or dogs, but longer is not forever.

Only humans are developed enough to feel sorrow before it comes, and foolish enough when it comes to cling to the memory of it for the rest of their lives. It is one of the payments we make for what we call our superiority, but it is as poor an exchange by happiness tests, as the payments we make to Mr Nordmeyer.

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It is not often that newspaper space is filled with such interesting matter as the tribute in the *Press* a few days ago by Emeritus-Professor Wall to Emeritus-Professor Evans. Many able,

wise, and important

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men die young. Very few see ninety, and

far more than half never see eighty. But here was a nonagenarian thanking a nonagenarian for sixty years of friendship and inspiration.

The dead man I never knew. The still living one I have known and admired for something like forty years, and I find it both stimulating and touching that his standards are what they have always been, his mind as clear and his voice as firm, and that what he remembers most vividly when he looks back are the days when literature met science on common ground in long and arduous expeditions into the back country. *

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I AM always suspicious of the man who knows any subject better than anyone else. But suspicion is sometimes misplaced. If it did not happen now and again that such people are right there would of course be no reformers, no revolutions, and no progress. But an occasional revolution is all we can assimilate. It would be an impossible

world if a Darwin

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appeared every year, a Newton every two

or three years, a Luther in every generation, and two or three Lenins every century. Fortunately we are in general too dull, too timid, too imitative, and too dishonest to let that happen.

But I renewed acquaintance with a farmer the other day, older than I am, and like me reduced to walking (and thinking) with a stick, who knew when we were both boys that all his neighbours were wrong, and knows it yet. Had I seen this nonsense in the newspapers about hydatids? No one would die of hydatids if he put dock leaves in the soup. He had done it all his life, had spent all his life among dogs, and here he was at eighty-two with no complaint but rheumatism. When I told him of a woman who warded off that trouble too by wearing a little bag of sulphur round her neck he was clearly interested, and as clearly disappointed: he had not only suffered unnecessarily but had lost fifty years of knowing better than the doctors.

From hydatids we wandered to footrot, and I was not surprised that he snorted at both bluestone and formalin. He had a special mixture of his own—no, he was not going to say what it was—that cured footrot in two days. Then

take erosion. There was no such thing as erosion unless you were born a fool (as most farmers, he assured me, were). All you had to do was to plough up and down, and when rain came it ran off quickly. It was following the contours that caused slips; trying to hold water on the land instead of getting rid of it as it fell. As for gorse, farmers were paying ten pounds an acre to have it sprayed by helicopter, when there was no need to spray at all. Pine trees would smother gorse in eight or ten years, and in another eight or ten yield a profitable crop of timber (if, I reminded him, they escaped fires, damage by stock, drought, and death from blights or borers).

"Of course there are risks," he answered. "There are risks in every-

thing. But what about the danger of sprays?"

Anyhow there was a safer remedy: common elderberry. Stock would not eat it, fire would not burn it, blight would not kill it. "Get a few well-rooted bushes in your patches of gorse and the birds will do the rest. But I don't think you grow it much in Canterbury."

"By Otago standards we don't, but you will see it if you look for it. I have a bush myself."

"In your garden, I suppose?"

"No, in the only patch of gorse I have not so far sprayed."

But he was not disturbed. My trouble, he said, was that I listened to experts. He never did. He used his head.

(To be continued)

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