

CLASS versus CATTLE

I CAME on this passage today in H. J. Massingham's rather dull *Wold Without End*:

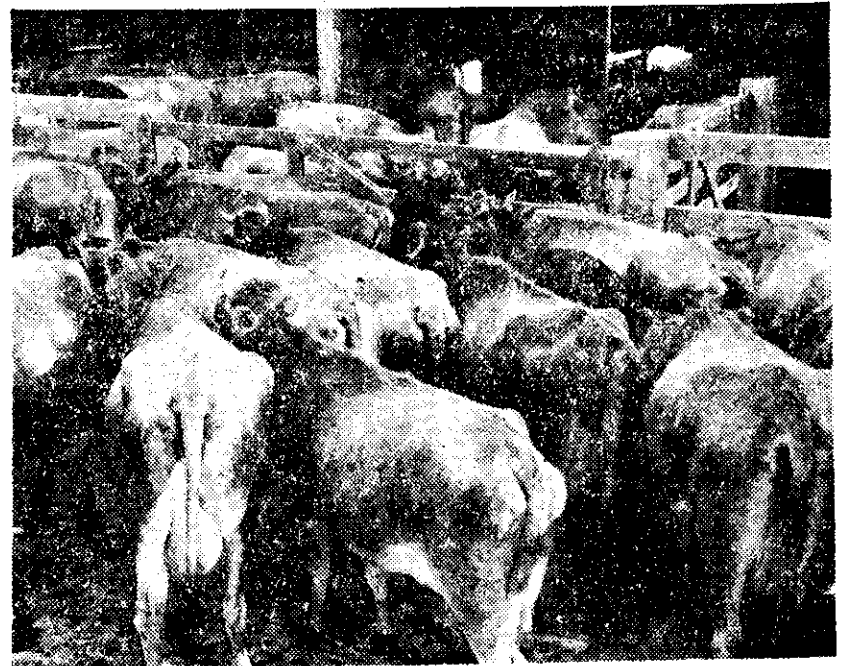
by "SUNDOWNER"

us. What worries us is knowing that others know that our badges of rank are bogus.

Once when I was a real sundowner, carrying my swag from station to station and taking care not to arrive too soon, I came with another gentleman of the road to Earnsclough homestead in Central Otago. It was early summer, but already very dry and hot, and when we asked for a shakedown and something to eat we were sent to the cookhouse, which happened to be in charge of a woman. She was a woman who understood the fitness of things. I was not often hungry on the road, but that night I was, and this class-conscious cook made us wait outside till every straggler on the station had come and gone. Then with contemptuous condescension she barked "In ya come," threw some boiled meat and cold potatoes at us and withdrew noisily from the room. I have been patronised since, and snubbed since, but never so plainly, rudely, or excusably as by that slatternly woman. It was, I realised even then, one of the few chances she would

We have never had anything quite as bad as that in New Zealand, but we have done our best in some parts of New Zealand—Canterbury and Hawke's

Bay especially—not to lose sight of class distinctions altogether. I think I suggested in an earlier note that it was sheep against cattle: class made a strong bid for survival but was trampled underfoot in the cowshed. Though the "Sir" acquired at some of our private schools lingers on in a few dark places—I hear it occasionally even in the pens at Addington—it is now an embarrassment to most of us rather than an offence, and would not even embarrass us if no one else heard it. Flattery does not worry



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"Class . . . was trampled underfoot in the cowshed"

have of looking down instead of looking up. The musterers despised the shepherds, the shepherds the rabbits and rouseabouts, and all in turn despised the cook; for cooks in those days were not the lordly tyrants they became later.

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is
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