

MAN'S DOMINION

by "SUNDOWNER"

I WOULD like to think that Eric Parker, editor of the Lonsdale Library, and for more than 20 years editor of the *Field*, did something useful when he suggested that one way of getting rid of spring traps would be to sit up all night in a district where traps are regularly used and describe precisely what has been heard. Here is a passage from an interview with him in the *Countryman*:

How are we to get public opinion so strong on the subject of the gin that even the farmers of the West Country, where rabbits do most harm, must give way? I have sometimes thought—indeed, were I younger, I would try the experiment myself—that if a writer could spend a night on a Devonshire farm where gins were set regularly and describe in print what he heard from dusk to dawn, the gin would be ended by law tomorrow.

Since Parker is now 81 he is free of the suspicion young men have of old men who engage in recruiting campaigns in war time. But I can't help feeling that he is a sentimentalist and not a realist. Every farmer who uses traps knows what goes on from dusk to dawn, and although sentiment is a stronger weapon in Britain than it is in New Zealand, it is not often strong enough to conquer self-interest. In any case, it is the farmers themselves who have to be turned against trapping to make it disappear, and this means that they have to find a better weapon or have it found for them. In the meantime, no writer will describe accurately what trapping means, in the *Field* or anywhere else, first because no writer can, and in the second place because a writer who could and did would be denounced by two readers in three for trading in and gloating over cruelty.

I HOPE it will not be supposed that I do not sympathise with Eric Parker's desire to let the public know what trapping means in animal agony. I know worse things about trapping than Parker does or is capable of imagining; but I have never seen mountains moved by faith without reinforcement by reason and self-interest. I go all the way with Parker as a sentimentalist, and a good deal further, since I could never write, edit, encourage, or enjoy some of the strange stuff he has passed through his hands for the *Field* and the Lonsdale Library; but I am not sure that I go as far as Professor James Ritchie, of the Natural History Department of the University of Edinburgh, who questions man's right to dominion over wild animals. Again I quote from an interview in the *Countryman*:

The legal relationship between man and animals is a curious one, for it would appear that in law man has an absolute dominion over the animals which he owns, and

has the same absolute dominion over wild animals as he has over domestic animals—subject to restrictions imposed on him by the law of trespass, game laws, wild birds protection laws, and the like. This is a point of view very different from that of the naturalist, who regards wild animals as having rights of their own, and indeed some prior claim over man to the territory which they occupy.

I mean that I can't go as far as that realistically. I support it all emotionally, but can't honestly say that I wish the killing of wild animals were legal murder, disturbing them legal trespass. I do wish that inflicting unnecessary pain on them could be regarded, always and everywhere, as legal cruelty, punishable in the same way as cruelty to human beings; but if the law is to go further than that, what we call civilisation will crumble in the hands of its protectors. These are deep and dangerous questions which no man can answer in the language of mercy and justice. They can be answered in the language of survival, and most easily in the language of religion. But I can think of no other answers—I mean, of course, just, logical, and humane answers—that would keep the human race alive for three generations.

ELSIE'S interest in her calf lasted 60 hours. It would, of course, revive again if the two were brought together; but hearing it occasionally, and I suppose smelling it, were not sufficient to keep her disturbed after two and a half days of isolation. The calf was never more than half a chain from her by one line of approach and a little over a chain by another. But she could not see it. Most of the time, too, a strong wind blew from her to the calf and never from the calf to her. Finally Andy has (for a calf) a high-pitched and (to human ears) a poor carrying voice.

I was, however, surprised that the separation was accomplished so easily

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National Publicity Studios photograph
BRANDING A CALF

"The legal relationship between man and animals is curious"

"Fred has fired his boss"

—said Uncle Chris.

"I met Fred Stone on Friday evening. Good chap Fred; solid, steady and not likely to blow his top for a trifle.

'I've had it,' he said, 'I resigned this afternoon.'

'What's the trouble?', I asked.

'Oh the boss; he's a slave driver and he's getting worse. Nothing's ever right; he's got half of them scared silly. He's the sort of employer who causes industrial trouble.'

'He may be. Employers haven't any mortgage on virtue. There are good and bad. But in New Zealand you can 'fire' your unsatisfactory employer and go and find a better one.'

'That's what I've done,' said Fred.

'Marvellous thing to be able to do,' I said. 'They can't do that in countries where the State runs the whole show. They have good and bad bosses too, no doubt, but employees can't change their jobs; can't bargain for better conditions or better wages. Short of mass revolt there's no way out.'

"One great virtue of the democratic system of Free Enterprise is that it is fluid and can be changed; in fact it is always changing. In this system employers and employees have one simple responsibility... to do a fair thing one by the other. Accomplish this and there's not a system in the world to touch Free Enterprise."

Inserted by the Associated Chambers of Commerce of New Zealand.