

Advice to the Rich Young Man

THE postman brought me this pleasant note this morning from a transplanted Englishman: "How strange that you should pick on docks as an illustration of the inscrutability of the ways of God! I remember when I was 14, before our family emigrated, how my old nurse used to apply dock leaves as a cure for the stings of nettles. She maintained that wherever you found stinging nettles there were docks close by. From this fact she adduced proof of God's infinite mercy. Even at that time I remember thinking that this might have been better manifested by the omission to create stinging nettles in the first place. But, like yourself, I have since realised the unprofitable nature of such speculations."

DECEMBER 27 I WOULD not have believed a few years ago that I would live long enough to hear a New Zealand Prime Minister talking about the rationing of bread. When there were hardly enough white men here to build roads and bridges the Maoris were sending wheat to Australia—and growing it in the North Island. Now we can't grow enough wheat in both islands to fill our own bread bins, and the Government can't think how to make us grow it. Thirty years ago it was my painful task to write an article every week or two pointing out that if New Zealand would not grow enough wheat for its own consumption the day might come when it would not be

able to buy enough for love or money. I found it a painful job because I was then, I thought, almost a free-trader. Week after week when I issued my wearisome warning I would be haunted by a secret fear that I was writing uneconomic nonsense; and at last I could not go on. But I could write the same articles today with both hands—breathe on them, blow on them, and send them in to every corner of New Zealand with a clear conscience. I could not, however, tell the Government how to persuade the farmer to grow the wheat. I could make out a case for compulsion that would be as simple, as clear, as just, and as unanswerable as the advice to the rich young man in the 19th chapter of the first Gospel; and it would be just as effective. I am not good enough to accept it myself, and not impudent enough to ask others to accept it. I am a selfish man, and conclude after long observation that farming breeds more sinners than saints. If lambs are more profitable than wheat, lambs and not wheat will fill our paddocks and our half empty heads. Vivant oves, cedant panes! To hell with the baker! The dough is in the lambs!

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N.P.S. photograph

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I was able to contribute a couple of examples from the Norse voyages. Somebody had given Olaf Trygvason a woman who, could run like a stag and wield a mean dagger. Olaf discreetly passed the lady on to Leif Erikson, who in his turn shipped her away with Karlsefni, an explorer. As soon as the latter hit America he put her ashore telling her to run about inland for a bit while the rest of the crew sat waiting with fingers crossed. However, she turned up again three days later untouched by the prudent natives.

Then there was Leif Erikson's own sister who, when beset by a horde of American natives, merely slapped her bared breast with a sword, and the formidable combination of symbols was enough to send the savages howling away in dismay. Men don't make passes at girls who wield cutlasses.

I wish that were all I had to tell about the theory. But one Saturday recently my feet were alongside Simmy's while I made notes on theory for the sex-determination of chickens. Suddenly his old head slapped back against the wall and I heard his heart keel over. His eyes were protruding towards the open doorway. Following the line of their horror I saw, swinging along to-

wards poor Jack Fraser's abandoned but a girl in purple slacks. She carried a rifle, was long in the legs and narrow in the hips.

"Majuba!" Simmy's breath broke free at last. His pipe had fallen out on to his open neck, singeing the grey hairs. His feet were panting distractedly. "No no, no," he began to wail, "not already not again, four times in a man's life oh, please, I'm just an old man, Simpson ain't got long to be here."

Gently I fanned him with a felt hat stuck full of fishing flies, and loosened the trousers around his ankles, while his voice went lachrymosing along. "Give me just a handful of years in the twilight of me age, for I couldn't abide to die wiv hydrangeas at me door."

He took ten days to disintegrate, hardy old man. Meantime, a lot of quiet activity went on around us. Waders, rods, biscuit tins, jemijohns, stoves and rolled bedding appeared in forlorn little heaps outside all the huts except Fraser's. Like lights going out one pair of feet after another disappeared from the windows. The evening sun would sometimes pick out darkly a hump of belongings surmounting a man as he rounded the river bend going westward, slowly.

Westward they went every one of them. I must drop a line to Roger Duff.

by "SUNDOWNER"

docks and our half empty heads. Vivant oves, cedant panes! To hell with the baker! The dough is in the lambs!

So it is for those with land that will fatten lambs. And the fate of those who can but won't grow wheat is as certainly in the bread bins of half a million housewives who will wake from their long sleep when bread costs half a crown a loaf.

WHEN I saw three horses today in one of Jim's paddocks I looked again to make sure that they were real. One was a hack and the other two half-draughts, and I am not sure that they felt real themselves. They certainly looked uneasy—a little embarrassed when they saw me

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getting over the fence and more than a little suspicious. But they behaved precisely as horses did before tractors made zoo exhibits of them.

First they lifted their heads and watched me, and when they saw that I was moving in their direction they all moved quietly to the farthest corner of the paddock and turned round to face me. Then they "obliged," as a lady gardener in a recent *Countryman* said about a passing elephant: a curious habit which I have not observed in horses unless they are free. A tethered horse obliges when he is stimulated instinctually. A free horse, when he is planning how to retain his freedom, obliges under another stimulus that I have never quite understood, unless thinking disturbs him inside. But it seldom fails; and when I see that sign I watch carefully for the next development, which is usually a move away into a safer position or a sudden break out of the corner into which I have been trying to drive him. For although horses are not intelligent they are cunning; although their heads are nearly all bone their brains are accurate recorders and good retainers of the few tricks they acquire from man. I have never been able to decide whether they have more or less intelligence than cows. They are better learners of the lessons of obedience—I am quite unable to teach Elsie the meaning of "Whoa!"—but they lose their heads more easily, stampede more often, and have almost no sense at all in bogs or on a long rope. Elsie threw herself the first day I tethered her, but she lay without panic until I freed her, and has never thrown herself since.

Perhaps I am beginning to forget what horses are like. A few years ago I thought it not impossible that we would one day send a horse to Parliament, and I would still give a trotter a chance if Addington were an electorate. But I don't think those horses in Jim's paddock were candidates. One of them had a perfect face for politics, and kept turning it my way from whichever side I approached; but in the end he ran away and left me. They were, I think, just strays—fugitives from work with Scottish ancestors who were looking for clover for Hogmanay.

(To be continued)

8 DAYS AND NIGHTS OF CARNIVAL

THE release of a flight of pigeons, and the re-enactment of the arrival by canoe of the first white women and children to the Manawatu will mark the opening of eight days and nights of carnival, organised to celebrate the 75th anniversary of Palmerston North and district.

On the Sunday, churches will hold special commemorative services. Gaiety and variety aptly describe the programme of events which opens on Saturday, March 15th, and closes with a Monster Fireworks Display on the following Saturday. "Old Identities' Day," "Children's Day," Athletic and Cycling meeting, Races at Awapuni, Musical Festival, Decorated and Illuminated Floats in one big parade, are but a few of the highlights being organised to celebrate three-quarters of a century of effort and development.

Next March will be the natural choice for those who wish to enjoy a holiday full of interest, fun and relaxation.

For accommodation security, intending visitors are strongly advised to write now to the Accommodation Bureau, P.O. Box 405, Palmerston North, indicating the grade of hotel—licensed or private—desired.

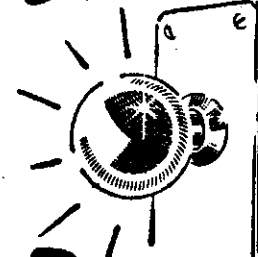
A limited number of the souvenir booklet "75" has been made available to the public at the nominal cost of one shilling.

Write to "75," care P.O. Box 325, Palmerston North, for a copy of this valuable piece of pictorial and letterpress information, which includes full details of the attractions and historical fixtures.

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