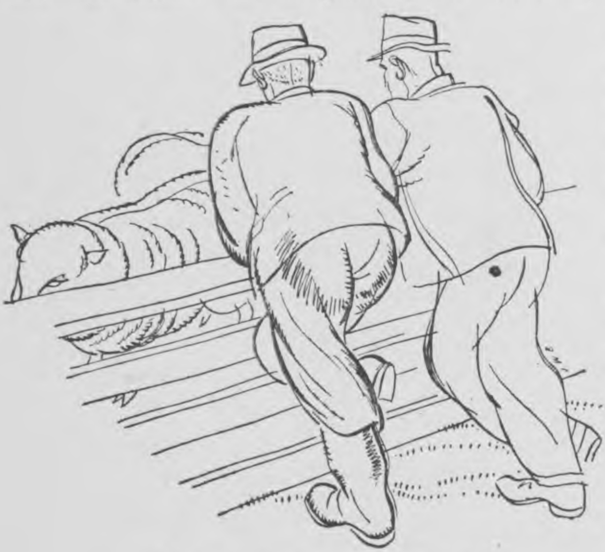
sleeks smoothly, quietly past. The line is only 50 yards away. Often there are trains ; nothing quiet about those fearsome engines—some of the cattle especially are disturbed.

Above it all is the sound of pigs continually squealing. Until the passing of the regulations prohibiting the sale to the public of pork, Levin each week had a very large yarding of pigs ; these days the numbers are much smaller. Butchers miss the business, but there is no squealing.

Six hundred fat sheep ; fifty fat cattle, forty dairy cows, fifty store cattle ; forty fat and store pigs ; and sundries. The yarding was small, below average, the day a *Korero* representative listened to the din and looked at the confusion. The prices, though, were excellent, the best of the season. Fat lambs, 35s. ; fat wethers, 41s. ; fat ewes, 34s. ; vealers and runners, £8 12s. 6d.; heifers and cows, £10 12s. 6d.; dairy cows, £14 ; heifers, £5 17s. Top prices, but the averages weren't much below.

Butchers made up most of the buyers ; farmers, of course, were calling, especially for the dairy cows ; but a farmer doesn't have to be a buyer to attend a stock sale. He doesn't have many other chances to meet his friends and neighbours, to discuss all the subjects affecting his livelihood. Values, of course, must be known in all their variations of sale to sale, of different districts, of changing seasons. To see for himself is much more satisfactory than a lifeless newspaper report of figures. So many of the farmers close round the pens are not buyers, but they are no less interested in those ewes and those "fine bodies of beef." And they'd probably tell you those auctioneers have to be known, watched for their tricks.



"Farmers close round the pens."

Tricks of trotting the bids—of taking a call that hasn't been made, so that a keen but innocent buyer will follow with another. Tricks of quick talk that cause a buyer to think he has raised a bid by a penny or threepence, only to find when he comes to square his account that it was a shilling, perhaps half a crown. Auctioneers' assistants often act as buying agents ; sometimes, too, they estimate what they think is the buyer's limit, trotting the bidding along with false calls. And sometimes it's not their bidding but their judgment that is false ; they are left with the final bid, often a fairly high price. There is no guarantee they will get their money back by putting their purchases under the hammer again. However, shrewdness is the virtue not only of auctioneers ; those farmers know more than a thing or two. And auctioneers know that if they get a bad name, a reputation for trotting, for tricks that sail closer into the wind than good business allows, they may as well put their own job under the hammer. They know it doesn't pay.

It's mud and filth and too much noise. You wonder at the vigour, the quickness, the rushing talk, the sallies of the auctioneer. You see the strain on his face towards the end of the day, you watch him laughing loudly, hands on hips, body swayed back. You're glad when you catch occasionally a quiet smile in place of that laughing ; it shows the man, not the agent