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A SIXTH SENSE.

Sir Ernest Shackleton's statement in his new book, "South," that during his march over the unnamed mountains and glaciers of South Georgia it seemed to him often that "the party was four, not three," has aroused great interest among students of the occult.

Describing the incident more fully to a "Daily Mail" reporter, Sir Ernest said it was noticeable throughout the expedition that at moments when everything seemed to be at its worst by some act of providence disaster was averted.

"Neither Worsley nor Crean" (his companions), said Sir Ernest, "is an imaginative man. But when Worsley said 'Boss, I had a curious feeling on the march that there was another person with us,' Crean added: 'It's the same with me.'"

"At times," added Sir Ernest, "the feeling was so strong with me that I would turn expecting to find a phantom person by my side, but actually I never saw a figure, nor did I hear a voice."

"Almost as uncanny was the moment when, roped together and marching along in darkness and fog, something inexplicable stayed my feet. We stood still, and a moment later the fog lifted, the moon came out, and there beneath us was a great gaping hole that would have swallowed a division."

"There were other times when this intangible feeling of impending danger came over me which I have not hitherto mentioned. For four days in our small boats we were racing before the gale towards Clarence Island. Against the usual course that would have prompted most seamen, I suddenly decided in the middle of the night to turn the boats on to the sea and wait. When dawn broke, rocks were directly ahead of our course, and had we not stopped when we did we should have been dashed to pieces."

"Perhaps," added Sir Ernest, "ten months' comradeship with death gives one a sixth sense."

GENERAL BIRDWOOD.

The executive recently wrote to General Sir William Birdwood in Australia inviting him to be the guest of the Association for one evening during his visit to Auckland.

In reply the General says: "I look forward to the possibility of going on to New Zealand from Australia and meeting so many of my old comrades of the New Zealand Forces, but at present no definite arrangements have been made. In any case, as I would be the guest of the New Zealand Government, the arrangements for my visit would be in their hands, and this fact would preclude me from making any private engagements in advance."

It was decided to forward General Birdwood's letter to the Minister for Defence and ask that an evening or part of an evening should be allotted to the Auckland Returned Soldiers' Association, so that the men who have served under the General might do him honour.

Agriculture.

Pasture Notes.

(BY E. BRUCE LEVY.)

ASSISTANT BIOLOGIST, WERAROA
STATE FARM.

GRASSING OF FERN LANDS.

Of the 33,300,000 acres in New Zealand available for agricultural and pastoral pursuits, 2,700,000 acres consists of fern and scrub. Certain of this area has been in fern for hundreds of years, but a large proportion represents country that has reverted to this vegetation after initial attempts at utilisation of the ground have failed. There are consequently two types of fern lands:—

(1) Natural fern lands.

(2) Induced fern lands.

The natural fern lands are those which have been in this vegetation for hundreds of years and are generally associated with Tutu.

The induced fern lands are of recent origin and comprise mainly those areas which previously carried forest—the reversion to fern following on as a result of "cheap" and inappropriate seeding of the burn, and subsequent poor farm management.

Fern will grow on almost every class of land—from the poorest to the very best—from extremely dry to fairly wet—the height varying from 1 foot to 8 feet according to the class of land. The fern covering thus serves as a very good index of the quality of the land and where fern is growing five or more feet of first class land is indicated and conversely the shorter and more stunted the fern growth the less fertile the soil.

The plant is generally looked upon as an indication of an acid soil, but it does exceedingly well on almost pure limestone formation.

The natural fern lands comprise some of the best lands in New Zealand, and these lands are really the easiest of lands to bring into profitable use from the natural vegetation. There are three main ways of dealing with natural fern lands:—

(1) Burning and surface sowing of seed.

(2) Burning and ploughing, etc.

(3) Crushing out by stock without burning or sowing.

The areas are fired in the autumn, and great care must be exercised to see that the fire does not carry over beyond the area intended to be burnt.

Late autumn (February-March) is advisable and really the later the better for the following reasons:—

(1) Rain is likely to fall soon after burning.

(2) Fern will not reappear until the following October so that the grass can become well established before stocking.

As soon as the area is burnt and while the ashes are yet warm the seed should be sown.

On land that can be ploughed surface sowing of seed should not be done—the area should be ploughed after the burn and a seed bed prepared.

It is advisable on such ploughable areas to adopt temporary pastures for the breaking in process until such time as the fern is killed out when a permanent pasture can be secured without fear of the fern again getting possession.

The crushing out of the fern by stock without burning, etc., is only possible where a run-off on to grass is provided, but this method is not recommended.

PLOUGHABLE FERN LANDS.

Burn as early in autumn as possible and get plough in straight away, or if the land is of such a nature that it soon gets hard, burn in late autumn and work up during winter and early spring. Reduce to a good seed bed and sow the following temporary pasture mixture (spring or autumn) according to season when ploughed:—

25lb Italian Ryegrass
6lb Red Clover

31lb per acre.

Stock when the fern is re-appearing and before it uncurs. If the seed is autumn sown one or two feedings off will be possible before October, but there must be a good growth left for feeding during October. This is essentially the secret of bringing in all classes of fern country and in each case the endeavour is to secure sufficient feed—October-February—so that stock may be kept on those

areas in sufficient numbers to eat or break off the young fronds as they appear through the ground, and if sufficient grass is not present, then it will not be possible to carry sufficient stock to cope with all the fern without the stock losing condition. Cattle beasts are better adapted for this work than sheep.

After the second temporary pasture the land should be ready for establishment of a permanent one, and the following mixture is recommended on good fern land—flat to undulating:—

15lb Cocksfoot
15lb Perennial Rye
4lb Crested Dogtail
3lb Timothy
4lb Red Clover
2lb White Clover

43lb per acre.

SOW IN AUTUMN.

On land that is too steep to plough a grass covering can only be obtained by surface sowing, seed immediately after burn (as late in autumn as possible).

According to type of country the constituents and quantity of each constituent will vary. On sloping country (too steep to plough), the following mixture is recommended:—

10lb Cocksfoot
8lb Perennial Rye
6lb Crested Dogtail
4lb Poa Pratensis
4lb Danthonia Pilosa
2lb Red Clover
2lb White Clover
2lb Lotus Hispidus.

38lbs per acre.

Some Italian Rye should be included in an early autumn (February) burn so as to cope with the immediately re-appearing fern—otherwise this constituent is best omitted from these permanent sowings.

On land of a steeper nature and of poorer quality the following mixture is recommended:—

6lb Cocksfoot
6lb Crested Dogtail
4lb Poa Pratensis
2lb Chewings Fescue
2lb Danthonia Pilosa
6lb Perennial Ryegrass
2lb White Clover
2lb Lotus Hispidus.

30lb per acre.

Again Italian Rye should be included for early autumn burns.

AMERICAN OIL PRICES.

PROFITTEERING ALLEGED.

An investigation of the Standard, Union, Shell and other large oil companies, against which complaints of profiteering have been made, has been started here by the Federal Government. The Government is represented by Mr C. C. Richards, special assistant to the Attorney-General, Mr Palmer, and he came to the Pacific Coast to look into the oil situation, and to see if there were any combinations in restraint of trade punishable under the Sherman law. Special agents of the Department of Justice will conduct the inquiry, and will endeavour to ascertain why the companies advanced prices from 2s 11d a barrel in some places to 7s 8d. A barrel contains 42½ gallons.

Mr Richards said: "There has been a withdrawal of 11 of the 22 steamers carrying passengers in the vicinity of Seattle. They have been compelled to cease operations on account of the increase in the price of oil. Passenger fares have been advanced, and the people are complaining. When the secretary of the navy advertised for 14,000,000 barrels of crude oil for the use of warships there was a number of bids, but the figures were all the same."

It is argued on behalf of the Seattle Chamber of Commerce that the prevailing price should be cut in two. A price of 3s 4d a barrel at Los Angeles would save the Pacific (government and private) more than £10,000,000 a year. True, it would take nearly £4,000,000 off the annual profits of the Standard Oil Company, but it would still have £5,000,000 left.

There is a strong feeling among oil men that the inquiry is likely to have been instituted by men with a bias against the oil industry. The most striking thing is the positive statement made by Mr

Richards that the existing shortage of oil in California is no excuse whatever for raising the price. It must mean, declared operators, that the Department is attempting by its own fiat to abolish the law of supply and demand. October statistics show that the State was short of market calls by 936,930 barrels.

Although the price has remained stationary for 18 months, the cost of production has been greatly enhanced. Labour unionism has invaded the fields and refineries; hours of labour have been cut from twelve to eight, thus necessitating three shifts instead of two, and wages have been raised until now drillers get a minimum of £1 19s for eight hours, while the lowest semi-skilled labourer receives a minimum of £1. The price of field and refinery supplies have gone up to an abnormal extent.

FASHION'S FANCIES.

AUTUMN MODELS.

(By "Brunette.")

In view of the fact that the new autumn models are being displayed a resume of the prevailing tendency will not be out of place. By the way there is more than one tendency, for this season's chapeaux are not confined to one particular type—there is apparently no end to the variety of shades and incidentally colours. Apropos of colours they occupy a prominent place both in regard to the trimming and the hat itself. Never have colours appeared to better advantage—every conceivable tint has been pressed into service. The result is very effective, especially if the shape is intended to be worn with a dark costume. That is probably the reason for fashion's departure. Hats in the past certainly possessed colour, but the present are—well—more daring or glaring! The sombre hues for which the war was responsible have given way to a riot of colour which reflects in a measure the temperament of the people. Bright cerises, greens, blues, yellows, etc., vie with each other for supremacy. It is, after all, a matter of individual taste and the choice rests with the wearer. The fact that the colours are occasionally (more often) contrasted lessens the difficulty of selection—so does the purse.

Turning to the question of shape, both the turned-up brim and its opposite enjoy equal favour. The former is very effective and has an indefinable "something" about it which can best be described as chic. A neat black chip (the turned up brim being well defined) looked tres bon on its pretty owner. Said hat was relieved by a touch of cerise on the edge.

After several years' seclusion the ever welcome beaver makes its reappearance and with a few exceptions has not altered much. The three-cornered style is in favour and these adorable little creations will be much sought after. Fortunately, or unfortunately, this shape does not lend itself readily to any or every face—it is rather exclusive—and on that account all the more desirable. Shortly after la guerre three-cornered velvets were the vogue but evidently beaver has superseded it. The opening of hostilities gave Madame Fashion inspiration, and military styles of the past and present decades have supplied the foundation for ideas not only in hats but also on coats, frocks, etc.

A close rival to the beaver will be the rough straws—shiny and otherwise—which will prove profitable investments, especially by the business girl who has to study economy. Of course there is no comparison between the beaver and the straw, both in regard to material and price, the former being the more expensive. On the other hand the beaver has its compensations for it is serviceable and attractive.

The millinery world, like everything else, presents a study in contrasts not only from the f. s. d. standpoint, but also from the trimming and materialistic. Cloth allied with velvet, velvet with crepe-de-chine, straw with silk, are typical of the craze for bizarre effects. What seem almost impossible combinations are delightful realities. As for the trimming—it is like profiteering—much in evidence. Bright button-hole stitching, for instance, is capable of transforming a dark hat and vice versa. A quill, feather, flower, rosette, anything in fact that will act as ornamentation or can be camouflaged as trimming is quite the thing. It is imperative however that the hat should have a suggestion of trimming—on this point Dame Fashion is adamant.

Another noticeable revival is a variety of the tam. The autumn modification is very smart, especially when it is presented in a combination of colours. It is a foregone conclusion that the indispensable tam will figure in the winter programme. It looks comfy cosy, and chic!

FOR SALE.

MODERN HOME of six rooms; ten minutes from P.O.; every up-to-date convenience; concrete verandah, paths, etc. Full ½-acre tastefully laid out in lawn and garden, etc. Owner leaving district. Price £925. Deposit £200.

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GLADSTONE.—Choice Home of six rooms; all modern conveniences; tile roof, washhouse, etc.; all under one roof; concrete paths; over ½-acre section. Price £1200. Deposit £400.

125 ACRES, five miles from town; modern five-roomed house, stable, cowbyres, pigstyes, two greenhouses, choice garden, etc; part in crop, part in young grass and part in bush. Well fenced and watered by windmill. Price £26 per acre. Deposit £400. Balance easy.

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No. 2—Holds 25 Dozen.
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1914-15 STAR.

25,000 TO BE ISSUED.

Sufficient supplies having been received from the Imperial Government, the Defence Department has now commenced the issue of the 1914-15 star to members of the N.Z.E.F. who are entitled to wear that proud distinction. It is estimated that fully 25,000 stars will be issued—the great bulk to surviving members of the N.Z.E.F. who left the Dominion in 1914-15, and the balance to the next-of-kin or legal representatives of the fallen. The stars are now being issued at the rate of 250 per day. They are being sent out in alphabetical order, and it is estimated that the whole of the living men who are entitled to wear the decoration will receive theirs within ten weeks. The issue of the star to the next-of-kin of deceased men or their legal representatives will then be commenced.

The star is in bronze, being about the size of a half-crown, and is four-pointed. On the front appear crossed swords surmounted by a crown, with the Royal cypher at the foot. In the centre, which is raised, appears the date "1914-15." The star on the back is being inscribed with the number, rank, initials, and name of the wearer, and below with the letters "N.Z.E.F." The War Office has sent out a special machine for stamping the name, etc., on the back. This task is being carried out by a small but expert staff of returned soldiers, who set the type, place it in a clip, and then pass the type and star through the machine. The star emerges plainly and suitably engraved.

With each star the Department is issuing about nine inches of the 1914-15 ribbon free of charge. As each man's claim to the star is established, he is notified by post that he is entitled to it, and asked if he would prefer it by registered post or have it presented at a public parade. So far, of the men notified, only about 1 per cent. have chosen the latter course, the remaining 99 per cent. preferring private receipt through registered post. The staff is now engaged in issuing the star to men whose names start with the letter "C." The "A's" and "B's" should already be in receipt of theirs.