MY YESTERYEARS

KISTON

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MY YESTERYEARS

My Yesteryears

A. J. Blakiston

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Plates

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Foreword

A SEARCH for historical information led me to Mr Arthur Blakiston with whom I have memories of spending sunny afternoons in his garden of magnificent trees, listening to tales of times that are past. The years have ripened acquaintance into friendship and I regard a conversation with this man of mellowed and cheerful personality as a privilege and an education.

His memory is surprisingly clear and he is able to supply details of incidents and events about which recorded history is hazy. Coupled with this ability is a facility for telling a good story and this book proves he can write with that same proficiency.

Mr. Blakiston, when I first met him, lent me a note-book in which he had jotted down some personal recollections. With steady perseverance, so characteristic of his nature, he has expanded those notes into this book. Only those who have tried to write a book know the difficulties, disappointments and hard work of such an undertaking. They will appreciate that, for a man of 89 to have written a book is no mean achievement.

Canterbury has travelled a long way from those happy days when it was possible to exchange — as Mr. Blakiston's father did — a block of land at the corner of Colombo and Hereford streets for a mare and foal. Mechanisation makes it difficult to picture such an era, but Mr Blakiston's book is full of pen-portraits of the rapidly changing times through which he has lived.

Within the next ten years, it will be too late to obtain first-hand recollections from our pioneers. Surely, even if

Preface

When over 80 years of age I decided to write a few notes from memory. Some of my friends advised me to have these printed, as I had known the Orari Gorge Station since 1869 and so many of the old hands and early day doings. I am sorry now that I did not enlarge rather more on many subjects but, having left it rather late, it will be only a booklet.

only for the sake of those coming after, we should rescue as much as we can of the story of pioneering endeavour.

At the age of seven, Mr. Blakiston went to live at Orari Gorge for a number of years. At different times he has been away from there but the greater part of his long life has been associated with this station. He is now the only person able to give such a complete history of this station — one of the most famous in Canterbury. Orari Gorge has remained for nearly a century in the hands of a family equally famous for integrity, hospitality and good works.

W. VANCE

Chapter 1

EARLY DAYS

My father, C. R. Blakiston, was born in 1825 near the village of Ashborne in Derbyshire. Being the fifth son in the family, and his elder brothers having taken up various professions, he decided to try his luck in the colonies.

Arriving in Australia with the gold rush of 1849, my father decided that digging for gold was not in his line.

Staying long enough to buy a thoroughbred mare and foal, he shipped for New Zealand in 1850. On arrival there, he exchanged the mare and foal for a block of land on what is now the Colombo Street-Hereford Street corner in Christchurch. A good start – but seven years later, on the eve of his marriage to Mary Anna Harper, he found it necessary to sell this land for £100. It now holds the Christchurch branch of the Bank of New South Wales and the Shades.

Charles George Tripp, who was engaged to Ellen, another daughter of Bishop Harper, and my father were married at a double wedding in St. Michael's Church. The two girls were similar in appearance; just as the ceremony was about to commence, Tripp whispered to my father: 'Are you sure we are right?' Afraid that he might be wedded to the wrong girl, he forgot that as he was short and florid, and my father tall and thin, the sisters were hardly likely to allow a mistake.

In 1861, when my elder brother Henry was a year old, his parents took him to England, for my father wished to see his aged mother. Although this lady was then one hundred years old, she still possessed all her faculties, and on seeing my brother her first remark was: 'Oh! But he is not black!'

She must have thought that babies born in New Zealand, regardless of their parents' colour, would look like Maoris.

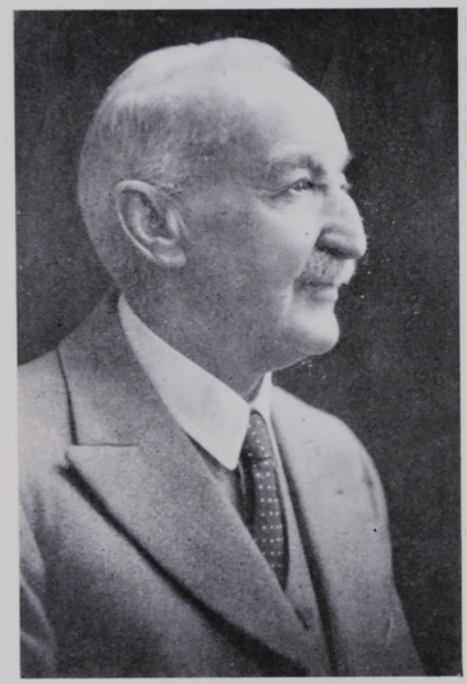
My grandmother died at the age of 102. I still possess a letter she wrote when 101, to my father.

When my parents returned to New Zealand, he took over a merchant's business in Kaiapoi. In those days, many small ships brought goods up the Waimakariri and the Cam to Kaiapoi, along waterways where nothing bigger than a canoe could now travel. I was born in Kaiapoi in 1862. After leaving that district, my father became manager for an Australian Trust and Agency Company in Christchurch, and we lived in Springfield Road. There we had, as cook and housemaid, two sisters named Easterbrook, and their brother 'Talic' worked in the garden. These three stayed with us for about twelve years; thirty years after 'Talic' left, he recognised me when we met again in Geraldine.

One of my earliest memories is of the big snow of 1867. It was followed by heavy rain, and through rain and melting snow we had the biggest flood in 1868 New Zealand has ever experienced. Overflowing its banks, the Waimakariri sent flood water pouring through Hagley Park and down Armagh Street, and I remember driving, in a high dog cart, with my father and mother, through two feet of water in Victoria Square. Mabel Hennah, aged two, who later became my wife, was out in a 'pram' with her nurse that day, and as every road became flooded, she had to be taken home in a baker's cart. I heard later that flood waters from the Orari and the Waihi washed sheep and cattle from Raukapuka, one of the first farms in the Geraldine District, down to Temuka, and a dead bullock was found on the footpath outside a hotel door. History does not record what happened to this beef.

Not long after the flood, I was sent to Orari Gorge, a South Canterbury sheep run owned by Charles Tripp. His eldest son, Howard, came to live with my parents in Christchurch, where he could attend school. My journey

CHARLES GEORGE TRIPP



ARTHUR JOHN BLAKISTON

began at the office of Cobb and Co., where the Christchurch D.I.C. Building now stands, and I was looked after by Mr. John Grigg, of Longbeach, and Dr. A. C. Barker, who was on the way to his Ohape farm near Orari. After spending one night at Turton's Accommodation House, in Ashburton, we reached Orari next day, and I was met and driven over the final twelve miles to Orari Gorge. There, with Fanny and Leonard Tripp, I was taught by a governess named Miss Jane Andrews, of whom we were all very fond. Many years later I heard that Fanny and Leonard had an idea that Miss Andrews favoured me, so they were in the habit of placing a stick between two large stones and whacking it. The stick was supposed to be me.

At Orari Gorge there was a donkey which, if beaten hard enough could be made to canter, but if he saw a patch of clover he would stop dead, and over his head we riders would go. We bathed in the creek and the Orari, and as we grew older, there was rabbit shooting and pig hunting, until in 1873 I left Orari Gorge to attend a Christchurch preparatory school run by Mrs. G. A. E. Ross. After two years at that school, I went to Christ's College, where my achievements in class work and games were average rather than outstanding. Five years later, I started work in a merchant's office, where in the next two years I learned some accountancy, which was to be most useful in later life.

While C. G. Tripp was staying with us in Christchurch, he suggested that if ever I wanted a change in occupation I should go to work at Orari Gorge, and in 1883 I returned to the station.

COACHING ADVENTURES

When I was a boy, there were no bridges across the Rakaia, Ashburton, Rangitata or Orari, and the coaches had to use fords which altered with every flood. During one

big flood, I boarded the coach from Timaru at Orari, and before we got very far into this first river, the lead horses disappeared into a deep hole. In those days, there was a ferryman, named Jack Heney, whose job it was to convoy the coaches across the Orari and Rangitata rivers ; thinking I would be frightened, he ranged alongside the coach, on a big half draught horse, grabbed me by the collar and carried me back to the south bank. Putting me down close to a couple of swaggers, he patted me on the head and said : 'You will be a man some day'.

'If I found this here young fellow dead in a swamp', said one swagger to his mate, 'I would know him again!' I soon realised that both were drunk.

Jack Meikle, the driver, managed to turn his team and get the coach back on to the south bank. By the time he had checked his harness, the ferryman had found a better ford, so in we went again. This time, all went well, but it took us an hour to find fords across the several streams of the flooded Rangitata.

After a change of horses, at the Hinds stable, we managed to get across the Ashburton just before dark. Turton's Ashburton Boarding house, where I was always well treated, was very welcome that night. By next day, the rivers had fallen, and without further trouble we reached Christchurch.

A wonderful driver, Jack Meikle was very good in the rivers. John Grigg told me that on one trip he and Meikle saw a peculiar object, not far from the tussock track between Ashburton and Rakaia. Closer inspection revealed two drunken swaggers : one had his mate down, and was pulling out his hair. Handing the reins to Grigg, who was with him on the box, Jack Meikle got down with his whip — he would flip a fly from a leader's ear — and let the top man have it. The fight having ended, suddenly, Jack picked up the fellow underneath, and put him with his swag in

the boot of the coach, in which he travelled to Rakaia. The other swagger was left to rub off the effects of the whip.

After living to a great age, Jack Meikle died in the North Island. Like many of the old hands, he possessed a great constitution, which helped him to stand up to exposure in all kinds of weather. Snow, hail or flood, coach drivers always did their duty. If snow became too deep for the coach to negotiate, it was necessary to ride one horse and carry the mail on another.

On a later date, while I was on my way back to college, we found that the flooded Ashburton river had washed away the ford. In trying to get out of the water, the lead horses managed to scramble up a three foot bank, but the coach was too heavily loaded to follow. Several other boys and I had to walk along the pole between the two polers, jump on the shingle behind the leaders, and make our way across other streams on planks where a bridge was being built. With our weight out of the coach, the horses managed to drag it up the bank. On my next journey, I found that this bridge had been completed.

The horses used by Cobb & Co. for these coaches were a splendid type, probably bred from heavy mares by a thoroughbred stallion. They had to be good, for the road over the plains was nothing more than the wheel marks left by early bullock drays. Each coach was sprung by heavy leather straps, and on the two day journey from Christchurch to Timaru, horses were changed four times. If conditions were good, two leaders and two polers were enough, but more often than not, there were three leaders. Ferrymen, stationed on the big rivers, had to pilot the coaches over their ever changing fords. At that time there were none of the water races which were to be so important to later settlers.

Chapter 2

SHEEP-STATION LIFE

EARLY ON THE SECOND MORNING after my arrival, Mr Tripp came into my room and sat on my bed.

'I have a good horse for you,' said he. 'I would like you to ride over the Blue Mountain saddle to Sutherland's hut. You can spend the winter there with John Evans and his sons, who are killing rabbits and pigs. Come into the station about once a week for tucker.' As we took turns to make these visits, each of us made one trip per month.

To reach Sutherland's hut, which stands in a deep valley on the shady side of the Blue Mountain, one rides west from Orari Gorge for about twenty five miles, climbing over a snow grass saddle about 4,000 feet above sea level. On my first trip back to the station for supplies, when Mr. Tripp asked how things were going, I told him I had learned that the horse he had given me was a broken down carriage horse without shoes. Three times, while climbing over the saddle, it had nearly fallen ; It was not fit to ride, and I was not going to ride it again. Mr Tripp smacked his thigh, clapped his hands and laughed. 'That will knock the drawing room out of you ! ' said he. I told him it was already out.

Camped in three of the coldest huts on the run, we spent a rough winter, but the pighunting was exciting. Even in those days, there were some rabbits on this country, as well as wild pigs, but with closer settlement of the Woodbury district, the wild pigs have been exterminated.

That first back country winter was quite an experience We lived on meat, potatoes, bread, scones and occasionally some treacle ; in those days there were no luxuries like butter, condensed milk or jam for back country men.

On the northern side of the range there was not much firewood, and at intervals wood had to be packed on mules from the nearest gully. Scattered over most of the hills there were occasionally totara logs – proof that forest had been plentiful in past ages.

In the hunting of rabbits, which were not numerous, and pigs of which there were plenty on the southern side of the range, we used shotguns and dogs, including two terriers which would bail any pig. One would swing on an ear while the other grabbed the tail end, and the pig would stay put until someone shot it. On the northern side, where the only cover was tussock and matagouri, there were never many pigs, but whenever we spent a few days at the Four Peaks Pleasant Gully Hut, across the (Blue Mountain saddle) we had great sport. Around this hut there were numerous gullies filled with bush.

With pork, young rabbits and an occasional blue duck we were never short of meat. Tamer than other wild duck, the blue mountain variety have now been killed out in this district, although they still exist in regions more remote. That winter I learned, among other things, how to cook, for we had to take turns with the camp oven. At any rate, none of the others showed any ill effects after eating what I put before them.

After that first winter in the back country, I bought a sheep dog, which proved to be a good one. I still had to learn to work him, and the summer mustering season gave me plenty of practise.

The first block to be mustered was the Four Peaks range, which is now cut up into several small sheep runs and farms. In those days, it was stocked with about 14,000 merino wethers, and the muster started from Sutherland's hut, down below the northern end of the range. In winter, when occupied by four men, this 14 feet x 8 feet hut had seemed small enough to be cosy, but on a summer

night, when packed with ten musterers, cosy was not the word for it. When the nor'-west wind allowed, we pitched a tent alongside the hut.

Starting at dawn, we climbed up the Clayton side of the range, leaving men at intervals to muster along that side, and the top man waited while others went through the saddle to muster the southern side. This range runs west, from our starting point, and later curves away to the south in a long, rough spur leading down to the Te Moana gorge.

When everyone was in position the top man gave the signal to start. With the free-running merinos well ahead, we kept in line, and this first day's mustering did not take long. The climb up the range was the hardest part, but by this time I was getting used to walking on the hills.

Two packers, with some of the mules which have been used for many years on Orari Gorge, had gone ahead of us to pitch camps for the night – one at Devil's Creek, on the South Side, and one at Jumpover Saddle on the North.

Next morning, we had to be up early to reach the tops before the merinos broke camp and started back for the country off which they had been mustered. On the south-western side of the run there was a boundary fence, but on the high country, there were no effective boundaries, natural or otherwise, and merinos start travelling at daylight. On this occasion, all went well, and at the end of the second day, with about ten thousand sheep ahead of us on the last high ridge, the two parties camped at Pleasant Gully, and Fiery Camp. On the third morning, after chops, bread and tea at 1.30 a.m., we had a big climb to reach our positions before daylight. At this stage, it was essential to get around the sheep before they broke camp, for to muster them again after they had begun to scatter would take many hours.

Some years later, at the same stage in a similar muster, a shepherd left camp before the rest, and as he passed

beneath the sheep in the dark, he started a stone rolling downhill. Away went the wary merinos in all directions. Although I managed to get a dog to the head of the mob before they crossed the Pleasant Gully Creek, we spent hours in getting them back to the top. A first principle in mustering is never to get ahead of your mates.

In this first Four Peaks muster the two parties, leaving camp at 2 a.m., got around the sheep in good time and swung them back across the foothills towards the north, and the station. By 8 a.m., we had our 14,000 wethers across the Waihi on to what was then called the 'low country'. now Ben Hope. While some musterers camped at the Waihi Hut, the rest of us rode the seven miles back to the station for a clean-up and to hear the latest news; then back to camp for an early start next morning on the lower country.

Some years later, before mustering this same block, we camped in tents on the South side of the Ben Hope ridge. Having to make some arrangements with the packer, I was last to leave the hut next morning, and as I climbed this spur, I saw that the musterers, instead of spreading on to their beats were grouped on a ridge.

'Come and look at this!' they called, in answer to my shouted enquiry. Although 60 years have come and gone since we saw that sunrise, it is still plain in my memory.

Like cotton wool, fog covered the Canterbury Plains and reached right up the ridge at our feet. Eighty miles to the north-east, the tops of the Port Hills could be seen above the fog. Through the mist a fiery sun threw a mass of beautiful colours: violet, indigo blue, green, yellow, orange and red. When old musterers, who have seen a thousand dawns so beautiful that they would make an artist gasp, stop to look at a sunrise it is something out of the ordinary, and all of this group agreed that never before had they seen anything so wonderful.

After about an hour the fog cleared, and we had a wet muster through scrub and snow tussock coated with globules of water. Soaked to the waist, it is not easy to keep up with merino wethers when they start racing downhill.

This had been a good muster. When we reached the last long downhill grade to the station there were 14,000 wethers, in a mob a mile long, racing over the low spurs towards a holding paddock. It was safer to let them run than to try to steady them with heading dogs, and we steered them by keeping in position above and below. If such a mob runs into a steep-sided gully, they are likely to pile up at the bottom until those behind are running across a bridge of bodies, and, in hundreds, are suffocated. Shepherds dread a 'smother', and when the last creek was crossed, and the sheep safe in a holding paddock we were all very pleased.

In the eighties, when Orari Gorge covered 63,000 acres, it carried between forty-eight and fifty thousand sheep and I can remember one season in which we shore a total of 49,869. The dry shearing (hoggets, rams, wethers and dry ewes) was done in November, and the wet ewes were shorn after weaning in February.

In those days, shearing began with thirty shearers on the board, and as many shed hands. Some of the men were Australians, who came over each year after the Australian season ended. Although rowdy at times, these men were good shearers and, on the whole, a nice lot of fellows. The rest of the gang were mostly local men.

There was one very hot February in which the Australians, accustomed as they were to dry heat, had to knock off for a spell while the New Zealanders were able to keep going. In one week of fine weather, during a ewe shearing in February, the tally between 8 a.m. on Monday and 4 p.m. on Saturday was 18,520. This was done with blades. It meant hard work for all hands, especially the

three men on the old screw press. By 6 p.m. on that Saturday all hands were paid off, and some of them on their way to Geraldine to quench a real thirst.

In those days, the hoggets were given a few days' spell, after shearing, before being put through the dip, which was filled with Little's carbolic fluid. While young sheep had to be stopped from rushing too fast into the dip, older wethers were not so keen, and old ewes, who knew too much, had to be man-handled over the last few yards. After dipping, sheep were turned out on the front hills until there were three or four thousand, when the mob was mustered and driven out to the Four Peaks high country. To avoid the heat of the day, we always made an early start on these drives.

With 30,000 dry sheep the first shearing usually lasted several weeks, and if rain was frequent, the job dragged on for months.

Another November job was the docking of lambs. As every ewe block had a set of yards and a mothering paddock, ewes and lambs were mustered in sections, with very early starts to avoid the summer heat. One hour in the early morning was always worth four in the middle of the day.

When we had mustered a small block, the ewes and lambs were allowed to cool off, after yarding, and then docked in the evening; a large mob would be yarded for the night and docked in the morning. After an early start we had often dealt with 3,000 lambs before an 8 a.m. breakfast.

The yarding of several thousand ewes with their lambs is one of the trickiest high country jobs. As the mob gathers, on the way to the yard, hundreds of lambs lose their mothers, and begin to rush around the outskirts of the mob. Now and then, one will try to bolt back over the ground along which it has come, and, if one gets past the shepherds, several hundreds will follow. When lambs 'break'

as this bolting is termed, they may run for miles before they stop, for no dog can turn them. Our usual custom was to let them go, close ranks behind the rest of the mob and yard what we could. Later, when the escaped lambs began to wonder whether they had acted wisely, we would let a few ewes out of the yard, wait until they had collected the stray lambs, and then drive the small mob back.

Entrances to the mothering paddocks were a chain wide, and carefully placed on some route which sheep would be inclined to follow. When a flock was safely inside, a strip of netting was dragged across the 'gate', and, as these paddocks were big enough to allow the sheep to spread, they would not crowd back on to the netting. On one occasion, when we were trying to get a big mob from a paddock into docking yards, about 2,000 lambs got out of control, and streamed wildly away from the ewes. With little hope of stopping, I started a big black and white dog named 'Glen' around them. As he rounded the shoulder of the running lambs, they slewed a little, and as the dog went on around the lead they all slewed around after him. No dog likes to have a lot of sheep rushing after him – no doubt it seems all wrong, to the dog, and this one clapped on the pace to get clear of the oncoming lambs. Straight through the gate into the yards went old 'Glen', and every lamb went after him, hurried on by us, while old shepherds, who had not cracked a grin for weeks, roared with laughter. Such bits of luck, in a docking muster, are all too rare.

On another occasion, at the same yards, a small mob of lambs had broken away and was left to settle down. After two or three shepherds with their best dogs, had tried without success to get them down to the yards, someone said to me – 'Try old Rogie'. Rogie was a dog for which I had given £4 when he was one year old, and just for the fun of the thing I sent him out.

Maybe the lambs were tired, maybe they thought it was time to come back – anyway, Rogie brought them straight into the yards, in fine style. Six months after I bought this dog, a man offered me £12 for him, which in those days was a very big price, but I would not sell. A really intelligent dog, Rogie was my mainstay for 13 years, and whenever a young dog made a mistake he would do his best to put it right. While his pups were good enough, none had the brains of the old fellow.

In the back country there have never been any laws regarding hours of work, and when we were mustering or docking the average day of each was nearer sixteen than eight hours. Among the old Scotch shepherds, who were honest, trustworthy, hard working men, rows were unknown, and all hands worked well as a team. Early one Sunday morning when a shepherd called Bill Tait and I were climbing out to a mustering beat, I happened to whistle a tune, which might have been a hymn. Whatever it was the shepherd said sternly, 'Laddie, you munna whistle on the Sabbath.' I always remembered that rebuke.

During one muster we were stopped by heavy snow on the Jump-over saddle, west of the Blue Mountain and many miles from the station. For ten weary days the gang camped there in two tents. After a day or two Harry Ford and I managed to get back to Sutherland's Hut, where two rabbiters were camped, and where we found plenty of tucker and warmth. When the snow finally melted enough to allow the muster to continue, the shepherds who had starved and frozen in the Jump-over camp, where wood was very scarce, were still cheerful. In fine weather, when one gets up on the high tops by sunrise, mustering has its compensations, but in fog, rain or snow the job becomes unpleasant.

In later years, when manager of Orari Gorge, I was waiting to stop any sheep which were being mustered on to a high spur above the Fiery Camp. Before the sheep

arrived, dense clouds settled over all this hill country, and it became a case of every man for himself and back to camp. After a lot of anxious moments, although I knew the country well, I got below the fog, to find myself much nearer to the Pleasant Gully hut than to Fiery Camp, where my swag was in a tent with those of several mates. However, some more of the gang were camped at Pleasant Gully, so I went on to that hut and spent the night there. To both lots of shepherds I pitched the same yarn. 'Had to make fresh arrangements, as the muster had been held up, so went down to have a talk with the lads at Pleasant Gully.' No one ever found out that the manager had been lost!

I was wet through when I arrived, but the good old shepherds unearthed clean clothes and lent me blankets. Next day I returned to Fiery Camp and re-arranged the muster.

SHEPHERDS

Most outstanding of the many shepherds I knew at Orari Gorge were the brothers William and Andrew Grant.

C. G. Tripp was in Christchurch and wanted to engage two shepherds. On hearing that a ship had just arrived at Lyttelton he hurried down to the port. On arrival he saw a man standing on the wharf with a good looking dog at heel. C. G. Tripp went up to the man and asked him if he was the owner of the dog. The man said 'yes, and I have just arrived from Scotland.' On being asked his name he replied 'Andrew Grant.' C. G. Tripp said he was wanting two shepherds, and Andrew said 'I have a brother over there who is also a shepherd.' The elder brother William was called over and both were engaged to work at Orari Gorge. William Grant asked if the run was far away as he was a bit short of cash. Tripp put his hand in his pocket and pulled out a sovereign and gave it to William. The story goes that William did not have to use this money

after all, and did not want to part with the first sovereign received in New Zealand, so he later bored a hole in it and hung it round his neck with a boot lace.

Andrew Grant, a tall, active man, remained with Mr. Tripp for about twelve years, most of this time as head shepherd. He had a lot to do with my own shepherding education. Apart from his skill among sheep, Andrew was a kindly man who at holiday time often took us boys out pig hunting, which was great fun. When he eventually left Orari Gorge, to begin stock dealing around Geraldine and Temuka he came back to help with the culling for a number of years. At that time the merino flock was in very good order.

A good judge of stock, with a wonderful memory, Andrew Grant soon made a name for himself, after leaving the Gorge. When buying sheep at a sale, he often tried to get all the good lines offered, and then sold them for a profit of sixpence a head. When farmers who wanted sheep found that Andrew was always ready to sell on that sixpenny premium, they soon found it profitable to let him buy from the auctioneers instead of bidding against each other in an open auction. What the vendors thought of this system has not been recorded. If a farmer who wanted to buy sheep from Andrew was unable to pay cash, he was told to pay when the ewes were shorn and the lambs sold, and it was very seldom that such bargains were not honoured.

Some years later, after Andrew Grant left the Gorge, Mr. Tripp asked me to ride down to Temuka and show him a list of sheep which we would soon have ready for sale. As we were shearing at the time, I could not get away until 7 p.m. and by the time I had covered the 22 miles to Temuka, it was after 9 p.m. I found Grant not over well, and scarcely fit for business.

However, when he presently asked the reason for this visit, I took out a notebook and read him the descriptions of ten different mobs, about ten thousand sheep in all. He

did not handle the notebook, nor did anyone take down the figures. When the list of sheep was finished; 'Tell your uncle I will take them all, at his prices', said Grant, and with that, I rode home for a few hours' sleep.

Some weeks later, on the way back to Orari Gorge from Timaru, I called in to see Andrew Grant and to get a feed for my horse and myself. After dinner he produced a diary in which he had a remarkably accurate list of the numbers of sheep, and their prices, which I had read to him on the previous visit.

'How did you do it?' I asked. His only reply was that when the descriptions were read he had not been very well, but his memory was evidently wonderful.

On 15th March, when delivery of these sheep was to be made, Andrew brought his drovers up to the Gorge. While he talked to Mr. Tripp, the head drover and I counted the sheep, and as soon as we handed them the tallies, Andrew said: 'Let's go up to the house and I'll give you a cheque for the lot.' He told me later that, as Mr. Tripp had been so good to him, he never expected to make more than threepence per head on any Gorge sheep.

Many of the shepherds employed by Mr Tripp were Scotch. Before the Grant brothers, there was Andrew Young, and in 1883, when I went as a cadet to Orari Gorge, the head shepherd was Thomson McKay. Although McKay had not the great knowledge of stock possessed by the Grants, he was a goodhearted man who was always ready to help young shepherds with advice. His wife, Jane, helped in the big house before her marriage, and after her wedding all girls that came to Orari Gorge were addressed as 'Jane' by Mr. Tripp.

In the eighties, the most popular shepherd on Orari Gorge was William Tait. With a pleasant nature, and fond of young people, he was a good, honest shepherd, and we cadets learned more from him than from anyone else. When

Arthur Hope was on a visit to England he saw a man so like Bill Tait that he felt impelled to ask his name, and sure enough he proved to be Bill's nephew.

After Thomson McKay, the next head shepherd was Hughie McQuinn, a man of a very different type. So universally disliked was this former bullock driver, whose language did not improve in his new job that in his time many good shepherds left Orari Gorge. His hostility to the rest of us became so marked that eventually he was questioned by Mr. Tripp, and gave a month's notice.

Before his successor was appointed, Mr. Tripp sent me over to Pleasant Point to find out if Murdoch McLeod, a shepherd who had left on account of the head shepherd's unpleasantness, would come back to Orari Gorge. After a pleasant evening with the McKays and their two cadets at Raincliff, my halfway house on the trip, I found McLeod, who on hearing the news asked who the next head shepherd would be. When he heard that I might get the job, he said he would come back, and he remained on the Gorge as a shepherd for the rest of his life. When he retired from active work he and his wife and family lived in a house on the place until his death.

Back at Orari Gorge, I found Mr. and Mrs. Tripp in the smoking room, very anxious to know if McLeod would come back. After hearing the news, Mr. Tripp told me to get a pen and paper.

'Write this down', he said. 'I want you to stop on here as head shepherd for five years, and to spend two of those years in teaching Bernard (a son) how to run the place. If you agree put your name on that paper'.

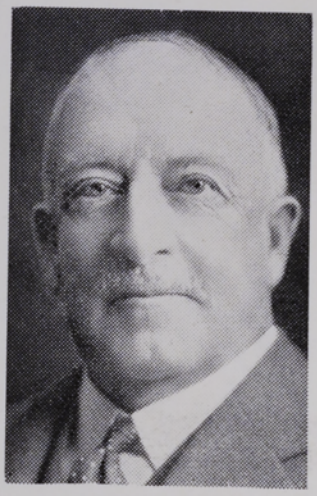
I refused to sign that agreement, as no man knows what the next five years will bring, but said I would stay : under the former head shepherd. I had been preparing to leave for Australia.

While McQuinn was in charge we had a bad smother. Bringing in 14,000 wethers from Four Peaks over bad gullies and creeks on the downs, he sent me ahead to open a chain-wide netting gate into another block. Having done this, I went off for some distance and sat with my dogs in the tussocks, where the sheep could not see me. Presently, the head of the mob came in sight, with the head shepherd on the low side, too far ahead of his opposite number on the top side. When the wethers turned uphill, the man above was too far back to turn them down again, and the leaders went over a steep bank down into a stream. As the sheep behind crushed down on to the leaders, the smother began, and very soon the main mob was crossing the gully on a bridge of 250 dead sheep. The whole fault lay with the two men who were out of position : from my vantage point I could see exactly how the trouble started.

When we got back to the station, I got the blame for that incident, but I am glad to say that Mr. Tripp got a true version from some of the other shepherds. For the next five years, we brought similar mobs off this country without another accident. Always taking the lower side myself, with Willy Lambie on the upper side, I found three places where it was safe to put a steady dog ahead of the mob, which was a great help in keeping them under control. Before I took charge, dogs were seldom used on this drive.

SHEPHERDS AND OTHER HANDS (2)

The packer on Orari Gorge was Jack Bennett, an ex-sailor commonly called 'Pimlico' or 'Pim'. Soon after he arrived, and before the other men knew his real name, he received a letter with a Pimlico postmark, and the men were so struck by the name that Jack was Pimlico from that day. A good honest workman, who looked after his mules well, Jack had a wonderful memory, was a great reader and a most interesting conversationalist.



BERNARD E. H. TRIPP

LEONARD O. H. TRIPP

Another shepherd who spent many years on Orari Gorge was William Irvine. He spent several seasons with me at Sutherland's Hut. A good man on the hill, he was a careful shepherd with first class dogs. On several occasions, Irvine helped me to keep boundary on the Blue Mountain during the tupping season. At that time, there were 20,000 ewes, and through most of the autumn there were four men who looked after the biggest mob, on the Blue Mountain country. With headquarters at Sutherland's Hut, two of us managed the western side, while McLeod and G. Pinckney, worked the eastern side from Steward's Hut. Two men would meet on the top each day, while the other two looked after the mobs of ewes in the holding paddocks. For the last fortnight of the tupping season, they were kept in smaller areas which were worked from two stone huts called Totara and Sandstone.

In 1893, Bernard Tripp became head shepherd at Orari Gorge and I went to the Chatham Islands. When Mr. Tripp died, in 1897, Bernard managed the estate with the help of a careful, conscientious head shepherd named James McNaughton. After him, came Simon Rae, followed by James Boa, the latter remaining until after my retirement in 1935. The station was fortunate in having such good men over so many years.

We used to have a cricket match, Macdonalds v. The Rest. At one period there were three 'Sandy' Macdonalds on the place at the same time. They were known as Black Sandy, Wild Sandy and Little Sandy. 'Little' Sandy Macdonald, who lived to be the age of 99, was still penning sheep for shearing at the age of 90. At the end of a day, when I sometimes gave him a hand, he would fish a blackball from his pocket, and offer it to me, saying: 'I always pay my debts.' His unfailing supply of blackballs made him very popular with children during his many years at the Gorge. A grand old character, full of yarns of the old days, he could

quote the Bible and Robert Burns till further orders. He used to tell how he met Harry Smith on the top of Four Peaks in 1862, and of the big snow of that year.

Among so many good shepherds and musterers, it is hard to pick outstanding individuals. Among the best were Ted and Jack Turton, Harry Ford, who were great company out in the huts, and the Evans', who were also great shots with a gun. Ted Evans was for many years the station rabbiter.

One of the musterers, Tom Stephens, used to work at Longbeach through the winter, and come to Orari Gorge for the summer. With a humorous face and a large mouth, he was full of quaint sayings, in which he often confused his words. 'Let them went, Boss,' he would say, when he had finished culling a mob of sheep. Not very fond of English cadets, he was often heard to remark: 'I can't stand these "reported" men.' (The word he was trying for was imported).

At that time, there was always a full time packer and saddler on the station. Two that I remember were Jack Brett, a very neat saddler, who afterwards worked in the Farmers' Co-op., Geraldine, and Charlie Ray, who later had a saddler's business of his own, also in Geraldine.

WOOLCLASSERS

The parents of Harry Smith, who classed the Gorge wool for forty years, came to Mt. Peel by bullock dray in 1856. After working at Mt. Peel, they came to Orari Gorge, where Harry, as a boy, began work as a fleece-picker. At that time he was so small that he had to step up on a box before he could throw a fleece on to the wool table. To this day, there is a note on a wall of the woolshed to the effect that Harry Smith worked there, as fleece-picker and classer, for

fifty shearing seasons, missing only one 'dry' shearing, a record rarely equalled. He used to go to Australia to class there, earlier in the summer, and it was a transport delay which made him late back on the one occasion he had to shear without him.

He and his brother started a fellmongery business in Winchester, and when this became a full-time job, Harry sent us a younger man, named George Burborough. Trained by H. Smith, Burborough was a good classer – he is now head of the Pyne, Gould and Guinness wool stores in Tīmaru.

SNOW

The most disastrous fall of snow in my experience came in October, 1887, early in the lambing season. When this snow melted, William Lambie and I spent four long weeks in skinning dead ewes from the Blue Mountain Hut to the Point yards.

After the shepherds riding the 19 miles to the hut, the first thing we noticed was a pile of dead lambs at the junction of two fences. Drifting before the storm, as far as they could go, both ewes and lambs had reached this corner, where about 200 lambs had perished before the ewes returned to the hills. Merino ewes always camp just below the highest top on what they regard as their own piece of country, all too often in the very spot where the deepest snow drifts form.

Working up a spur, Lambie and I would soon begin to get to work on these ewes. Skinning was not a pleasant job, but it was a case of 'off coats and at it'. My average time per carcase was two and a half minutes, but Lambie could whip off a skin in two minutes. If a nor'wester was blowing, the skins had to be stacked under a rock, until they were picked up by a packer, with a string of mules, for transport back to the station. Of a total loss of 12,000 lambs and 6,000 ewes, we skinned 3,000 ewes.

From the station to the foot of the hills on which sheep are buried in drifts, a track can usually be made by a snow plough or a string of horses, but over the sheep country, shepherds must plod their way through deep, soft snow. For eight or ten hours a day, every step takes one down to knees or waist. Where buried sheep are still alive – they will live for weeks under a drift – there is an air hole above their cavern, from which a wisp of steam often advertises their presence.

Breaking through the drift, they open a passage out of which the animals can climb, if they will; once they get a start along the trail, they will follow it down to the main track, and the shepherds struggle on to another drift.

On many places, it is customary to offer a whisky to men who have spent a day snow raking. 'Could you manage a whisky, Jack?' I asked one man after a particularly heavy day. 'Could a duck swim!' said he, followed by 'Come on! Lets do the job again!' I replied 'You can if you like Jack, but I have not had a whisky.'

Chapter 3

CHATHAM ISLANDS

On 1st January, 1893, I went with Arthur Turner to the Chatham Islands, to inspect a property leased from the Maoris by Walter and Frank Moore. Tied up alongside the Lyttelton wharf, the S.S. Kahu looked very small, but with her good engines she could plough through heavy seas. I was allowed to sleep in a surf boat on deck, which was a vast improvement on the varied collection of smells in the cabins below. Captain Romerill, who proved a good friend to us later, came from the Isle of Skye and had a great collection of yarns to tell of the sea. Travelling with us were Mr. and Mrs. Frank Moore.

Three days after leaving Lyttelton, we reached Waitangi, where the ship had to anchor some distance from the island. From the surf boat which took us close to the beach, we were finally carried ashore by sailors. Among the group of Maori and Pakeha on the beach was the postmaster, who stood up on his cart calling: 'Make way for the Royal Mail!' From the cart this was just dumped anyhow on the beach.

As we had seven miles to ride to Moreroa Mr. Brown, who was then manager for Moore Brothers, met us with horses, and we rode out to the homestead. After a mile of beach, we came to a small village called Te One, and after that there was a pleasant track through patches of bush.

A third of the island is covered by the large lagoon, and there are many smaller lakes, surrounded by tall karaka trees and other native bush. Some of the land is fertile, some poor, and there is a lot of bracken.

After helping with the inspection muster and having a thorough look at the country, Turner and I decided to go into partnership and take over the lease of Moreroa, which carried about 4,000 sheep on 10,000 acres.

On this visit, we much enjoyed the hospitality of Mr. and Mrs. Moore, but had to hurry back to New Zealand to arrange financial and other matters – then back to the island on the next boat.

Mr. and Mrs. Brown remained with us for some time. While he gave us much useful information about the island and the run, his wife kept house. After they left, when we had to bach for some months, we found our evenings fully occupied by the baking of bread, cooking scones and the next day's meals. When Captain Romerill brought us two cases of oranges, at 4/- per case, we cut them all up and made two boilings of marmalade in the copper. Later we had an excellent housekeeper in Mrs. Abner Clough, who stayed with us for a long time.

In January, 1897, I married Mabel Hennah, of Christchurch, and in 1898 Arthur Turner married my sister Lucy. Keeping a share in the run, they decided to live in New Zealand. A year later, when Turner wished to dissolve the partnership, I bought his share and carried on by myself.

Although there were dangerous, burnt out peat holes, quicksands, and swamps on Moreroa, there was no part of the place over which you could not ride. While out mustering one day, I put a dog around some sheep which were heading for a patch of bush, and rode after him. Having turned the sheep in the right direction, I went back to investigate the cause of a sudden jerky movement in which my horse had swung from right to left. In between two deep peat holes I found a narrow strip of firm ground, on which my horse had just managed to keep his feet; if he had gone in, we might never have been found.

Although riding was our only means of transport, our horses never needed any shoes, for there were no stones on the island. Later on, I bought from a Maori a wild sort of horse which could run along the tracks at a special pace of his own. Although he got me out of many difficulties, one day he got himself into a tight corner.

Trotting along a usually hard stretch of sand, between a lake and some sandhills, he suddenly sank girth deep into a quicksand. Jumping off, and whipping off saddle and bridle, I watched him plunging about until he was surrounded by a pool of water. Those who have encountered quicksands, in New Zealand snow rivers, will know how helpless I felt.

About half a mile away there was a farm owned by a man named Willy Dix. Going in search of him, I luckily noticed some sledge tracks leading away from his farm, and found him making a potato garden. While he went back to his house for a long rope, I hurried back to the horse. As he had stopped struggling, the water had subsided, and when Dix arrived with a rope, and a team of horses, we managed to get it round his girth. When the team hauled on the rope, the horse made a mighty effort and landed on his feet outside the hole, and we hurried him on to firm ground. After brushing off the sand and re-saddling, I made for home on a still-trembling horse.

At Waitangi, the Chatham Island port, there was a post office and lock-up, a building used as a combination of hotel and store, and surrounded by scattered Maori houses. Another hotel was built later. On the other side of the tidal Waitangi river, was a Maori pa. A little further on, was the race course, and two miles on at Te One, situated near a lake, were a Church of England Vicarage, schoolhouse and sundry dwellings.

On the island, there were several sheep runs. At Wangaroa, which then belonged to D. Pappin, there was a safe harbour, in which several Union Co. ships anchored

while loading sheep. Further on, one came to Waitangi West and then to Monganui, owned by a German named Engst, who came originally as a missionary.

Another station, Wharekauri, was owned by E. R. Chudleigh, who as a young man, was a cadet at Mt. Peel. When he left that station he gained further experience, with F. Standish, driving fat bullocks from Longbeach to diggings in Central Otago and the West Coast. After taking the lease of Wharekauri, he married Miss Mabel Potts of Governor's Bay, and between them they made an attractive home on the Chatham Islands.

When the Maori fanatic, Te Kooti, was first taken prisoner he and some of his followers were sent down to the Chathams as prisoners, but there were not enough guards. While a ship called the 'Clansman' was anchored at Waitangi, Te Kooti and his men overpowered the guards and some of the others on the island. E. R. Chudleigh was hung with a rope, but managed to get a hand under the noose around his neck and hold the fingers of that hand in his teeth. Captain Hood of the 'Omaha' who traded with the island, was trussed up and left on the sand to drown in the rising tide, but fortunately some friendly Maoris came along in time to cut Chudleigh down and untie Hood. In the meantime, Te Kooti had bound the captain of the Clansman and forced the first mate to take him back to the North Island. I have seen the marks made by E. R. Chudleigh's teeth on his fingers; he lived for many years at Wharekauri and took an active part in the development of the island. He then came back to a dairy farm in the Waikato, on which he did remarkably well. He was buried at Mt. Peel.

A few miles along the beach, past Wharekauri, one came to the woolshed and yards at Taupeka Point; then came a long streach of beach, in the middle of which the 'Jessie Redman' was wrecked. Although her crew heard the breakers, they misjudged their direction, and ran aground

on the beach. On the way down from New Zealand to England, this ship was heavily laden with bales of wool. Thinking they were wrecked on a cannibal island, the crew armed themselves with revolvers, and anything else they could find, before rowing ashore in their boats. Following a track, they ran into a Wharekauri shepherd, who directed them to the station, where no doubt they were well treated. The sight of a white shepherd must have been a pleasant surprise.

With the help of a ship's cable, the wool was salvaged from the Jessie Redman, and all the local residents who had conveyances helped to cart it to the Wharekauri woolshed, where it was stacked and covered.

Further on, past the scene of the wreck, there was a small settlement named Matarakau, next to which was the Kaingaroa run taken up in 1893 by J. M. Barker. This run, and Mr. W. Polhill, its manager at that time, were both known to me. On that run, there were some good lake flats with wonderful fattening feed.

Not far away, was a small but very fertile run, owned by Messrs Shand, named Te Whakuru. From Te Whakuru a long sandy beach led to Awapatiki, the mouth of the big Awanga lagoon. On leaving the outlet of the lagoon, a few miles away is Owenga Station, then owned by Messrs. Rhodes and Macdonald, carrying about 8,000 Romney sheep. In later years, a company was formed to start a fishing industry and blue cod were exported to Australia.

Past several more farms, one came to the village of Tikitiki, where in my time, Major Gascoyne was magistrate. He was succeeded by R. Stone Florence and Dr. Gibson.

Practically the only inland run of any size, Moreroa was a convenient stopping place for people crossing the island. Two young Maoris helped us with the mustering: Harry Nikau and Henry Reriti, who stayed with us for many years. After two days' mustering and drafting, our musterers helped several others to do the shearing, with

Maori boys picking up and anyone we could get to press. One Maori shearer Rewai, who spoke fluent English, was a very fine character. Weighing about twenty stone, he had an appetite to match his size, and at one evening meal I saw him eat a whole leg of mutton with plenty of vegetables.

Most of the Chathams sheep were a good type of Romney. As there were no frosts, no artificial winter feeding was required. The average rainfall was much the same as in South Canterbury, with occasional cold winds from the south west.

On Moreroa we kept several cows, and usually managed to get a cowboy from the neighbourhood. Breeding some of our own horses, we had lively times while breaking them to saddle or harness. Several half draughts turned into good lorry horses, and we sold a number of hacks to owners in Christchurch and Canterbury.

CHATHAM ISLAND MAORIS

In those days, the population was about 400, half Maori and half Pakeha. A happy and good natural lot, the Maoris used to call on us whenever they went to fish in the lake. If we had any food to spare, such as bread, mutton or vegetables, they would take it, but invariably on their return, they would leave us some fresh fish or eggs. In the lake there were beautiful flounders, which were easily speared. When fishing, for eels, the women used to paddle into the lake, and when they saw an eel, they smacked it with the edge of a piece of hoop-iron, picked it up and strung it on a bit of flax. In daylight, when the eels were in hiding, the Maoris used to feel for them, in weeds and mud with their bare toes. Many of the fish were dried and sent to friends or relations in New Zealand.

When I first went to the Chathams, Tommy Solomon, the last full blooded Moriori, was only a boy, but he grew into a very big man who weighed more than twenty stone. As

this was a bit too much for the average horse, he used to travel around in a sledge. When a young man, Maui Pomare, was well known to us. When he went to America to study medicine, he used to earn money by lecturing on Maori and Moriori history and legend.

During one long vacation, he returned to the Chathams, and one day went out with a birding party. As the party was returning through one of our paddocks, after being out for several weeks, Maui got off his horse, looking very different from the young man who had recently arrived from America.

'This is a great life,' said he. 'It appeals to me'. 'The steamer will be here in a few days,' I replied. 'If you will take an older man's advice, you will return to America and finish your medical course.' This he did. When next he returned, as a qualified doctor, he and his bride came to stay with us at Moreroa.

Te Wanga lagoon is composed of two deep lakes, separated by a shallow part which was used as a ford. Four and a half miles long, this crossing was about seven miles from Mareroa, and our land ran down to the water's edge. When the lake was running out, the ford varied in depth between six and eighteen inches, but when heavy seas blocked the outlet, the ford was dangerous until the outlet had been scooped clear of silt. Black swan, which were very numerous, sometimes scooped holes about the size of a milk pan in the mud beneath the shallows, and when a horse put its foot into one of these, or trod on an eel, it would stumble or play up, the rider sometimes landing in the water.

On one occasion, after spending several days at Te Whakuru, I was anxious to get home, but found the lake very high. There was a thick mist, which made it hard to see the poles which marked the ford, and although Bob Shand, who was with me, reckoned it was not safe we started across. Before long, we found ourselves in deep

water, and unable to see the poles. As luck would have it, the fog lifted, and we saw the poles a quarter of a mile to our left. After we got back on our proper line, the water became quite shallow, it was banking up on one side but not on the other, and we had no further trouble. Although our horses were very cold, and covered with wet sand, when we reached dry land, we soon reached home.

CHATHAM ISLAND CHARACTERS

St. Helena Tom, who was sent ashore from a ship to cut wood, came from the island of St. Helena, and no one knew him by any other name. When his ship went off without him, he was looked after by the Maoris, for whom he took messages and did odd jobs. Never wearing boots or shoes, he could run for miles. When my daughter, Rona, as a baby, used to be left to sleep in her pram in the shade, Tom used to be on the ground beside the pram, because he thought it very wrong to leave her alone.

Arthur Douglas Cox, formerly a subaltern in the Indian army, was invalided back to England. As his health did not improve, he came out to New Zealand to join his brother, Percy, who at that time owned Mt. Somers Station. E. R. Chudleigh, on a visit to New Zealand persuaded Arthur Cox to go back with him to the Chathams, where his health improved so much that he decided to stay. After going into partnership with Alex Shand in a sheep station called Whangamarino, he married a Miss Shand. A cheerful and kindly man, he was a keen botanist, and became a lay reader, Sunday school teacher, and Justice of the Peace. Early one morning, he passed me : riding an old horse, with fathoms of rope wound round his neck, on his back a sugar bag full of lunch for himself and meat for his dogs, he was singing a comic song, and the sight sticks in my mind. Later in the day, he would tether his horse, feed the

dogs and himself, have a sleep and then hunt for plant specimens, when he should have been looking round for his sheep.

When a case came up before the local magistrate, who at that time was also the doctor, he would sometimes call for a full 'bench' which consisted of the two J.P.s, Cox and myself. As the magistrate was not very familiar with Island ways, he often asked me to conduct the case, and as Cox usually went to sleep, I had to impose a lot of fines. Apart from visits to New Zealand, Cox spent the rest of his life in the Chathams, where he and his wife brought up a large family.

The German, J. E. Engst, was an interesting character, and a very strong man. In his younger days, he frequently walked the twenty-five miles from Waitangi to Te Whakuru with a bag of flour or sugar on his back. Having dinner with us one day, he passed his plate for a second helping of plum pie, and to our astonishment we noted that he had swallowed all the stones. The same thing happened again – he must have had the digestive powers of a goat.

As detailed accounts of the Chatham Islands have already been written, I will say no more. In 1908, leaving a manager in charge at Moreroa, I went to New Zealand for six months, to look after Orari Gorge while Bernard Tripp visited Australia in connection with a property there. When he returned, he asked me to stay at the Gorge for another year, until they could get rid of the Queensland cattle ranch. When they did eventually set out, Bernard said he did not want to carry on as manager at Orari Gorge, so I was asked to remain there.

As the Moreroa lease expired in 1910, and I could not get a renewal on the homestead block, I shipped a number of sheep, and some horses to New Zealand for sale and sold the rest on the island.

Since then, I have never visited the Chathams. My next 27 years were spent on Orari Gorge.

On one trip in 1896, Captain Romerill left Lyttelton in the 'Kahu' for the Chathams, taking as passengers Bishop Julius and several girls, one of whom later became my wife. For two days and three nights they sailed through weather so heavily overcast, that not once did Romerill get a 'sight' by which to fix his position, and a southerly drift took the ship well out of her course. After several days spent in cruising around, searching for Chatham Island a Maori look-out spotted, dead ahead, a rocky island known as 'the forty fours'. Just in time, the ship was turned about, and another day's sailing took the party to its destination. We residents, meanwhile, had become very alarmed over the non-appearance of the 'Kahu'.

In the eighties, a ship called the 'Assay' was wrecked in Cuba Channel on the north of the island.

Included in the cargo were tons of candles, and for years afterwards there were candles mixed with the sand on the northern beach. For a long time after that wreck, one of many around the Chathams, local houses were well lit.

Ambergris was often found and still is, on Chatham Island beaches. The first beachcomber on the Islands, who made some kind of a living at the game, was named Abner Clough.

Chapter 4

CHARLES GEORGE TRIPP

Of Welsh descent, Charles George Tripp was full of restless energy. Always in a hurry, he would be saying 'Grace' on his way to the breakfast table, and his companions there would hear something like this : 'Amen. Jane Jane Jane where are the plates what will you have Miss Bathgate ?'

At 9 p.m. each evening, he would stand up, then startle visitors to attention by announcing Prayers. One evening, while reading the lesson on Jacob's spotted cattle, he paused : 'Bernard,' said he, 'did you remember to put those heifers on the run to-day ?'

On another occasion, his reading was interrupted by one of his occasional stuttering fits, and he thrust his Bible into my father's hands. 'Here, Blakiston ! You carry on !' That evening's devotions lost some of their solemnity.

Acting on the spur of every moment, Mr. Tripp had many differences with neighbours and workmen, but such differences were forgotten, on his part, as speedily as they arose. I have counted as many as six letters, all addressed in his notoriously difficult handwriting, to the same firm in Timaru, and all waiting to be posted. Each letter would contain an order for a single item ; as soon as Mr. Tripp learned that something was needed, he would hurry into his office, write and seal his letter before anyone else had had time to mention other needs.

On a wet day he would often ask me to write some letters for him. All would go well until we came to a letter to someone who had annoyed him, when his dictation would become so abusive that I would refuse to write it. 'Quick,

Quick, My good fellow! Give me the pen, give me the pen!' And the abusive letter would be finished to his own satisfaction.

As few people could decipher Mr. Tripp's writing, he could write what he pleased with impunity. Riding one day through Geraldine, he was stopped by a shopkeeper who was quite unable to read a letter he had recently received from Orari Gorge.

'My dear Maslin,' said Mr. Tripp, 'I wrote that letter. It is your job to read it.'

C. G. Tripp was a member of the Geraldine Road Board. On one occasion he found that he could not attend a meeting, as he had made arrangements to meet a man some distance away. He wrote a letter saying he could not be present and gave his views on certain questions.

It turned out that the man did not keep his appointment, so Mr. Tripp arrived at the meeting after all though somewhat late.

It appears that earlier in the meeting, his letter had been passed round but no one could read it, so on arrival he was asked to decipher it; however he could not read it either and after examining it carefully, asked the other members what it was about! Laughter!

Having had some training in law before he left England, he kept a copy of every letter he wrote. Although each copy was somewhat illegible, and always on the wrong side of the paper, the total mounted into many thousands, for Mr. Tripp was a prolific writer. Many of those copies still exist in a large book form.

As a farmer, he was one of the first to recognise the danger of the rabbit pest, and he spared no expense to keep Orari Gorge free from rabbits. One of the men once told him that he had seen a rabbit disappear into a huge pile of firewood, and within a few minutes he had collected enough

station hands to surround the pile. Stick by stick, it was removed, until from beneath the last few logs bounced a flustered cookhouse cat.

Mr. Tripp hated gorse, and broom and wild pigs almost as much as he hated the rabbit. Orari Gorge, thanks to him, was practically cleared of all such pests. He depended a good deal on manager and head shepherd for the culling and sale of surplus sheep and cattle. He was one of the first to see the possibilities of irrigation on Canterbury flats. Beginning with small water-courses fed by creeks he went on to construct a main race from the Orari river ; control of this main race was later taken over by the local County Council.

Although his irrigation schemes were highly successful, his attempts to improve hill country by ploughing were doomed to failure. Keen to make two blades of grass grow where one had grown before, he had small patches of ground ploughed on the tops of hills and spurs where the black soil was only a few inches deep. When the sour clay beneath was turned up, it would grow nothing but Cape weed and Yorkshire fog.

In those days, ploughing cost only 7/6 per acre. We soon found, however, that the surface sowing of grass seed gave much better results. A generous man, Mr. Tripp had a good name among the very numerous swaggers of his time, and as many as five hundred of them called at Orari Gorge in a single year. One day, while driving back to the Gorge from Geraldine, he picked up a swagger who was bound for the same place. Not recognising the station owner, the swagger began to talk about ' old Tripp ', telling stories more entertaining than accurate. Not until this garrulous swagger climbed down from the buggy, at the top of the cutting, did Mr. Tripp remark : ' I'm old Tripp ! '

So numerous were the gentlemen of the road, that a special bunk house was built for them at Orari Gorge.

There is another story which might fit in here. In the first place I must mention that in the old days at some stations, when a swagger arrived, he reported himself to the owner or the manager and received a ticket which he had to present to the station cook. He then either received ' spuds and mutton ' or sat down at the table with the station hands. At Orari Gorge they cooked their own meals in a separate hut which was kept for swaggers and there no ' tickets ' were issued.

In 1885 C. G. Tripp went to England. One day travelling by train with a cousin, he dozed off to sleep as the day was hot. When the guard came to collect the tickets, he tapped Mr. Tripp on the shoulder saying ' tickets please '. He roused himself and the guard repeated ' tickets please, sir '. C. G. Tripp replied ' go to the cook, spuds and mutton you know '. The guard no doubt came to the conclusion the passenger was not ' all there ! '

In the early days, most of the guests at Orari Gorge were bachelors, and for that reason the spare room at the station became known as the ' Bachelors' room '. At one period an Irish visitor from Cracroft, a sheep station north of the Rangitata, was occupying this room, and early each morning, Mr. Tripp used to rush in pull up the blind and pull the clothes off his bed. Unknown to the host, the young man was transferred to another room, and another visitor, a girl, took his place. Next morning, when Mr. Tripp hurried through his usual routine, the confusion was terrible, and called for long, careful explanations from Mrs. Tripp.

As her husband could not bear the sight of blood, this lady was often called upon at a moment's notice, to render first aid to accident victims.

Messrs Acland and Tripp allowed no colonial informality to mar their observance of English customs. In the Christmas – New Year week, the two families always

met at Peel Forest for a picnic, and I always noticed the manner in which the heads of these houses addressed each other. It was invariably :

'Good morning, Acland.'

'Good morning, Tripp.'

Even after forty years of friendship, there was no casual use of Christian names. Although the two were firm friends, they enjoyed nothing better than attempts to get the better of each other in a deal in stock.

To these picnics, we usually drove a four-in-hand. If we happened to have four matched horses accustomed to this formation all was well, but more often than not, the team included one or two substitutes which caused no end of excitement. Miss Bella Button was an expert horsewoman who was never happier than when driving a scratch four-in-hand team. She would on occasions ask me to rig one up too, for a picnic party or some such thing. A lot of entertainment was caused.

Chapter 5

PIGHUNTING

IN THE EARLY DAYS at Orari Gorge, pighunting was one of our favourite sports. With the two terriers , 'Whisky' and 'Frisky', we could stop any boar ; the difficulty was to kill him, after he was bailed, without injuring the dogs. Both of them, however, died natural deaths after living to a good old age. Sheep dogs became very cunning with pigs, especially if they survived a rip from a boar's tusk.

In the early eighties, three of us went pig hunting at Pleasant Gully, where in warm, sheltered gullies, pigs were very plentiful. After we had separated, a mate above me had a shot at a very large sow, which came on down the side of a spur towards me. As she was veering away, I fired at her, and to my alarm, she turned and came straight at me. There was not cover, and so all I could do was to drop on one knee for a steady aim, wait until the last possible moment and fire my single barrel carbine.

She dropped dead, within a few feet of me, thank goodness, for a sow's bite can be nasty. No doubt her savagery was due to a litter planted somewhere in the bush.

Another time, during the holidays, while on the way home after pig hunting with a cousin, we put the two terriers and two sheepdogs into a big clump of bush. Presently, the dogs gave tongue, and we tied our horses and hurrying into the bush, we found a cattle track, and it soon became clear that pigs and dogs were coming flat out along the track. I just had time to tell my cousin to shin up a tree on his side, and to take the pig nearest to him, while I did the same. Down they came, full cry, and at the two shots

both pigs dropped dead, the dogs going head over heels across the carcases.

The greatest pig hunter in my day was Archie McFie. With fair hair, reddish complexion, and blue eyes, Archie was extremely hardy and strong, although slightly built. When out killing pigs at so much per tail, he scorned a blanket, but would take two old bags.

When he went out to the back country in winter, his whole outfit was made up of tea, sugar, salt, dog and spear. The spear had been given to him by George Dennistoun. The salt was for preserving the pigs' tails, which were worth a shilling each. If Archie found himself a long way from his camp, at nightfall, he would find a pig's lair, having first killed the boar, and sleep in it. These nests consist of a mass of dry fern and tussock, which is usually clean and very comfortable.

McFie would allow any boar to charge him, and then spear it down the mouth or through the chest into the heart.

On one occasion, after spending most of a winter out in the back country, he brought in a collection of several hundred tails. After Mr. Tripp had counted them, Archie's conscience got the better of him :

' Mr. Tripp, I would not like to 'do ' you,' said he. ' Some of those tails are manufactured ! '

' Show me, Archie,' said Mr Tripp.

The hunter then demonstrated how, when the weather was too rough for pig killing, he made those ' tails ' from a thin strip of skin, rolled round a twig, and dried to a life-like curl. With a few bristles from the back of a skin poked into the end of each artificial, they were so cleverly made that it was almost impossible to detect them among the real pigs' tails. Mr. Tripp was so delighted with Archie's ingenuity, that he said he would pay for the lot.

Some men working near what is now the Silverton homestead, once saw such a strange apparition moving down the Orari riverbed and they went across to investigate.

On his way into the station, McFie had paused to wash himself and his clothes in the river. Not wanting to waste time, he had then hung the clothes on a long manuka pole, and with this portable clothes line over his shoulder he was marching down the riverbed clad in a pair of boots.

One day when we were mustering, a couple of miles from the homestead, my dogs chased an old boar down a creek bed until he tumbled into a deep hole. As he had no hope of getting out, I thought it would be better to kill him with a boulder than to let him die of starvation, but my best efforts had no more effect than to make him shake his head. Time was passing, and my mustering mates getting ahead, so I took a last shot with a stone about the size of a tennis ball. To my surprise, and relief, it killed the boar stone dead.

The biggest pigs I ever saw were in Peel Forest. On one hunting trip, on the Mt. Peel side of the Forest, Ben Moorehouse and I saw a huge boar crossing a clearing above us. Although we did not get him, he looked as big as a six-months old calf, and Moorehouse remarked that there was the biggest pig he had ever seen.

There are many other pig hunting stories I could recall but they would take up too much space.

STATION STOCK

In the early days, Orari Gorge carried nearly 50,000 Merinos. While the sheepfarmer of to-day can profit by the experiences of earlier settlers, we had to experiment to find the most suitable sheep for the country, and by the use of Leicester rams I obtained a halfbred type which did very well on that flat country. The first cross, Leicester ram and Merino ewe, brought halfbred lambs; by mating these, in due course, with Leicester rams we got a true threequarter-bred which stayed true to type.

In later years, some of the Merinos picked up footrot from the flats, and spread it over the hill country, and as merinos are peculiarly susceptible to footrot we finally got rid of this breed. It is worthy to note that they have been brought back to the Blue Mountain by R. Buick, who now owns that part of the original station.

In place of the merinos, we used Corriedales and Romneys. By using Corriedale rams we were able to breed from Romney two tooth ewes, which gave a lot of trouble when mated with Romney rams.

The return of the merino to Blue Mountain country will make a big difference to the supply of ewes suitable for fat lamb breeding in the Geraldine district. Each year, I used to send 2,000 cull two-tooths, as well as older ewes, to the Geraldine yards, but from a merino flock no ewes suitable for the plains will be sold.

Most of the cattle with which Orari Gorge was originally stocked were Shorthorns and Herefords. Many years later, the station carried a fair number of Black Polls, which are doing well to-day. About 25 years ago, Bernard Tripp acquired some pure bred Friesian milking cows, but we found these a real nuisance. The cows had to be grazed on the best of pastures : they required a lot of winter feeding and their progeny had to be photographed and registered. All this meant a lot of work.

After carrying these Friesians for many years, we found it increasingly difficult to get a man, or boy, capable of looking after a good milking herd, so we sold them and made other arrangements for milk. In the eighties, the station had no difficulty in getting good boys. As far as I can remember, nearly every Woodbury man who worked at the Gorge started as a cowboy, and almost all of them became good workers. Money was not everything. They wanted to learn, and many of our best stock agents, auctioneers, sheep buyers, and carpenters, started on low

wages at Orari Gorge. In those days, a man who was energetic, and thrifty, did well afterwards – but it depended on the man.

Some of the original Shorthorns and Herefords became rather wild. On the way home from one cattle muster, I noticed a cow down in a gully near some bush, which evidently did not want to join the main mob. It looked as though she had a calf hidden, and when I sent a boy down to move her along she rushed him. The boy shot up a light sapling which was not strong enough to carry his weight, and every time it swayed low enough, the cow prodded him with her nose. Luckily, her horns never quite reached him. Having a stock whip, I rushed down, found the calf and started the pair down the gully to join the mob. Instead of being frightened, the boy laughed and quite enjoyed the adventure.

On another occasion, when the same boy was helping to draft cattle in a stockyard, an old cow made a rush at him from behind. At my shout, he dived for the rails, just a little too late. The cow caught him and sent him over the top rail – but he got up unhurt and laughing. Having unlimited pluck, that boy always managed to come through his troubles smiling. In those days, both old hands and young had any amount of courage, and would work any hours as long as there was work to be done.

We had a good average lot of horses, most of which were bred on the place. After weaning, the young ones were run on hill country on which they became so sure footed that one could ride them almost anywhere. I usually had them handled and taught to tie up at the age of about one year, and as they never forgot these first lessons they were much easier to break in a couple of years later. We had several Welsh cobs. Although these were excellent on the hills, they were too heavy in chest and shoulders to be easy hacks.

Some of our horses were so reliable on the hills that we could muster cattle off the roughest country in comparative safety.

Orari Gorge has always had a team of mules for the packing of stores, fencing material, timber and iron for the building of huts. When you put a few sheets of iron on each side of a mule, you can see only the tips of its ears.

One mule, called Ned, was procured many years ago from Cashmere. When I got to know him, he was about forty years old and a bit short tempered; every now and then, after being loaded, he would quietly land both saddle and pack over his head, very often without breaking a strap. Thin, with a good wither, old Ned was probably out of a thoroughbred mare. I always found that the best mules, and indeed the best of any stock, had some breeding on the maternal side. Never known to have a sore back or a girth gall, old Ned was a hardy old sinner.

Mules live and work to a great age. As they are very hardy, do not require covering, and carry heavy loads they are really useful pack animals.

Some of those at the Orari Gorge were clever and persistent at opening gates with a spring hook. I have seen a gate fastening polished as bright as a new coin by the teeth of a mule determined to open that gate.. As strange horses were always terrified of our mules, there were lively scenes on the station when the hacks ridden by visiting stockmen saw these strange animals for the first time.

On one occasion, a quiet station mare went completely mad. While a girl was riding her across a paddock near my house, the mare stopped suddenly, then started to back and play the fool. Jumping off, the rider led her back to the house and tied her up, and when I looked at her later on she seemed to be quite all right. When I started to lead her back to her paddock, however, she suddenly broke away and

began to blunder through fence after fence. Presently she hit the sheepyards. After that she went through a lot more fences, using her weight to burst through barb wire which cut her terribly, and finally she got into a small ditch near a fence with her hind feet in the wires, and there she stuck. With her eyes sticking out, she looked completely mad, and she was in any case so badly cut about that all we could do was to shoot her. Three days elapsed before we got all the damage repaired. This mare was formerly so quiet that for several years she had been used as a ladies' hack.

Chapter 6

THE SECOND GENERATION

AMONG THE PUBLIC there is a feeling that none of our early settlers were ever short of money. The truth is, however, that some of them were just as hard hit by the bad times of 1895 as were their successors in 1921 and 1933. When C. G. Tripp died, he was not well off, and it was left to his sons to get the station back on its feet after the disastrous snow of 1895.

After obtaining law degrees in England, Howard and Leonard Tripp returned to practice law in New Zealand : Howard with the firm of Tripp and Rolleston in Timaru and Leonard with Chapman and Tripp in Wellington. When I left Orari Gorge for the Chathams in 1893, Bernard took over the management of the station until my return in 1908, and in future years he became one of the best sheep men in New Zealand. In 1895 after the great snow storm (when Orari Gorge alone lost 10,000 sheep) Bernard and Jack, who each had £750, asked Simon McKenzie, an old friend, to suggest an investment for their money. McKenzie heard that the owner of Glentanner wanted to sell the run and remaining stock for £3,000. He suggested that they should go into partnership and buy the property and he, McKenzie, would take a half share. This was agreed to and Jack was appointed Manager of the property. After holding it for about eighteen months, they sold it to Leo Acland for £5,000. Another very profitable deal made by Bernard and others involved the purchase at a low figure, of a cattle station in Queensland. For the sum of one guinea, Clement Wragge, the celebrated meteorologist, gave Bernard a weather forecast for several years ahead, and

that forecast of the Queensland climate turned out a winner. After several good seasons, as predicted by Wragge, Bernard sold this station at a big profit. The next year brought a serious drought.

After making a study of the wool question, Bernard was one of the first sheepmen to suggest that farmers from New Zealand, Australia and South Africa should form a Board to encourage scientific research into the uses of wool and to advertise its advantages. He attended a conference in Australia at which the original Board was formed. The Joint Organisation which dealt so successfully with wool stocks accumulated by Britain during the war is one of the offshoots of the original Wool Board.

After working at Orari Gorge, Jack Tripp managed Arthur Hope's Raincliff station and then Glentanner. In later years he settled at Silverton, just across the Orari from the Gorge, and farmed that property until his death.

LATER YEARS

In 1910, the Four Peaks country and a lot of flat land near Orari Gorge station was taken over by the Government for closer settlement. It was unfortunate that the Chief Surveyor of the date, when dividing the 'Tripp Settlement' block into farms, refused to take offers of advice from the Tripp Brothers, who through experience, knew just how this land should have been divided. Some of the land was hilly, and sour, some flat and fertile. While settlers who took over the dry, stony flats, did well enough, others who were given sections on sour downland found it difficult to make a living. In later years, the use of lime has brought a great improvement to this sour country, but its first farmers had a hard time.

Thus reduced in extent, the station had to sell more than 25,000 sheep. This sale, managed by the firm of

Guinness and LeCren lasted for three days, while the Orari Gorge yards were thronged by buyers from near and far. As the sale was held in March, and as heavy rain fell for several days beforehand, we had great trouble in collecting big mobs of ewes and lambs. With every gully full of water, we spent most of the time in carrying lambs across the creeks.

The mustering, yarding, drafting and counting of so many sheep made a lot of work. I had a good head shepherd in Simon Rae, and a good team of men, but the weather was a real handicap.

From our side, the prices obtained at that sale were satisfactory. The sheep brought an average of £1 per head, and cattle, horses, and implements sold readily enough.. One old wagonette was bought for only a few shillings.

Before 1910, the first motor vehicles had arrived in New Zealand. On his way from Timaru to Orari Gorge for the sale, Howard Tripp got one of these stuck in the Sweetwater Creek, north of Geraldine, and as a man of action he decided on extreme measures. Taking off all his clothes except his shirt, he went into the water and proceeded to wind his car out by swinging the starting handle, while delighted spectators on their way to the sale, cheered his efforts. He not only got the car out, but got the engine to start, and on the last lap of his journey he roared past two Orari Gorge horsemen who were hurrying down to pull cars out of the creek. Those two spent the rest of the day in extricating other vehicles which failed to cross under their own power.

From 1910 until I retired in 1935, Orari Gorge carried an average of 23,0000 sheep. During the war of 1914-18, we had the same difficulties which made it hard for everyone to maintain routine work, but our worst period came in the influenza epidemic, which followed the Armistice. At

its worst in early summer, this plague put several musterers out of action, and while out on the hill, we had to leave several sick men in huts or tents, with others to look after them. In spite of this rough and ready nursing, none of our men died.

In the burning of tussock, a subject now under much discussion, I found that burning was most satisfactory when the tussocks were half wet. If a fire could be made to run through the tops, without burning down into the hearts, one got fresh palatable growth without weakening the tussock. We never burned in nor'-west weather, or when the ground was bone dry. On large blocks it was necessary to burn in patches, using one's judgment in lighting the fires.

Mr. Tripp was particularly keen about burning but as far as the tussock land was concerned, especially the sunny facings, he always said the grass should be burnt as far as possible when the ground was damp so as not to destroy the roots. The dark facings and the lawyers and scrub should be burnt whenever the country was dry enough. If a man who was sent out to burn tussock found it impossible to make a fine run, he would gather up a lot of wet cabbage leaves and flax and pile them on top of a wood fire, and as long as Mr. Tripp saw a big smoke boiling out of some gully he would be satisfied. While burning fire breaks on the flats, he would get a couple of men to put the fires out behind him, and as he was always in a hurry these men had a nerve-racking job.

FIRE

Late on a night in 1922, the shearer's cook called me on the telephone to say that the shearers' whare was on fire. As he gave the news, his foot went through the floor, and by the time I reached the scene nothing could be done.

Not far from the blazing two-storied whare there were twelve hundred sheep in the woolshed, but as a nor'-west wind was blowing flame and sparks away from the shed we decided that it was not necessary to let the sheep out.

A spark from ashes emptied outside the whare had evidently blown into some dry stuff beneath the floor. By the time the twenty men sleeping upstairs were awake, flames were roaring up the inside staircase, but all were able to escape down a fire escape which I had had built in the previous summer. As some of the men had been flustered by the fire, a lot of blankets and other gear that could have been saved, were burnt, as well as all the pots, pans and cutlery on the lower floor. In the excitement, no one thought of the shearers' saddles and harnesses in an iron lean-to on the side of the whare, so they went the same way as the rest.

When these men put in their claims for the value of the gear lost, nearly all of them were extremely reasonable. A more pressing question, however, was the provision of shelter and food for so many men. Spare rooms at the station and manager's cottage were filled and some shearers camped on baled wool piled in the shed ; at breakfast time they came to the station kitchen in relays. There was no grumbling ; and everyone did their best.

The original part of the shearers' whare had been built of bricks which tumbled down in the heat of the flames from the wooden sections. Many early buildings, including the Mt. Peel homestead, were built of bricks made on the spot, at £1 per thousand, by bricklayers who later did the building.

After the fire, bricks from our shearers' whare were used to make a swagger's hut. For the shearers, new sleeping quarters were built. The building used by station hands

was cut into two sections, towed down to the horse paddock, west of the woolshed, and re-erected as a general dining room and station hands' whare.

RANDOM MEMORIES

About sixteen years ago, a member of the British Government, L. E. Amery, came out to New Zealand, keen to collect pictures of country life. Bernard Tripp warned me to expect him at the Gorge on a certain date, so I collected up a mob of good crossbred two tooth ewes and had them ready in the yards.

At the visitor's request, we moved these sheep up and down a terrace while he wound at his movie camera, taking pictures which must have looked very well.

'Are there many horses on the place?' he asked.

When we brought in a bunch of horses and mules, which were fresh and frisky, Amery wound furiously at his camera, evidently feeling that at last he had found the real 'wild west'.

His next suggestion was about cattle. Close at hand, there were a dozen milking cows, used to an unvarying routine. When we rounded them up, at the wrong time of day, and in a hurry, they entered into the spirit of the day, galloping around with tails high in the air.

The visitor's next pictures were of a dog trial, staged by F. F. Johnstone, a shepherd from Peel Forest, with a few wethers that were in the yards.

When Mr. Amery got back to Britain, he showed these pictures to a great many people, so they must have been good enough to make his visit a success.

Each Christmas Day there were twenty or thirty people at dinner in the Orari Gorge homestead. After one such dinner, noticing the approach of threatening clouds, I called out to a group of cousins that I was going down to fill the woolshed with sheep, and a lot of volunteers decided to lend a hand. So many assistants made the job unusually

difficult, but in the end we got the shed filled. Very hot, I leaned against the door for a spell, then suddenly felt myself swaying. 'Too much exercise, on a very full stomach,' I thought, and looked slyly at the others to see if they had noticed my unsteadiness. They were all swaying, looking at each other with sickly grins – then suddenly we realised that one of South Canterbury's rare earthquakes had occurred. Soon afterwards, heavy rain began.

At Orari Gorge, in the early days, we had a red wagonette which did a lot of service. First used on the Christchurch-Sumner service, it was bought by C. G. Tripp, and used as a family conveyance. One Sunday, when most of the men were away, I harnessed a couple of horses into this wagonette, and got halfway down a cutting between stable and homestead, before I realised that the brake would not hold. The weight on their tails made the horses bolt, but after skidding wildly around various corners, they stopped in the usual spot in front of the front door.

Loaded with passengers, we started for the Woodbury Church. At the first small dip in the road the horses, afraid that the wagonette would run on to them, bolted again. Luckily, one of the maids had walked ahead to open the first gates, which we approached at the gallop. Near the second gate, a passenger sitting next to me made a grab at the reins, but after I had discouraged him with my elbow, we managed to get through safely. Swinging the horses to the left uphill, I stopped them on a cutting, and glanced back to see how the passengers were feeling. A burly cadet named Acland Hood was holding Mr. Tripp down, using sheer force to prevent him from jumping out, but Mrs. Tripp was her usual composed self, sitting quietly in her place.

The year 1885 brought the heaviest gale I can remember. The iron roof was ripped off our stable, complete with 3 x 4 scantlings, and tossed down on to the station homestead. In Burke's Pass the church was blown over;

at Peel Forest, a hut with a man inside it was rolled over and over for more than a hundred yards. When two teamsters crawled home they could not open the stable door, and had to unharness their horses outside. Musterers on high country often have to crawl over ridges in windy weather.

On another windy night, I camped with three other men in a tent outside Sutherland's hut, which was already full of musterers. Although our tent was well anchored, it blew down, and as we had no hope of getting it up again, we had to let it flop around on us all night.

A happy occasion in the history of Orari Gorge which I attended, was a reunion of employees. This was held on May 7th, 1949, when nearly 300 persons from all over New Zealand were the guests of Leonard Tripp. With them came their families, and in some cases, several generations who had worked on Orari Gorge.

Leonard Tripp extended a welcome to the guests at a Luncheon held on the grounds and said : 'We must never forget all we owe to the pioneers, both men and women'.

He then paid a tribute to men from the station who had given their lives in three world wars. 'We must never forget them,' he said.

He was pleased to see so many old hands present, some of whom had worked under his father. One guest spoke of the spirit of friendship that had always existed between employer and employee on the station.

In the afternoon, many of the old hands visited the homestead, mens' quarters and woolshed. Memories of former days were recalled. Shearing feats, and many old yarns were told.

Chapter 7

CONCLUSION

ORARI GORGE TO-DAY is a very much smaller station than it was in the days of Mr. C. G. Tripp. Although changes were inevitable, the old homestead remains, full of memories of earlier days. The huge visitors' book, dating back to 1878, tells of weddings, Christmas parties and records the names of many people who have enjoyed the hospitality of Orari Gorge. On the bookshelves, there are big volumes of copies of letters written by Mr. C. G. Tripp, in the writing which even he himself could not read, and on the walls are photographs of those who served the station, as well as family groups and distinguished guests.

To-day, men and women who once travelled in drays along the rough roads which formerly led to the station, can reach Orari Gorge from Timaru in less than an hour. But the early days, with their hardships and triumphs, still live in the minds of surviving pioneers.

APPENDIX

Among shepherds who worked on Orari Gorge were :—

HEAD SHEPHERDS :

Andrew Young
William Grant
Andrew Grant
Thomson McKay
Hugh McQuinn
James McNaughton
Simon Rae
James Boa
Philip McLeod (Present Head Shepherd)

SHEPHERDS :

William Tait
1. Alexander McDonald ('Black Sandy')
2. Alexander McDonald ('Wild Sandy')
3. Alexander McDonald ('Little Sandy')

Locky Grant
John Grant
William Irving
Simon Mackenzie
Murdock McLeod
William Lambie
Kenneth McClennon
Christopher Johnstone
Finley Johnstone
Edward Turton
John Turton
Alexander McIntosh
Donald McDonald
Francis Ray

Robert Gillespie
Benjamin Baker
Robert Shaw
Alfred Austin (Jerry)
Donald McDonalad
Roland Evans
James Boa (Junior)

MUSTERERS :

Thomas Stevens
George Evans
James Evans
Edward Evans
Henry Klee
John Campbell
John McKinnon
James Lorgesley
Michael O'Halleron
Roland McMillan
Henry Ford
Samnel Gould
Arthur Irving
George Wood
Godfrey Burrows
James Johnston
Daniel Scully

N.B. These are names I remember though there may be many others that I cannot call to mind.

EARLY DAYS :

Cadets who worked on Orari Gorge included :—

L. Matthias
J. Randall
V. Musgrave

J. Bond
A. Hope
W. F. Somerville

1883 ONWARD :

A. J. Blakiston
C. V. Swabey
L. A. Thruston
C. E. Eyre
B. Empson
G. Pinckney
G. W. Geddes
S. Palmer
A. L. Meason
L. N. Bartrop
M. Harper
L. Acland
A. G. Miskin
W. Acland Hood
A. V. Hutchinson
C. B. Kingsley
W. F. Herron
T. J. Saville
C. T. Bentley
C. Montague Ormsby
Norman Hope
H. D. Were
G. Harper
R. Harper
J. Maling

LATER CADETS :

C. M. Cazalet
John Tripp
David Laidlaw
Jack Acland
Harry Crampton

Bernard Pridie
Basil Unwin
Basil Shaw
Peter Blakiston
David Tripp
Daniel Studholme
Richard Herd
George Harper
John Burdon