

A Sheep a Month is Enough for Men on Marion Island

MR. J. H. KING, a senior meteorologist of the Union Weather Bureau, returned to Pretoria yesterday after a visit in the frigate Transvaal to Marion Island, in the Antarctic—"a land of mutton-eaters, bleak bogs and innumerable penguins."

The frigate reached the island on October 26 and was able to land stores, including six sheep, from its motor boat on the same day.

The nine officials on the island slaughter a sheep a month for meat, and occasionally add penguin eggs to the menu.

Mr. King said that, after landing stores on two consecutive days, the frigate rode a storm in the shelter of the southern side of the island.

The wind reached the hurricane strength of 75 miles an hour and heavy rain pelted down into the choppy sea.

"But a worse gale was to come on the voyage home," he said. "A heavy swell was running, with waves 40 feet high, and spray beat over the ship in a storm which lasted for 36 hours."

About 100 miles from Marion Island, Mr. King saw the Aurora Australis, a rare sight which has not yet been seen from the weather office on the island. White, yellow and green lights were draped like a coloured curtain over part of the horizon.

OWN HOUSEWORK

Mr. King said that the nine men left on the island were fit. They had little spare time because, in addition to their ordinary duties, they had to do all their own housework. There were no servants.

Several cats, however, were on the unofficial staff of the weather office on the island. They were imported to keep down mice introduced from a wrecked ship some years ago.

There was a cat in almost every room of the living quarters, and no dogs to worry them, he said.

Millions of penguins inhabited the island, which was also a breeding ground of the wandering

albatross and the sooty albatross. "The albatrosses build a nest raised about a foot above the swamp. The female lays a single egg, and the chick is fed by its parents for a year until it is able to take its first flying lesson."

FEEDING BIG CHICKS

"I saw big chicks, not yet ready to fly, sitting in nests waiting for the next tit bit. It is surprising to see birds so young being fed by their parents," Mr. King.

Something New