

# THE ZOOLOGIST WHO TURNS TREES INTO TABLES

By **BABETTE HAYES**

I doubt if there are many zoologists designing furniture, but Jeremy Griffith, of Cremorne Point, Sydney, is doing a roaring trade in beautiful tables, benches and chairs.

Jeremy gained his BSc at Sydney University, then went to Tasmania for six years. While searching for the Tasmanian tiger he became fascinated by the State's great forests.

He still enthuses about the local axemen ("they're the best in the world and in tremendous shape because they cut hardwood while their Canadian counterparts cut softwood"), and the skyscraping hardwood trees ("Some in the Florentine Valley are 420ft high, and I have seen trees with butts—trunks—62ft around").

Tall stories run thick and fast among the axemen. "One old-timer told me about a very big tree," Jeremy said. "He and his mate had been cross-cutting into one side of it for about a week when they decided to walk around it to see how far they had to go.

"On the other side they found four men who had been chopping away at the same tree for a month! They left in disgust!"

Back in Sydney, Jeremy decided he wanted to do something with timber. (See photograph at right.)

A progressive sawmill which had pioneered a technique of artificially

seasoning large slabs of hardwood, co-operated with him.

Promising pieces without flaws are reserved for Jeremy, but only about one in every 100 is right for him.

"It is my aim to retain the very essence of the huge trees," he said, "For instance, the edges along the length of the tables are rough. The bark has simply been stripped off.

"I don't stain, fill or apply unnatural effects. For protection, one thin coat of matt sealer is used, then Scandinavian oil which leaves the wood with a natural glow and feel."

Each one of Jeremy's tables is numbered and a record is kept of its tree's history.

Jeremy uses no nails or bolts in his furniture. The only fixed joints are dowelled with wood. Tables and benches can be taken apart for easy transportation and are easily re-assembled.

The seats of chairs are made from solid timber, the backs are of untreated "saddle type" leather. One I saw even had a cattle brand on it!

Jeremy's standard table measures 76in x 33in (will seat eight people) and costs \$150; a bench is \$45 and a chair is \$48, with arms \$55. Freight is extra.

You can see this furniture at John Ogburn's Studio, 34 Harrington Street, Sydney, on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays only.

