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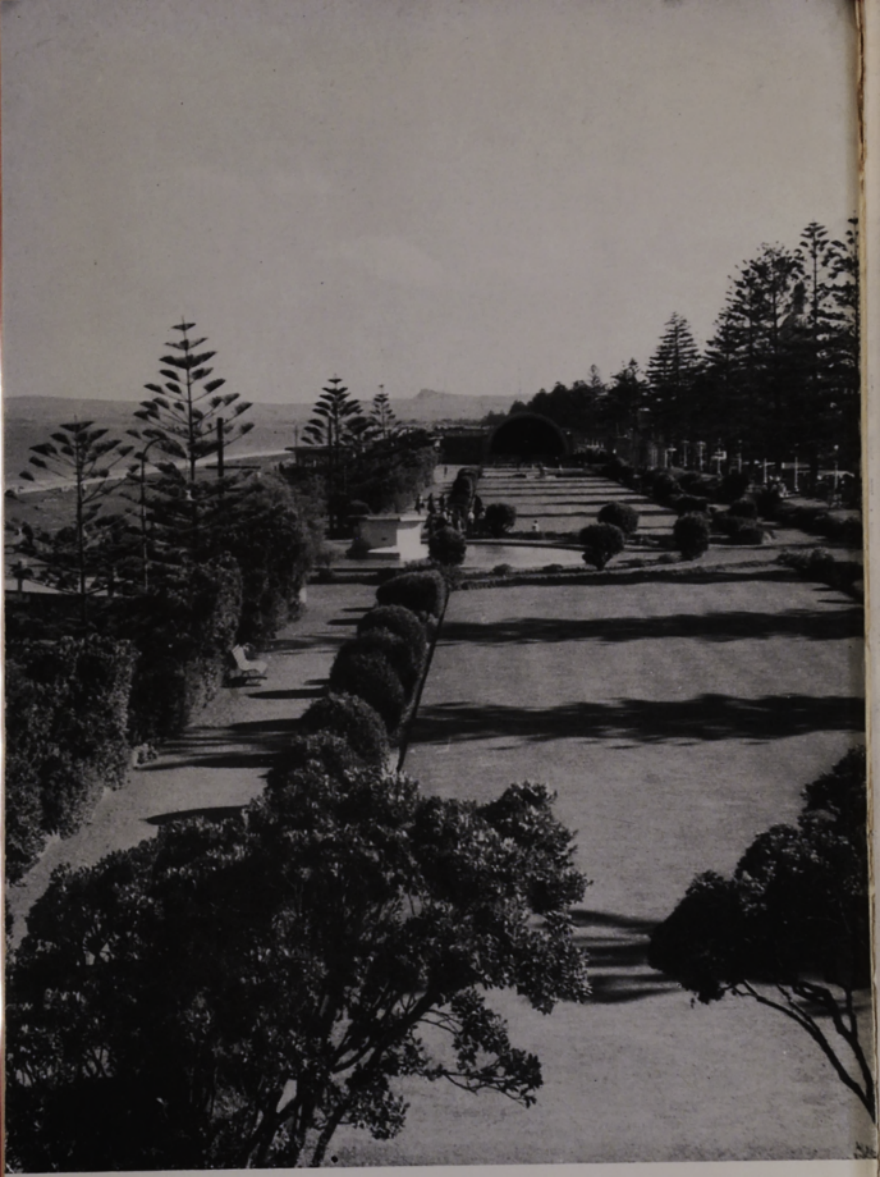
NEW ZEALAND BOOKSELLER'S REMINISCENCES



Marine Parade, Napier.

Photo: A. B. Hurst & Son.

New Zealand Bookseller's Reminiscences

by

ERNEST E. MARSDEN

Published by

MARSDEN BOOK COMPANY LIMITED

NAPIER

First Published 1955

SET IN LINOTYPE JANSON

PRINTED AND BOUND BY HALSTEAD PRESS, SYDNEY

To
My Grandsons
and Granddaughter Lynley

FOREWORD

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New Zealand is a very young country. Less than 100 years ago there were only a few isolated settlers and the Maori. In the comparatively short time since the early settlers pioneered the virgin land there has been an amazing development. Those early settlers have "passed on" and many of the stories of their early adventures and experiences died with them.

To-day, however, there are still settlers of the first generation of those early pioneers. Most of them have lived through the period during which New Zealand history has been made and their stories will be of incalculable value in the years to come. I have listened to many anecdotes of the early years related by these people, and I have heard them say repeatedly, "I could write a book of my experiences."

In his Reminiscences Mr Marsden has written such a book. In it he has covered a very wide field of anecdotes and impressions, which should prove of interest to a large section of the community. As one of the many South Islanders who, over the years, have settled in Napier, he shares with them an ardent love of the fair city of his adoption. He stresses the fact that Napier has been richly endowed by nature, particularly as to its climate, but he also pays tribute to those enthusiastic citizens who worked so hard and with such enthusiasm to develop the city into one of the most popular tourist resorts in New Zealand. He modestly mentions that he had worked with these enthusiasts for thirty years. This is quite true, and I would ask his readers to add Mr Marsden's name to his list when

they read his chapter eulogising those who have worked for the city's progress.

The terrific earthquake and its consequent fire which virtually destroyed the heart of Napier some twenty-five years ago was indeed a tragedy. In addition to suffering bereavement and personal injury, many of Napier's businessmen were financially ruined. Their future looked as black as the embers which were all that remained of their years of industry. Mr Marsden was a member of that group of stalwarts. They seemed to thrive on adversity. It is true they shared in the kindness and practical assistance which was extended so generously from all parts of the world, but they not only had the courage and determination to re-establish their own businesses over the years, but they found time to assist in the re-establishment of their city. They set an example of perseverance which could well be followed by those who are at the threshold of life.

Mr Marsden has reached the stage when he is able to indulge some of the pleasures and hobbies for which he has striven so long. He is able to enjoy a well earned leisure, but he has found it impossible to resist the creative energy which has contributed to the production of his Reminiscences. His book will not only prove of particular interest to his business associates, but he gives some worthwhile impressions, not the least of which is the ability to find satisfaction and enjoyment in the simple blessings of nature.

E. R. SPRIGGS,
Mayor of Napier.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

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A PLACE LIKE HOME

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THE morning star was shining brightly—it was two hours before dawn—taking on the brilliancy of a cut diamond through the icy air of a July morning.

A heavy fall of snow had blanketed the plains, so the going was heavy as I rode horse and saddle along the silent country roads of the Canterbury plains, muffled in a woollen scarf that was only partly successful in protecting me from the icy breeze that bit at my eyes and nose, with just sufficient bodily warmth to turn it into a rich vapour, which every breath produced.

It was an eerie experience, yet a satisfying one for a boy—healthy as I was in those days—riding along the quiet country roads in the yet untrodden snow, lightened somewhat on an unusually dark morning by the fluorescent reflection of the snow.

Every living thing was in repose. Even the beauty around was as yet undisclosed.

"On your way, Neddy," I encouraged my four-footed friend along, labouring, as was to be expected, in the soft crumbling mass underfoot, nostrils steaming with a steady vapour in the movement and warmth of the animal's body.

As the dawn approached the morning star faded, and the rising sun, on a sparkling expanse of white, heralded a new day—a day of clear and exhilarating freshness that only the aftermath of a snowstorm can bring.

"This is nature at its best—and worst," I could not help

¶ *In my runner days I was somewhat of a trick cyclist. Trafficless and copless Ashburton suited my stunts, and I got away with tricks impossible to-day. Facilitating delivery, I would ride handleless, slip on to footpaths, folding the paper meanwhile into a wedge shape (not screwed), and deliver it on to a verandah or through a window. Fortunately the window was usually open.*

but reflect as I saw the cattle, cut off from their usual sustenance, wandering towards the barns for their meted-out hay supply, while the sheep, half crusted with snow, were standing indifferent to the elements, or were nosing about in the snow for tufts of grass.

Against this the grandeur of nature that the snow had precipitated. Hedges everywhere capped with a belt of snow for miles; trees of diminutive and majestic height, bent in grotesque and fantastic shapes—a picture that is often put on canvas, yet inadequately conveyed. Nor can this canvas portray the hardships of a journey of this nature, however adequately protected.

Snow and frost—particularly frost—is no respecter of persons, especially in the latitude below forty-four degrees; and on the plains of Canterbury on a midwinter morning they can be particularly biting.

Evidence of this has been with me all through my life in the form of fingers of both hands set in my formative years with a decided curve—particularly the smallest fingers. This has been some annoyance to me because, being musically inclined, I lose expanse in the reach, and have therefore never been able comfortably to take a run of octaves on the piano, or span a flush of six strings on the guitar.

These hardships were mostly occasioned by the gripping of the handlebars of my cycle, and even the flailing

of the arms occasionally would put very little warmth or spirit into the fingers.

These frosty and occasionally snowy pre-dawn mornings are vivid in my memory.

On the credit side must be placed nature in reverse. A summer's day at dawn, with the sun like a huge fluorescent ball breaking over the horizon; the green fields, with the sheep bleating, and the lambs baa-ing, in the early mists of dawn; the majestic beauty of trees in their rich green sward scattered about in miniature forests as shelter for the stock, or the homes of the settlers.

"All's right with the world. This is the life," I thought, as I cycled along the country roads, through miles of waving golden grain.

The fact that I was doing it of necessity in the delivery of the morning *Mail*, and at half the price of a three star hotel dinner nowadays, in wages per week, did not take the edge off the pleasure. The lark was on the wing, and it was soul satisfying to listen to him in the quiet early morning light, trilling to the rhythm of the waving grain as it beat a soft tattoo in the breeze.

The expansive grain fields of Canterbury provide a very happy home for the skylark. His happy song is very much missed in the grainless areas of the North.

Well, I left the fresh country sweetness for the more enervating atmosphere of the town, and this was my home—Ashburton.

In the nineteen hundreds it was a quiet town, with little evidence of the noise and whirl of wheels that we see to-day. The occasional clap-clap of the horses' hoofs was heard, as the farmer brought his buggy in for the weekly supply, or his drays laden with grain and produce for the markets.

The streets were lit by gas. The onward roll of science, however, has put the lamplighter, with his stick and hook, into the legendary class.

Schooldays were somewhat trying, not because it was school, but because I was engaged on a newspaper run that required my attention during lesson periods in the morning.

Happily, I got away with the truancy, not so easy now, because of the slow movement of industry, and the slow trains in those days.

Consequent on this, my mathematical training was poor, as this was usually the lesson I missed. As it happened, later in life I could have done with it, and had to swat it up. However, I managed to wriggle through the fifth, and dodged the sixth.

Up to this period I was an afternoon runner also for the local paper, and had many happy after-school hours in association with the *Mail* and *Guardian* staffs.

I was always considered a trustworthy and conscientious runner, which is essential for work of this kind, and on my departure from the town later, the management gave me a glowing reference which materially assisted me later in life.

A brief recess from newspapers, and I was back on an improved morning run of a city newspaper, a job that retained respectable morning hours, not pre-dawn.

It looked as though I was destined to remain with newspapers all my life. Certainly it was healthy, open-air work, but no avenues of advancement attended it. It paid me well, even in those days of penny papers, and I opened a trading bank account and drew my own cheques.

The only stipulation in my young days as a banker was that I should not ask for an overdraft. I gradually built up a little nest egg.

The trials of a runner in Ashburton were no less arduous at times than the pre-dawn wintry mornings of other days. The town itself was subject to heavy snowfalls, raging north-westers, biting icy rains, and in all this the news-

paper show must go on. In all my experience, I never let a customer down.

I pondered on the work I was doing, and a more ambitious field of industry, and decided I should make an effort to improve my position in life.

With expanding newspapers and increasing circulation the financial returns were improving. Indeed, it was not long after my decision to branch out on something else, that the returns were sufficient to keep a married man and family.

A friendly bookseller, well meaning, one day gave me a jolt. "Look, Ern, you don't want to be doing this," knocking my bag, "all your life. Get after something better."

I pulled a doleful face. "I think you have something there. I believe I will."

I had occasion later in life, when I was well established in my present business, to meet that friend again, when he congratulated me on reaching the temporary top office in the Booksellers' Association—the chairmanship of a conference. He was remembering the time when he told me to turn the job in for something better.

I was not mechanically inclined, so I reckoned my best course was in a profession. At the time, correspondence courses were well established, and I considered this would be the best course to adopt, in the absence of local tuition, which was not available.

I started a correspondence course in accountancy, but my limited knowledge in arithmetic made the going somewhat hard, and I began to turn over in my mind the need for personal tuition, and how I could achieve it.

I studied my bank account and measured the possibilities of it seeing me through a commercial college in the city. I decided to take the risk, transferred my balance to the city office, shook hands with the teller, who wished me luck, and took train for Christchurch.

That is a story for another chapter.

FAMILY INTERLUDES

★

My earliest recollection of family life was when we were a barefoot four—Eva, Amy, Bill, and I, plus mother and father. Mother, a godly woman, with an intense love for children, which she would need to have to keep an even balance with us four; father, a labourer with the hands, continually battling with hardship to keep an ever growing and increasing family.

Sometimes we were down to rock bottom, when bread and dripping would be our sustenance. Even this could be quite palatable when flavoured with a little pepper and salt.

We, as children, never thought much about these things. We never knew anything of luxury, and as long as there was free air, room to play, and quite often country lanes to wander in, we never grumbled.

It is a pleasure to record that our country homes were our most satisfying times, engaged as we were on chores of childish interests, although the amenities were poor as compared with the town. I could always whistle along the country lanes, or at times give over to listen to the lark on the wing.

My first attempt to enter the social world as a writer was in composing a letter to my mother. We lived at Hornby at the time, and mother was in the home town with another baby on the lap. I managed to write a page of the news of the day, such as it was in quiet Hornby, and received a nice reply from mother, in which she said: "Dear Ernie.

¶ *Being the eldest of the family, there was an obligation put upon me to set an example of decorum and good behaviour, that others "seeing my good works would likewise follow". Since I lost close touch with them by some four hundred miles many years ago, I have slipped in my duty as a shining example, and can act only as a silent shadow.*

Lives, however, bound in a common bond, never fail to return to understanding.

got your welcome letter", and so forth, and finished up "when you write again, head it 'Dear Mother', not 'Dear Polly' ". This was dad's heading, and mother's pet name with her family.

Hornby is vivid in my memory for one experience. In those days trains were trains—only just. The carriages were high window affairs, with long hard wooden seats running along either side.

The fares were cheap, in keeping with the cheapness of the luxury, but we were still hard put to find the fares for the family to travel to Ashburton. On this occasion, mother looked at me very pathetically. "Look, Ernie, will you try and curl up on the seat while the guard passes through, so that you can pass for under age", and I was the eldest of the family.

I think that guard was the kindest on the road, because he had one eye shut when he went through our carriage.

Our home at Laurenson was one of the happiest memories of my young days. Perhaps it was because my brothers and sisters were more of a companionable age, and we enjoyed our play.

It was here I invented a new game which Bill and I played. Bill would lie on the grass with his arms and legs up, and I would straddle them, and Bill would shoot me over his head. Then my turn would come to lie on the ground with arms and legs up, and I then shot Bill over

my head. I broke his collarbone and put his arm in a sling for weeks.

We never played that game again, nor did we copyright it.

It was here I could laud it over the other schoolboys, and I couldn't get strapped, because my parents were caretakers of the headmaster's house, so he had to be nice to me in case mum put salt in his tea.

We moved across from here on to a big station, still in Laurenson, and I had my first experience of station life, and not so happy a time in an isolated place.

Unless you are actually engaged in the job of harvesting, rounding up cattle, or shepherding, as I wasn't, life on the farm is inclined to pall. The absence of social life, and contact with your relations, leads to fretting for the town lights again.

One experience there I will never forget. One bright spot in the life there was the occasional visit of a relation. I had gone to the station to meet my Aunt Millie, returning with her across the fields to the farm.

On the last stretch of the journey, dusk was drawing in, and a very heavy mist came up. We found ourselves safely at the gate entrance to a very large field—and they could be large in those days, and made what we thought was a diagonal cut to the homestead end gate.

After a good long walk we found we had wheeled round and came up against a fence barrier. In the heavy mist, with no moon or stars or landmark to guide us, we were in a quandary as to which way to turn. Eventually we set out along the fence and walked for what seemed hours, getting soaked with the mist, shedding tears in our misery, and even offering prayers for an early deliverance.

We arrived at last at the homestead gate thoroughly worn out and depressed. The sight of the homestead gate was the most welcome thing I have ever seen in my life.

Aunt Millie told me in later years the memory of it still lived with her.

Back to the home town again. I was then in my middle standard days and newspaper work, somewhat backward in my education because of the shifting around.

Our spiritual education was looked after. A godly mother kept the vision of hell fire before us if we were naughty, and inclined to stray from the right path.

At this time our more numerous family—Eva, Amy, Bill, Walter, Victor and Charlie, really enjoyed our Sunday School in the old Primitive tradition, with its picnics, harvest festivals, tea meetings, and socials, as marking a very important stage in our training, and the influence of which has been with us through life.

Ralph and Nell's spiritual guidance was to come later. after I left.

Often I look back and remember those stirring times when the old church used to ring with the spiritual acclaim of the old pioneers, steeped in spiritual fervour, with shouts of "Amen, brother. Praise God", ringing against the rafters. Nor would I wish to find a more spiritual tone or inspired singing than emanated from that church.

Most of my relations, including myself, were possessed of fair voices, and were a strong support in the choir, and through its work in part songs, anthems, cantatas, became an important unit in the musical life of the town.

Alas, this is all gone in the amalgamation of the Wesleyan and Primitive Methodist churches. The ghosts of yesterday walk through the chancels of that once famous church in Wills Street. When I visited it some years later, I was pained to see the building given over to a junk store.

Before the great trek began of my relations to the city of Christchurch, we lived much of the time in a musical atmosphere. We had the voices, and we loved singing. It went forth in a burst of harmony, as the occasion warranted.

I could pay a tribute here to my mother, who has long passed on, for the message she conveyed in song. Gifted with a pure soprano voice, she uplifted the hearts and souls of her hearers in a spiritual sense, until she often brought tears. Her memory is revered to-day.

In my young days, I was like most boys, looking for adventure, and I often found it, right or wrong.

Birdnesting was a feature, and Ashburton can boast—or did then—of fir and bluegum trees that could hardly be matched anywhere. To my credit I never came to grief, although, like most boys, I had some narrow shaves.

One adventure that nearly landed me in disaster was started in a neighbour's orchard. I always thought that orchards were made for little boys to rob, but this one wasn't, nor, I expect, are any made for that purpose.

The irate owner saw me as I was sneaking out with very poor loot. I thought the matter might end there, since he knew that "boys would be boys"; but no, he reported the matter to my parents. Mother scolded me in a Christian-like way, pointing out the evil thing in robbing orchards.

"Now, Ernie," she said, "you must go round and apologise to this neighbour, and tell him you will not do it again."

Of course I wouldn't. I had my lesson. I was real scared. "I don't want to go! I don't want to go!" I sulked, frightened of the consequences.

"You must go."

She never actually said he had threatened to go to the police, but I conjured up visions of the police coming for me and taking me to prison, so I reluctantly went round to apologise.

As it happened, he was a Christian gentleman, and he accepted my apology, and gave me a little homily on wrongdoing.

One day I was on a little wander tour with Bill and my two sisters, and we came to a creek of rather small dimen-

sions, which was spanned by a round log, apparently put there for the Blondin type of tramper.

"We've got to cross this," I said. "It will be easy enough."

My sisters hung back, a little uncertain of the risk.

"Come on," I said, leading one on to the makeshift bridge, and got her over safely, giving the other confidence.

However, as these things happen, in the middle of the log I lost my footing and took a header, while my sister hopped safely to shore. Then the commotion began.

"Ernie! Ernie! Oh, Ernie!" shouted my sisters, as I disappeared under water.

I was remembering that I could not swim, and began to feel frightened of the outcome. Down I seemed to go, and couldn't feel bottom.

Apparently instead of going down and down, the stream was moving me along under the water, and as soon as I made some effort with my arms to save myself, I broke surface.

I had only been under water about a foot. However, the relief on my sisters' and brother's faces was good to see. In my sober moments, I thought I was lucky to come off with only wet clothes.

So my boyhood days slipped by, and I was still anchored on a newspaper run at twenty, when I packed my one portmanteau and entrained for the big city and a new life.

CHRISTCHURCH BY THE AVON

★

THE big decisions of our lives are fraught with anxiety and sometimes fear, weighted for a time with homesickness, that no home away from home can cure, however humble the old home was.

This was my burden for a time. However, it was somewhat lessened by the accommodation offered me by friends of other days.

At the time, I was the only one of my relations to break away from the home town, so that "like home" comforts in the security of my own had to be taken secondhand.

My commercial education—the thing I had come for, was now uppermost in my mind. I measured my cash over a period of instruction, hoping that it would see me through to efficiency, and a job. Otherwise I would have to pack my port again and entrain for home. Not that that would worry me, or indeed worry anybody, because no matter how poor and hard pushed you are, there is always a place at home; but it would be a setback to the great adventure, and a second chance may never eventuate.

I saw my very good friend, Mr Gilby, of the Commercial College, because that was what he proved to be. Knowing my limited resources, he took me in hand and tried to hasten into my somewhat dull mind the arts of bookkeeping, shorthand, and typewriting.

In three months I obtained a working knowledge of bookkeeping, but only managed to effect a second grade

¶ *To the country towner, the vision of "the great white way" that symbolises that glamorous world, provides no alternative to success or defeat. You either win, or you lose. I hopped in, studied, and close to time made the grade. It was conscientious trying, more than great ability that got me started in my profession.*

in shorthand and typewriting. I was not particularly worried about this, as I considered the latter arts as sissy jobs.

When Mr Gilby gave me one of the happiest days of my life—and it certainly was, because I was almost at the end of my resources—by calling me from the class and introducing me to a business gentleman, a Mr Fountain Barber—a name well revered in the bookselling world, I was in fear and suspense lest it was something that wasn't going to happen.

He soon set my mind at rest by saying that he had recommended me to Mr Barber as a suitable applicant for his bookkeeping position—that is, to keep books of account, not sell them.

Needless to say I accepted, and thus was launched on a commercial life within three months of leaving home.

"Thank you very much, Mr Gilby, for all you have done." I was almost weeping with joy.

Those nervous first days in business were with me, of course, as they are with most people, but I made the grade, gradually getting into the selling end to fill in time. There was no "stick to one job" laws in those days. As it happens, this dual purpose job proved valuable to me later in life, and the change from sitting on a high stool—that is what they were in those times—made the job more interesting.

I was not content to drift along in a bookkeeper's job. I had ambitions to become a full blown accountant, so I took up the study of accountancy, and attended Canterbury College for lectures. Very extensive and painstaking

study is needed to get through this course, and I did not wholly make it. I completed six of the nine subjects, and may have gone on to completion, but various interruptions dampened my ardour, and I excused myself from study.

One was the losing of my job, and the other was romantic; but of the latter, it will be a very short story—I got married.

One of those cycles of hard times was hitting the businesses, and my good friend Mr Barber was forced to reduce staff, and since I was mostly an unprofitable employee, I was dismissed.

In passing, it is interesting to note that soon after this J. R. McKenzie opened up in cramped quarters in this very shop the second store in the extensive line of chain stores the firm controls to-day.

While with Mr Barber, an unfortunate incident happened, which later was to prove a great blessing to me.

The shop had been entered on one or two occasions after hours, and money and goods stolen. Since I was holding a key, and opening the shop in the morning, it was obvious I could be under suspicion. My integrity was never in question, but nevertheless I left under a cloud.

The means of entry was a mystery at the time, but I heard later from the staff that the entry was found to be an upstairs skylight.

At this time I was not married, and it looked as though unemployment was going to delay the event.

Something always turns up to those who have faith. I was engaged as accountant in Ashburton at the very office where I used to work as a barefoot runner—the *Guardian*.

For a time I carried on, happy in the prospect of a good job and rising pay, but I began to feel homesick now for the big city, and, of course, the young lady who was to be my wife.

I could have settled down in Ashburton, but I was not happy about that prospect.

Here's where tragedy has a happy ending. The very man whose employment I left under a cloud of suspicion, transferred to the opposition business along the street, gave the management a glowing account of my work, and helped to secure for me the position of accountant to a public company on whose staff he himself was employed.

So soon after this, my matrimonial career started, and I gave up all thoughts of taking my accountancy degree.

I had a very happy association with the firm of Simpson and Williams for over ten years.

During this time I had a family of two, lived in two rented houses, and eventually built my own.

My term with this firm came to an abrupt conclusion. I had ambitions to improve my position, being a fairly knowledgeable accountant, and was a close runner-up for a very good position that would take me away from book-selling, although a position somewhat involved with it.

My dismissal came through the breaking of a confidence. My prospective employer betrayed me to the management, and that was that.

My parents had taught us all the need to attend to our spiritual life, and I became an attendant at the Primitive Methodist Church, which was still in being at the time. There I had some happy associations with men of the Bible class, for whom I acted as organist. From this class men have gravitated to influential and top executive positions in various parts of the world.

Christchurch by the Avon. Truly it is a beautiful city, but it has its tantrums. Like Ashburton, it is subject to extremes of snow, frost and winds, but unlike Ashburton of my time, it abounds in comfortable conveyances to overcome these vagaries of nature.

One outstanding adventure during my residence in Christchurch was a motor cycle trip to the West Coast.

In the days of 1918 the Otira tunnel was not completed, and anyone essaying that trip would need to ferry the river, and do the journey over the mountains.

It was the time of blackberries, and delicious they were in the bush country of the West Coast, where they grow to perfection.

Missing the train at Springfield that would transport me over difficult country to the ferry at the Otira end, I decided to do the trip the hardest and most roundabout way, just for the experience of boasting my B.S.A. could do it. This was a road over which the gold escorts and supply wagons came from the West Coast in the early days, now much overgrown and in disrepair.

I climbed over the first few miles of hilly country with little incident. Country entirely devoid of habitation or the presence of a human being or an animal to break the monotony.

My first and only really stiff hill was in the early stages, and what a hill. It was not so much its steepness—it was bad enough—as the loose nature of the grit and dust, of which the climb was composed, that made it impossible for the wheels to grip.

I had perforce to push the heavyweight cycle up this slope, and in very slow stages, accomplished a hundred yards in an hour and a half. The only compensation for this was I could sit on the cycle and rest while covering level roads for a time.

I was by-passing the river which required the ferry, and encountering numerous stony creeks and dry water-courses, some of immeasurable distances, that looked almost impossible of negotiation. Certainly not mounted on the cycle. The only way was to put the power into the machine, and guide it bumping and straining over the stones.

I had several hours of this before striking and commencing the mountains proper.

By the time I had accomplished all the hazards of the early part of the trip darkness had fallen, and it found me isolated in the never never lands of the mountains, so snuggling up with very little cover—I had anticipated reaching accommodation the same day—I passed a very uncomfortable night in the autumn mountain atmosphere.

On the move at dawn to get up a little circulation. I accomplished without further incident, although arduous enough on tracks that were overgrown, the journey to the coast. There the beautiful scenery and bush-enclosed lakes provided some compensation for the more exhausting stages of the journey.

I wasn't very happy about doing the return journey over the same track, but this was decided for me by magneto trouble, impossible of repair there, so I coached back and transported the cycle overland.

There was one good deed I did on that trip. Arriving at the coast and before starting my coast trip, I met a like motor cyclist, who was contemplating doing the overland trip the return way. He took my advice and went the easier way.

At this time I had some success as an author. The only two serious attempts I made were both published. One story was called "Rarer Than Gold", and was suggested by my overland trip to the coast, recounting the days of the gold rush, and was published by an Australian magazine; but, oh! the remuneration. I did not feel encouraged to carry on.

However, later a local editor offered prizes for contributions to a Christmas issue, and I entered for this. It was a humorous domestic story called "Two's a Company" and was suggested at the time by the then frequent event of two people forming a limited company.

Apparently I must have tickled the editor's fancy, for he gave me a very generous amount for the story and

published it in the Christmas issue; but I did not actually get into the prize money.

These successes were not sufficient to tempt me to carry on writing. It was evident I would not make a living that way. That does not alter the fact, however, that many top authors have written many rejected stories before getting into living money.

So, in the evening of life, I take up the pen again, and tell, not a fictionised story of other days, but a human story of achievement.

IT'S AN ILL WIND

★

I WAS not overworried at the loss of my job on this occasion. I had visions of some day leaving the confined and stuffy atmosphere of the office, and taking to the wide open spaces; indeed, quietly, I had made preparation for this some time back.

In common with countless enclosed workers, who wished for the open air life, I had taken an area of orchard land at Loburn, in North Canterbury, consequent on a wide campaign at the time to settle people at the very happy business of fruit growing.

The industry was being fostered by the Government in the interests of export, the attainment of which is now apparent.

Instruction in orcharding was available, and I took a practical course around the neighbouring orchards, and obtained my ticket; so with joyous anticipation I, and my family, departed for this new life.

Some of my orchardist friends were already on the job, finding sustenance while their orchards came into bearing, by working on neighbouring agricultural farms, or for absentee orchard owners.

A little cottage had been built on the property, together with a two-story barn, poultry house, brooder shed, and to make the place complete, a cow bail, with a Jersey cow as provider, and my wife, who had some experience, as milkmaid.

However, the cow, both literally and figuratively, determined not to stay with us, hopped the barricade and re-

¶ *The great things of life are not what we expect. They come to us through wind, rain, freeze, earthquake, or ill health, and leave us high and dry, or in the depths. More often the latter. It is the ability to rise again that is the test of our strength. As far as I was concerned, I could see "the writing on the wall".*

turned home. I never realised until then that a cow is much like a cat—the homing instinct is strong.

After doing this a second time we let her stay home. So the churn had to go, and with it the happy thought of profit from butter and cream on the dessert.

In the selection of trees and varieties, I had observation and other experience to guide me, and started off the trees in the best tradition.

In later years the report came to me that my pioneer work was wise, and the orchard was one of the best in the area.

I was years away from fruit. With export in mind, the orchard was mainly in apples. Stone fruit came along a little earlier, and would be represented in small patches, as welcome revenue from the local markets, while the apples were coming to profit.

My only immediate revenue was from poultry, plus a little in the bank.

I had built a long poultry house to take an ultimate three hundred hens, the revenue from which, with the sale of breeding stock I hoped to develop, would keep us comfortable in the meantime, with the property free of any encumbrances.

I was settled on the property only a few weeks, happy, as was my family, in the prospect of something to be achieved, when there came upon me one of the greatest calamities of my life.

The prospects of adverse elements are known to most

High St. Christchurch. My business career started nearby.

Photo: National Publicity Studios.

orchardists, of course, and prior provisions for shelter belts are arranged and established.

My orchard in its young state would be little affected by wind, rain, hail, snow, or frost—the place was subject to them all to a more or less degree—and by the time the fruit arrived, the shelter would be some protection from at least some of the elements.

One dark night—and it is vivid in my memory—there came upon us the greatest cyclonic wind that it has ever been my experience to encounter. I walked the track back and forth between poultry house, shed, and barn, in despair of these buildings withstanding the fury. It was whipping a siren of musical sound round the buildings.

I watched the long poultry house tremble and sway for only a few minutes, before it went toppling back on to a neighbour's orchard, damaging some of his trees.

I then went along to the brooder house and store, hoping and praying that it would stand against the fury. It did for a time, prolonging the agony of watching, but eventually collapsed.

The two-story barn stood. It had been sufficiently anchored and the house was intact. What import were they now? I had no means of sustenance, and finance was not sufficient to rebuild. My only avenue was manual labour, and I was not used to, or anxious for that. The heavy work of cultivating was usually done by a contractor from the neighbourhood, leaving the more pleasant jobs of pruning and spraying and light gardening to the orchardist himself.

No need for long words of explanation as I entered the house. My wife was resigned and ready for the future, however uncertain.

"We will have to sell and go back to the city," was difficult of utterance. All the joyous anticipation over many years crumbled in a night. Could I ever rise again in the most pleasant of all industries?

In the morning I surveyed the damage, and confirmed that the position was hopeless. A number of fowls were killed in the crash, but the greater part were wandering about unconcerned, as if the fright of the previous evening was of small moment to them. I just let them wander about and fed them in the open, until such time as I could make some decision.

At a time like this, there is a brotherly comradeship among your neighbours. Tom, George, Charlie, were on hand for any help they could give to hold me on the spot.

"No chaps, thanks! You have your own problems with your growing orchards. I have to work this out the best way."

The depressing fortnight that followed, while I made arrangements to send the poultry and timber to Christchurch, gave place to a serene and more optimistic view of the future.

We were still young, and I had opportunities for service in other fields, although the great ambition of my life, to be my own boss, was for the moment thwarted.

I placed the property on the market, prepared to sacrifice for a quick sale. The sale eventually took place—actually to a neighbouring orchardist—and the money placed in the bank for the next adventure, whatever and wherever that might be.

I would like to close this part of my reminiscences on my orchard experiences with a surprising sequel.

Many years later, my good friend Charlie walked into my shop, appraised me in a fairly prosperous situation, and to my question as to how the orchardists were doing, surprised me by saying that they had had seasons of bad luck through adverse conditions, and were hard put to carry on, having to solicit Government aid.

"You're well out of it, Ern," earnestly declared Charlie.

So "It's an ill wind that blows nobody some good."

MY OTHER LOVE

★

One thing that provided very acceptable back yard revenue, and likewise a very enjoyable hobby, was poultry husbandry. Most of my backyards were devoted to this, with vegetable growing a runner up. Of these, poultry was the extra revenue earner.

In my early experiences I had been astonished at the returns from a small pen of poultry, bred and fed along the right lines, and from this I gradually developed into a miniature poultry farmer, took my place among the breeders, and entered into the activities of the Poultry Association and the egg laying competitions.

At one stage I imported a pair of breeders from Australia, and bred a pen of six pullets for egg laying competition, and they ultimately achieved a record of sixteen hundred odd eggs for the year. It was a profitable pen from a commercial point of view, but unfortunately it came short on egg weight, and was disqualified.

This was typical of the profitable results I was getting at home, but, of course, I was breeding for the standard size egg. This foreign strain had temporarily upset my egg weight, and it had to be stepped up to the right class.

This was the time when eggs were 1/- and 1/2 a dozen. No! "Happy egg days will never come again."

Getting back to my problem of a living, I had transported my poultry and timber on to a section quickly purchased in Christchurch, built temporary housing, and had the poultry installed preparatory to a disposal sale.

¶ *Just as I was beginning to feel some concern for the future, something turned up. It was a happy omen one evening while the wife and I were out for a stroll in a country lane, to see a black cat cross our path. Soon after that things happened.*

I just wanted to get rid of everything that reminded me of the unfortunate calamity.

I did not want to take up confined work again, but was forced to watch for any opportunity that provided a living.

At the end of a fortnight, and at the time of my disposal sale, I had a call to Kaiapoi for an interview with a poultry farmer there.

I was running a motor cycle with side car at the time, as my only means of transport for myself and family.

This poultry farmer friend offered me the management of his adjoining poultry plant, with free tenancy of a cottage thereon, and a small token wage.

I was happy and humbly pleased at the chance to work in the industry again, and have the opportunity to bring my wife and family away from the disaster, to another, if less pretentious home.

Here I was now, an expert poultryman, and at the time chairman of the Canterbury Egg Circle, without a home or industry of my own, enjoying the protection of a kind poultryman less experienced than myself.

I was happy here for a time, but felt I must get into a more profitable and ambitious project. The position of the farm was on a quiet country road.

One day my wife and I were out walking, when a black cat crossed our path. We both particularly noticed it, and took it as a pleasant augury for the future.

I am not usually taken with superstitions, but somehow I could not dismiss the import of this from my mind. Something was going to boost my morale.

It came almost at once in the offer of a position as accountant to the Orchardist Co-operative Company in Christchurch. Gladly I accepted, as offering a new outlook on the future, although it was to take me back to confined work, but in this case, not so confined.

I was now involved in two important positions, and felt the future secure.

We were living at the time as tenants in one of the most northerly homes in the city, more northerly than any we had been in—whether this portended something that was to happen in the future. At the moment no thought of a change was in my mind.

I was reasonably happy in my job, although the concentrated work of figuring was at times irksome. I could not wholly forget that this was perhaps only a means to an end, one that would take me away on some adventure and secure for me the ultimate in pleasure and work.

I had a little nest egg in the bank from the orchard sale hesitating to tie it up with any project in the city. Nor could I coax myself to take up the practical end of the two industries, as I had done before the Loburn disaster.

After the spell of open air life this job of figuring, concentrated and bewildering, always the same monotonous theme, under the direction of a management and Board, when I could and should be my own principal and employer, later decided me to leave the city, as offering no scope for opening my own business, and entrain for a place that had some glamour and a possible opening for a business in the line I was brought up in—bookselling.

Consequently, I resigned my position with the Company, made a little tour of the North Island, and decided that Napier was the place. I packed and shipped the bulk of the household furniture, said good-bye to my friends of the Egg Circle at a farewell gathering, attained front page photo publicity in the local poultry journal, and with my family, started on the great adventure.

NAPIER BY THE SEA

★

I ARRIVED in Napier in January nineteen twenty-one—the hottest month of the year in these parts, and after Canterbury, I thought I had let myself in for something really trying in climate. For a while I was longing for a little of those pre-dawn wintry mornings of Canterbury.

Wherever you go some concession or adjustment must be made to nature, and as long as it is on the upgrade, we can take it without complaining. It so happens that the mild and temperate climate of this place has become a legend all around the English speaking world, and happily in many foreign countries as well.

First I got in touch with a land agent, a Mr Clark Thomson, who was of assistance in arranging the tenancy of a shop, which fortunately contained living quarters.

Situated in the quieter part of the town at the time, it lost some pulling power for business, but nevertheless had possibilities. For one thing there was no overloaded charge, as in these modern days, in the nature of goodwill, before the key is handed over.

My limited finance could see me started only with a small stock, adequate, as it happened, for the small shop.

I carried on an opening sale in some specialty lines for a time, and lengthened it a little in the hope of picking up some needed finance, and fell foul of some of my competitors. With ready cash I had picked up some opening lines at clearance prices, and could legitimately sell them cheaper, but I was open to correction on a line or two

¶ *Adventure is ever calling. There is a constant trek of "try againers" wending usually towards the sun, and more temperate climates. My long experience of the South Island, and the vicissitudes through which I had passed, decided me to find a pleasant resting place in the North. I made a temporary trek North and found my place.*

that I considered fair complaint. Being an accountant, I could measure the required distance in profit, and was satisfied.

In short, the competitive spirit could not be applied in those days, as it is to-day. As it happens now, the added weight of a controlling body has made it possible for stationers to meet the competitive spirit of chain stores and their cut-rate brands.

There was a simmering disquietude, however, existing among competitors at the time over another matter.

Being observant of some needed school line in stationery, and securing the masters' approval, I provided in the course of business a stock of the particular line.

The masters, without giving me free publicity, demanded that the children should get the line, and it fell to my lot for a time to fill all the requirements, because no others had stocks.

This raised a storm of protests, and was even publicly proclaimed. In no uncertain manner I replied to the challenge in an explanatory advertisement, setting out the facts, and stating that definite proof could be found on the manufacturer's trade list, that the line was listed as regular stock and available to anyone who wanted it.

The trouble was that others had not thought of submitting a sample of the line, which appealed to me, for the masters' approval, and there was a cry of favouritism.

The reply immediately reacted on the public in my favour, and I found a step up in business.

Matters quietened down in the trade and we became the best of friends, and remained so through the passing years, until I was the only one of the old brigade left. I remember with pleasure my association with them.

These were semi-depression years, and I looked for some agency to boost the returns. I secured a gramophone agency and endeavoured to push this, with little success. Radio was coming into prominence, with detrimental effect, and I was forced to give up the agency.

About this time the Farmers' Co-op., who had been building below me for some time, opened up. My business immediately improved, consequent on the increased traffic in the street.

I also at this time was offered and accepted the agency for the *Dominion* newspaper. This was then a small affair, but it was some help financially. I was back in my old newspaper industry, actually walking again at night, in the absence of runners—a trouble ever present in the trade—the hills of Napier as late as nine at night, through delay in train arrival.

It is a long cry from those days of the 5.30 p.m. train to the present 7 a.m. arrival by motor transport. This agency I have long since relinquished after a service of twenty-five years, during which time I built the agency up from a matter of sixty papers to . . . well, they have now a sole manager in control, with a branch agency, still under my roof, but apart from the business.

Consequent on the opening of the Farmers' Co-op., I could consider going a little farther down the street. Down in this case meant a little farther away from the foot traffic, but I had the opportunity of a corner shop of larger dimensions, still with living quarters, so I moved there, and augmented my stock with fancy goods and toys. The advent of the chain stores was still some distance away.

Radio was now becoming quite a popular institution, and while the novelty was on, somewhat affected the sale

of books, although it was the time of three and sixpenny new novels.

The free and easier times consequent on the relaxing of labour conditions, and the institution of the forty hour week, has since had a lot to do with improved business in reading matter for the leisure moments.

It was while on this corner that I had something to do with an incident that had disastrous and far-reaching effect on a congregation.

I was engaged on my duties in the shop when two children came in, and casually and half apologetically said, "Mr Marsden, would you come outside and see what this is?"

Curious as to what had taken their eye, I went out. They pointed up the street. "What is that in the window?" I looked, and there in the window of the Presbyterian Church was a great wall of fire.

"My dear children, that's a fire," as I looked quickly for the firebox, which happened to be on the opposite corner. I called the brigade, standing guard until they came into view, to direct them.

It was an old wooden church, and attempts were made to save it, but without avail. A new and modern church, with imposing steeple was now put in hand, but before completion, this was to suffer another disaster, about which more anon.

I now come to the time when my very good business friend, Mr Rice, offered me the tenancy of one of two shops he was building. I accepted with pleasure, because I always wanted to get on the busier side of the street.

It had the disadvantage of being set back in a pocket pending the widening of the street, for which by-laws had been passed, but the advent of which seemed a long way from attainment.

How the transition quickly took place is told in the next chapter.

EARTHQUAKE

★

My desire to find ease and contentment far away from the disastrous "on the land" experience, landed me in another of huge dimensions.

No matter where one goes, there is always the possibility of disaster overtaking one in one form or another. The Canterbury plains were singularly free from earthquakes, and if I thought at the time there could be anything worse than what I had gone through, or what the orchardists had to contend with, I may have chosen the lesser elements and stayed on in Canterbury.

However, we see only the attractions and glamour of a city, and have thought only for the beauty, the sunshine, and the freshness about. Without doubt Napier had them on that morning in February 1931.

A beautiful summer morning, with just a touch of the approach of autumn, and a stillness that could portend something sinister in the air.

With very little warning it came with a gentle rumble, quickly gaining intensity, and culminated in a violent shaking, with walls creaking and roofs buckling under the pressure, until it seemed impossible for anything to stand against it.

It was a major catastrophe, as we were to learn on reaching the street. In the meantime, my wife, son, and myself stood on the heaving floor inside the shop, throwing our hands out for stand and counter support, feeling with a depression of soul that the end of time had come, and

¶ *Out of the bowels of the earth came destruction unprecedented in the history of New Zealand. A fair town was swept out of existence, and a sorrow almost impossible to bear came upon its inhabitants. Out of great tribulation came a glimmer of hope—reclamation. It must spell the birth of a grand new city.*

nothing could prevent the shaking walls from caving in on us.

It is with a thankful heart I can record that we came through without a scratch. Apart from books falling all around us and broken windows, the premises had suffered no damage—at least visible.

Helping my wife, we reached the street, and there a sight of desolation met us up and down the street, in the centre of which I had my business. The facades of two and three story buildings were heaped as rubble on the street; verandahs of wooden buildings, of which there were many at the time, were lying, or were bent at grotesque angles across the footpaths.

The street became deserted soon after we reached it; shoppers and business people who had escaped quickly found escape lanes and hurried to their homes.

I concerned myself about my own family, two of whom were absent. A daughter managing a branch shop along the same street, was unhurt except for a cut foot, providentially through a building similar to mine withstanding the quake, except for broken windows and jumbled stock. A son attending school on the edge of the business area also joined us, to our relief, unhurt.

Sending my wife, daughter, and young son out of the area to find what temporary shelter they could among friends—my own home, I found out later, was in a dishevelled state—I made my way to the rescue groups to give what assistance I could.

Ambulances were getting as near to the area as possible

to lift dead and injured, and take them to temporary marquees and dressing stations. The normal staff was pathetically depleted by the total collapse of the nurses' home, with a roll of dead and injured.

I happened to take part in what was an almost hopeless task of removing heavy beams, which was eventually accomplished, enabling the rescue party to remove a dead body and another severely injured. Doors were used as stretchers, and laid aside with dead and injured in readiness for the ambulance.

The number of dead could not be appraised for some time because of fallen buildings covering the bodies—and then at most only charred bodies, consequent on the fire sweeping the area, but the resulting deaths stood at over two hundred.

The most heartening sight was the providential presence of the navy ship *Veronica*, lying at a badly broken wharf at the Port.

Consequent on the upheaval, she had become stranded, when the bed of the sea rose, putting the wharves and facilities for a time out of action. Eventually the *Veronica* got away safely.

The earthquake spelt doom for the Port harbour, but nevertheless reacted in a very beneficial way by reclaiming thousands of acres of inner harbour for later farming and agricultural uses.

The sailors were quickly on the spot patrolling the area, and assisting in the rescue work.

A very happy memento of that occasion is the *Veronica* bell, which later was donated to the town, and now hangs in the Shelter Bay, and is used in a ceremony of ringing in the New Year.

Minor shakes were occurring at intervals for some time. One or two were severe and would have caused damage had there been anything to damage.

Following rescue operations, I tried to think along busi-

ness lines again, and the future. I was not then knocked out, or even seriously inconvenienced, but this was not to last long with a fire in prospect.

I entered the shop again with my son Laurence, rather an eerie experience, and collected my essential books of account and what money was about, and departed to search out the rest of the family.

Some evidence of resignation was visible on all sides. What had been must be endured, and only thought of reconstruction was on everybody's mind. Help, however, would have to come from outside.

Communications had been interrupted, but word filtered through to the outside world, and the Minister of Defence immediately put in hand the dispatch of military personnel and camping gear to house a much diminished population.

The edict went out that women and children were to be evacuated immediately, and before that night was out most of these were on their way to friends in other parts, who had offered homes for the use of the evacuees.

Some women were not anxious to leave, and since there were essential services available to them, they were drafted into camp life. My wife was one of these, and soon found companionable friends among the women helpers, who in their little world of the camp, were able to forget the torn world outside.

My daughter and younger son were evacuated to our good friend of the trade, Mr Bennett of Palmerston North; later to go on to my sister in Wellington. It was some relief to know they would be in good hands. My eldest son stayed on.

FIRE

*

IF fire had not followed the earthquake some measure of reconstruction would have been possible at an early date. Hastings was saved complete catastrophe, with less earthquake damage and only isolated fires.

Napier, however, found almost complete destruction by fire, and only a few shops on the fringe of the business area escaped the flames.

It was through a singularly unfortunate accident of combustible materials fusing that the fire swept the whole of the business area. It started in the northern end of the town in a chemist's shop, and would have been brought under control by an efficient fire brigade, had the water supply not given out, through disruption of the mains. It was this little thing—a combustible mixture—that led to the major disaster.

The progress of the fire at first was somewhat slow. It crept up one side of the street, and gave some promise of burning itself out in a block, but the appearance of fires in other chemist shops soon led to the major conflagration.

Rescue work was going on, being abandoned only when fire made any further action impossible. There is reason to hope that no injured or living person was incinerated by the later hour that the flames reached the main part of the area.

A tomb-like atmosphere prevailed, and by the time the flames were ready to sweep up Emerson Street, the business area was devoid of a living soul.

¶ *When fire completes the destruction it does it perfectly. A few lumps of melted gold might turn up in the ashes for the scavengers. For the seekers, a few mementoes. For all of us a black scarred skeleton of a building, with neither shape nor promise. Before the fire the outside appearance of my building was normal except for crashed windows. Such is fire—the destroyer.*

In a last gesture of hope, I had moved through a back lane to observe the fire as it approached my shop, and was rewarded with a scene up and down the street as awe inspiring as it has ever been my wish to see, or ever want to see again. As if to prolong the agony, the fire had swept up and down the two business streets and finished at my shop.

Having seen the end, I was concerned for the fire at the outer points, and the possibility of it flaring up again.

As it happened, on checking at the Methodist Church in Clive Square, I found a small band of men debating the chances of extinguishing a fire that had crept through from the shopping area on to the rafters of the new schoolroom at the rear of the church. With no water available, it looked hopeless to arrest it. However, at my suggestion, we went about trying to stop it.

Finding a ladder and placing it at a manhole in the ceiling, several of us went up with sacks, and even sand, and fought it to a standstill, saving a fine building.

One of the most depressing sights, and one that was a landmark for many years, was the Presbyterian Church, in course of erection. Reposing at the foot of Tiffen Park, it hit the eye as a reminder of that sad past.

At the time, it provided a nerve racking experience for the workmen on the tower. They had to thank the solidity of construction for their fortunate escape. However, it was damaged, and later had to be dismantled. On its foun-

dations now stands a social hall—a wooden church having been built immediately following the earthquake, on an adjoining section.

The aftermath of fire has been depicted in thousands of scenes in all parts of the world, but no illustration could adequately convey the scene of desolation and carnage that existed in the immediate business area.

The clearing of the area was as much of a superhuman task as the rebuilding later on. Rubble available in the streets in thousands of tons found a ready use in reclaiming a stretch of the Parade. This front had providentially been lifted up with the rest of the town to a high and dry point, and its use as a promenade could be put in hand.

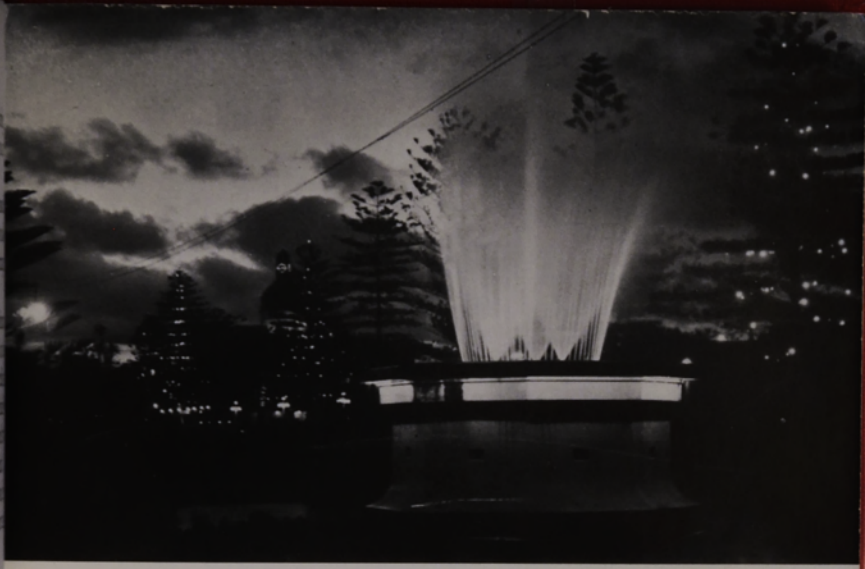
This was one of the major jobs of the Commission, and the beautiful front, with the assistance of the then curator, Mr Corner, is a monument to their work.

Trying to get a grip of life again, I spent that first night in camp in somewhat uneasy rest. Lieutenant Davis and his band of personnel organised a very efficient commissariat, and Uncle Sam catered for the entertainment end in a very happy form.

Men were drafted on to clearance work on pay. I set about starting business again the next morning. Being a newsagent, and particularly the *Dominion* agent, I had a service to render the public, who were now without a local paper—an essential at a time like this.

I happened to get access to one of a few old shops on the outskirts still standing, on the stipulation that no water or sewerage could be used, which of course were out of order. News from the outer world, and its reaction to our disaster, was eagerly sought after, and since my business was a luxury that had to be paid for, I was the only businessman in action for some months.

Notwithstanding our small population, I distributed the unprecedented number of *Weekly News* of one issue—a thousand copies. These thousand copies are probably



Marine Parade, Napier—at eventide.

Our shop, after earthquake and fire—Laurence standing.

Photos: A. B. Hurst & Son.

kept as very pathetic mementoes in all parts of the world, with the drift of the population since.

So for a while I was able to lighten the burden of the idle moments by providing also light literature, and made available a library. Fortunately I had the makings of one again on the subscribers' shelves, in most cases intact.

A temporary shopping area was put in hand on a scenic park known as Clive Square—a beautiful area given over to the expediency of the moment.

A continuity of shops was hurried up and balloted out to business people. I did not enter this area, having secured a shop in Dickens Street that, with a few repairs, was ready for occupation. This had living quarters.

Examining the old home on the hill that we had not been into since the earthquake, like most homes, I found some confusion. The house had shifted a little on its piles, the chimney was down, the piano was on its back, pantry in a sticky mess, and altogether it was a gloomy place. I quickly moved the issue to the new quarters, and settled down again to a comfortable, though hard future.

With repairs to the homes complete, and the passing of same by the health authorities, people began to return to their habitations and pick up the threads again.

The main reconstruction of the business area was still far away. Ways and means were being considered by the Government.

A stroll through the business area was only possible for some time through lanes in the rubble, and the area became a paradise for photographers. Their wares became an important sideline in my business for many years. My sales in postcards and snaps would run into a quarter of a million.

My photographer friend A.B.H. had perforce to provide an efficient service in this line. He was well knocked out himself, but managed to salvage a camera or two, and

took a unique series of views, both before and after the fire swept the area.

These views, along with amateur ones of their own, adorn the albums of most residents as a sad reminder of the event. Among these are several notable and unique views that graphically illustrate the force and extent of the earthquake. Doctor Moore's several-storied hospital on the Parade was left leaning at a precarious angle, due principally to the stony nature of the ground on the foreshore.

The wharf road that skirted the three hundred foot cliff was entirely obliterated by a huge fall from the face of the cliff, leaving it a possible tomb for some unknown, as the new road now by-passes it at the edge of the fall.

One well known truck driver reported a very narrow escape. He was under this cliff at the time. Looking up, he saw the face of the cliff disintegrating and starting an avalanche. Hopping quickly from his truck, he raced the onrush to the seashore, and managed to make it in time, but his truck, of course, was engulfed.

Getting out into the suburbs the scene was not so depressing. Most chimneys were down—some going through the roofs, but otherwise there was a homely appearance, at least outside.

A very notable landmark for some time was the embankment built to take the rail and road across the estuary. Its appearance was almost indescribable. The road was a series of huge fissures for the whole length, and several cars were lying partly buried in them.

A very unusual object of interest on the side of a hill was a house almost swinging on the edge of a precipice, through the subsidence of the hill.

Everything was brought back ultimately into something like order.

A very fitting memorial to a risen city is inscribed on a plaque in the Shelter Bay. Its sentiments are worth repeating, and I give them here.

"I never understood how man could dare
To watch a city shaken to the ground,
To feel the tremors, hear the tragic sound
Of houses twisting, crashing everywhere,
And not be conquered by a sick despair.
Although his buildings crumble to a mound
Of worthless ruins, man has always found
The urge to build a stronger city there.
Within my soul I made my towers high;
They lie in ruins; yet I have begun
To build again, now planning to restore
What life has shaken to the earth, and I,
In faith shall build my towers towards the sun,
A stronger city than was there before."

DISRUPTION AND RECONSTRUCTION

★

THE earthquake corrected in a few moments a shortage of building space, something that had been exercising the minds of town councillors for some years. It brought an area into production larger than the then flats of Napier, through the raising of the land and the dispersal of the tidal waters.

The need was so great that twenty years later the greater portion of this area was occupied by new homes.

The Government of the day was mindful of the need to quickly rehabilitate the town, as well as provide for the needed expansion, and acquired some of the area for State homes.

The rehabilitation of the business community, however, was their first consideration. A wave of sympathy was passing through the world, and it was certain that a relief fund would have largely rehabilitated the town, but the Government discouraged this, preferring to treat each case on its merits from a special fund.

This was done by a loan at interest to be liquidated as convenient. With an almost insurmountable burden the business people were ultimately relieved of the interest charges.

Wholesalers were on hand to give every help, with no thought of recompense for the moment, and life went on calmly in "tin town"—the main shopping area.

I was temporarily set in a permanent building in Dickens

¶ *"Faith shall build my towers towards the sun,*
A stronger city than was there before."

Truly has there risen from the ashes a beautiful city, more colourful and closer to nature, with its tropical layout and its God-given suburban area, that is a measure of recompense for the trials and tribulations that the city passed through.

Street—now the temporary main street, but its use as a shopping area was restricted through the interception of garages and offices.

As I mentioned, I had not been out of business. Being temporarily disorganised for want of stock, but with newspapers and periodicals coming in regularly, I was retaining a regular trade, although the absence of much of the population reduced turnover considerably.

Receiving a grant from the Rehabilitation Department, I used a good portion of it in a composition with my creditors. I also received the sympathy of the Booksellers of New Zealand in a very tangible form, and was much heartened by that expression of their concern.

The repair of homes and services was the first to be undertaken, and this completed, the population gradually took up residence again.

By this time the biggest job of rehabilitating the business property owners was under way. My pre-quake landlord, who only twelve months before had been involved in a new building, was a substantial loser, with walls only standing, and had to gain the maximum help for rebuilding, due to the extensive reinforcing and realignment of the building.

The realignment of the street was now put in hand, something the earthquake had accomplished in a moment, and I was on the street front in my old position. Some tenants of the once main street had seen the trend of busi-

ness, and elected to site themselves in new positions in Emerson Street.

There arose again a model town, complete with a blending of front tints, alignment of verandahs, and an absence of supporting posts and telegraph poles in the business area. This made, and still makes the city—as it now is—the most modern in the Dominion.

The disaster had forced some amendments to the building by-laws, and in the construction and reconstruction a generous amount of concrete reinforcing had to go in. In the case of my building, all walls were standing, with interior a jumbled mess with crashed roof. The windows and masonry in the front were in a mess. In the reconstruction, however, I gained another four feet in the shop through the taking in of a right-of-way, which was now eliminated throughout the business area, with access lanes provided for. This meant the dismantling and re-erection of a wall, and the addition of pillars to meet the new conditions.

All this reinforcing an accomplished fact throughout the business area, the city is now considered reasonably earthquake proof.

If the earthquake can be considered to have benefited me in any way, it is in a more commodious shop. In addition to the extra width, the landlord, consequent on the earthquake, decided to relinquish a factory business he had in the rear and added this to my shop.

The resumption of normal business came somewhat sooner than anticipated in those dark days. The town was rebuilt and I found myself tied to my second shop in Dickens Street for a further two years, an obligation I had to honour. This put me back somewhat in my struggle, because it was of little value now for business, but, having living quarters, provided some compensation.

So businesses started to operate again along conventional lines, with the Government in many cases as mortgagee.

It was a trying time for most businessmen with the burdens they had to face, but they put their minds to it, and achieved ultimately some measure of easement of the burdens. A few found the going hard and departed for new pastures.

As I have already mentioned, I had taken no spell immediately following the earthquake, feeling that I must retain my paper connections, in the interests of building up again. This battling on against adversity ultimately set up some reaction, and brought me sleepless nights, and I was forced to take a doctor's advice and have a spell in hospital.

HOSPITAL IS A GLOOMY PLACE

*

"Boots! Boots! Boots! Boots! Marching up and down again!" Kipling must have composed that in a hospital. I can hear them still just on the stroke of midnight, as they were trying to put me to sleep. A mannequin parade wasn't in it. Those nurses did love that modern shoe, and they would vie with each other as to who attained the highest heel. As soon as I had a sedative the parade would start, and after a few nights I was sure it was done for my benefit. I am happy to say, according to reports, this nuisance has long since abated.

But jokes aside, the hospital is a splendid place. It is, and it isn't. . . . I am mixing my metaphors, because on the top I have called it something else, and sometimes when the nurse annoyed me I had another name for it. It is all right for the people who are out and don't want to get in, but it is no good for the people who are in and want to get out.

However, the doctor knows best. Some of our problems however, resolve themselves into a matter of expediency.

To get back to the correction of my metaphors, the hospital, as I know it in Napier, is a lovely place, situated as it is on the top of what is Hospital Hill, commanding uninterrupted views of mountains, sea, and rivers; and above all an immediate landscape of beauty, and a freshness in a temperate climate that cannot be matched anywhere.

On the other hand, it isn't. No amount of beauty outside can compensate for the gloom that is perpetuated inside. We are legally behind bars for the duration. We

¶ *Health has no commercial value except good health. I weathered the catastrophe, hopeful of weathering the financial storm. The odds were too great, however, and I was forced to take a rest on "The Hill". Rest for a period was my need and I recuperated.*

look out on an active world below and feel frustrated and lost. Some of the time I had the free run of the hospital, and spent much of it wandering round in search of some cheerful and happy faces, but there weren't any—I wasn't feeling that way myself. There it is, but it's the best place for the job.

Kind friends and entertainers did attempt occasionally to bring a little cheer to home-starved patients. Home! That is what we all wanted, but we did not want to be reminded of it. Our well-meaning visiting pianist on one occasion nearly broke all our hearts by playing "Home, Sweet Home".

"Never do that again, my friend," I protested, voicing the feelings of many of my fellow patients. That is why it isn't a lovely place—and yet it is. Work it out!

When I was over three months in the place, I tackled the doctor for keeping me there, when there was nothing the matter with me. Of course he was entitled to his opinion.

"Look, doctor, my trouble's only imaginary," I coaxed him.

He looked at me quizzically and half smilingly. "Yes, I do believe it is. You may go." Those were the best three words in the English language at the time.

My family were carrying on in an optimistic atmosphere, but I did not feel like digging in yet, so away to the old home town and forgetfulness for a time.

I returned refreshed, and to the task of easing the burden on my family, thankful that they had been able to keep the ends together.

My previous three shops in Emerson Street had been within a stone's throw of each other, the last one on the opposite, busier side. My original intuition that this street and position would one day come into its own was happily with us. I was able to quickly honour my obligations and go on to better times.

The chain stores were creeping in at this time, and one's position needed to be secure, and as it happens, it has paid out.

With the support of the wholesalers, and the absence of restrictions through the requirements of licences and bank exchange and war economies—which were not yet with us—I was able to build up my stock again.

The advent of the Book Clubs at this time was rather disturbing. By their specialty advertising they led the public into believing they were giving something that was never available, when, as a matter of record in the early days, they were dependent on the very bookseller they were opposing. Later they were able to ensnare the wholesaler, digging deeper at the same time into supplies, profits, and turnover.

Up to this time booksellers had considered a library of little value, except as an attraction for other business—indeed the profits at the time were not commensurate with the work and worry involved.

With the advent of three Book Clubs I ultimately decided to let them have it, and closed the library down. With this I got rid of a fair amount of annoyance with indifferent, careless, and unsatisfied subscribers—ever present in a library.

I never suffered in turnover through the closing of the library. My returns steadily improved. I put this down to the fact that in my very favourable position people preferred to buy literature in the shop, in preference to climbing stairs or hunting Book Clubs in out-of-the-way quiet streets.

EARLY NAPIER

★

Captain Cook discovered Hawke's Bay in 1769, after landing in Poverty Bay a few days earlier, so Gisborne can lay claim to being the pioneer English settlement.

The incident that frustrated him in his attempt to land on the Hawke's Bay coast, and resulted in the name Kidnappers being bestowed by him on the southern cape, is graphically told in his *Voyages*.

Cook was anchored off what he named Bare Island, close to the Kidnappers, when several canoes with armed natives aboard approached his ship for the purpose of bartering, and while this was going on, a native grabbed a Tahitian boy and paddled off with him.

A volley of musketry and a shot from a big gun on board the ship caused the natives to release the boy, who immediately swam back to the ship, followed by the natives in the canoe, but they hesitated to go too near the guns again and returned to shore.

Thus Cape Kidnappers was born. This incident decided Cook to up-sail and travel south without landing.

That incident could easily have altered the history of Hawke's Bay.

Should that bartering have been successful, and mutual friendship established with the natives, Cook would assuredly have landed to develop the friendly contact, and in that case the point of entry would be somewhere about where Clive now is, since the future Napier was then practically an island—now known as Scinde, and inaccessible from the south.

¶ *If Captain Cook could wake from his long sleep and walk the Napier streets, he would stare in wonderment at the transformation that has taken place on this once vast waterway.*

A trading post, later developing into a settlement, and ultimately a township on the borders of a fertile region, six miles south of the present Napier, would greatly have hindered the development of Hastings, with its fertile region, and within walking distance.

However, some seventy years later, when the Treaty of Waitangi was signed and confirmed by Hawke's Bay chiefs, Napier was gradually expanding into dry land; Hastings to be the centre of a rich agricultural district, and Napier an important shipping, tourist, and exporting port for its extensive sheep country.

What was known as the Ahuriri Block, on the Port side, was purchased in 1851, and Sir Donald McLean, who, as Crown Lands Commissioner, purchased Scinde Island from the natives—which is the Napier city hills—lived to see these same hills almost covered with homes and beautiful gardens, of which he had a portion himself, later to be subdivided on Lady McLean's death, to complete the coverage of the hills.

These hills cover an area of 640 acres, and sections in key positions, if available, now bring up to £1,000.

The town was named after Sir Charles Napier, a soldier of the Indian province of Sind, and street names were suggested by a Mr Domett—who was a Commissioner of Crown Lands, a poet and writer, and are taken from poets and authors of distinction, or from officers associated with the Indian Mutiny.

In 1860 swamp areas almost touched the hill on the southern side. This was gradually eliminated by the action of silt from tidal rivers and the sea, to be completed ultimately by the diversion of a river and a major earthquake.

In 1920, the river, now diverted, ran along the edge of the town, and had boating facilities along its course.

This old course now runs through the centre of the suburban area, and is due for beautification as time and funds permit. Eventually an artificial pond will be created, and boating and yachting will again give pleasure.

The railway to Wellington was commenced in 1872, and 1857 saw the birth of the first newspaper—the *Hawke's Bay Herald*, now defunct, but retaining its individuality in the *Hawke's Bay Tribune*.

Since the earthquake, the whole contour of the city has altered. Areas have expanded and developed into individual suburbs.

A pine plantation that was once a shelter belt in the far distance has now been by-passed.

Palms, Norfolk pines, and tropical bushes that an earthquake could not destroy, have developed into beautiful scenic spots.

Altogether, the new Napier has no semblance to the old Napier, and the transition has come about through the elements and the mind of man.

NAPIER TO-DAY

★

No place in the Dominion, or indeed in Australia, can lay claim to be the newest and most modern city in the Pacific; nor indeed would one wish to claim this had it to be obtained through suffering and tears, as was Napier's experience.

The hand of God wrote on the scroll of time a chapter of trial and tribulation, such as we mortals at times are forced to meet. Out of the suffering did come some good; a saner outlook on the future, and most of all, material wealth in the form of a tangible asset—land, that no other English city in the world can match.

Thousands of acres—figures are unimportant—when Napier was at the point of frustration, were sent as a gift. It brought within measurable distance the goal and aim of the Thirty Thousand Club.

It is a happy thought, twenty-three years later, as I write, to see that goal slowly but relentlessly moving towards its climax.

You move into this new area in wonderment and surprise. Street after street of beautiful homes and gardens that have grown from sodden country. Never-ending streets with well thought out surveying, intercepted by colourful gardens and parks; drifting on through plantations and unformed roads into expansive areas not yet tapped. Thus this panorama of beautiful new homes goes on to ultimate completion.

We turn again towards the city proper, and in the dis-

¶ *The new Napier has become a by-word with tourists, with its beautiful setting and climate. So tropical is it in appearance that were one to land on the coast, one would believe oneself on one of the Pacific islands, with a modern business area transplanted.*

tance is Scinde Island—Napier was once an island—reposing in grandeur like the Mount of Olives, with the sea sparkling as an arc around its shores, and misty hills away in the rear.

On its slopes green swards and trees of tropical nature, set around toy-like homes, some seeming to ride precariously on the slopes, others safely perched on the top.

One would not be astonished to know that with the congestion that Napier was suffering from, practically no sections have been available on the hills for some time. During the last thirty years homesteads have been broken up into plots and rough places made clear, until those once wilderness spots blossom as the Garden of Eden.

I happen to have my home on one of these reclaimed areas, and outwardly the scene is an enchanted view of sea, capes, and hills.

Napier has a place in the sun. Its sunshine is one of the highest, and conversely of course, its rainfall is not quite so good. Notwithstanding this, its public gardens, grass squares, and tropical trees are a pleasure to behold.

Nature originally placed along the foreshore that skirts the business area, a rolling surf on a shingly beach of little commercial value, when you measure seafront in terms of attraction to visitors. The earthquake, however, lifted that land up seven feet and placed the sea wall safe from encroaching seas, which at times had been a danger spot.

This area then received the attention of the Commission appointed to rehabilitate the town, and from this wilderness of stones they formed the famed gardens and walks, which, with the co-operation of the Thirty Thousand

Club, has made this a talked-of beauty spot throughout the world.

It is rather a paradox that I, as a bookseller, should land in what purports to be a literary town—but which I would hesitate to second—surrounded as I am in business with such street names as Emerson, Shakespeare, Tennyson, Carlyle, Thackeray, Browning and Dickens, which are certainly not typical of the reading here. Such names as that need to be transferred to Cambridge or Oxford, but possibly they have them already.

However, we would do well to ponder the thought that this classic reading would improve our minds, step up our education, and most of all take us away from some of the trash that is inclined to engage our leisure moments.

The Norfolk pines that line Napier's famed Marine Parade are a twinkling fantasy of coloured lights at night. Likewise, Napier's dual row of palms in Kennedy Road make it a tropical avenue of great beauty.

Napier, as the capital of Hawke's Bay and its chief and only seaport, is rapidly coming to the front in its handling of shipping cargoes, and with important wharf and harbour extensions contemplated, it will become a close competitor with the leading cities. It is a far cry from the days thirty years ago, when boats stood in the roadstead and lighterage had to operate.

In the post-earthquake period, those men who had to do with Napier's rehabilitation and its happy position to-day, have achieved something worthy of record.

Charles O. Morse, who sat with the Commission on the reconstruction and carried on for a time after its disbandment, had the major job of mending the broken town. All the services were in a bad state, and colossal supplies were needed, with manpower, to reinstate everything.

T. W. (Bill) Hercock held the office of mayor for a long period. He saw the city back into a happy and pros-

perous state and was awarded an O.B.E. He was president of the Thirty Thousand Club for a term.

E. R. (Ron) Spriggs took over the reins of mayoralty, and carried on the good work so ably started by his predecessors. The city now in its best trim, the governing of same became a pleasurable routine matter.

L. D. Bestall, whose interest in art and curios prompted him to test the historical value of Hawke's Bay, and culminated in a magnificent museum, gained a fitting reward with an O.B.E.

Among other servants of the community whom the citizens are pleased to honour there stand seven names.

Trevor Geddes, in the journalistic field, like others of us, built again from the ashes, and with his partners took the lead in news purveying; but more particularly is he known for his piloting, as chairman of the Harbour Board, the development of Napier's very efficient breakwater harbour.

Pat Higgins, who followed him on the job, has carried the development on to within sight of completion, ultimately a very fine and serviceable harbour. On other bodies Pat has given good service, and he has the distinction of being a farmer as well as a citizen, and he has an appreciation of the two points of view.

Norman McKenzie, in the sporting field, can never be mentioned without thinking of football. Norm in his early days had a very mean boot, and he can still raise a good one, although grey hairs encompass him. While he was in his prime he bullied the boys so much that they simply had to keep the Shield here year after year. Eventually, however, someone kicked it over the border when Norm wasn't looking, and it hasn't yet come back.

Charles Price had a long association with journalism in Napier. Versatile and knowledgeable from every angle, Charles could outwrite anyone. With a sense of humour, he did not disdain any menial tasks, and would deputise

for a boy if need be—an honoured name in the community.

Fred R. Watters, Napier's very efficient City Clerk, has seen the place grow from a mere town to a very famous city, and can take pride in its beauty and orderliness.

George E. Rogers, Publicity Officer since 1949, has the progress of the city very much at heart. His success with Industrial Exhibitions has been a real achievement.

W. E. Barnard, a member for Napier, did yeoman service in the earthquake reconstruction period.

THOSE AMERICANS

★

THE author of *These New Zealanders* does not "in all respects agree with the opinions he records". Quoting him, "New Zealanders do not like to be criticised. No one cares to be criticised, but New Zealanders show this trait more than any other people the author has met."

First of all, who are the criticisers? If an American is in New Zealand, he is entitled to criticise; and likewise a New Zealander in America can do the same; but if the inference is that New Zealanders cannot take it, then let us examine the causes that lead up to this indictment.

If the American has heard often the expression that New Zealand is a "Fools' Paradise", then it is only the fools that make it so, as in any favoured country. If they sop up every evil and vice that's going, because freedom gives it to them, or money pays for it, then their "Fools' Paradise" is of their own making. No criticism can be levelled at New Zealanders because of this. It is a condition peculiar to every civilised country. It is a personal matter, not a national affair.

As the American says, "this is a friendly chat" and a friendly answer to the indictment. An unbiased observer can weigh the pros and cons, and tip the balance in favour of whichever side justifies it—if there is a side.

If no other answer is needed, in the interest of tourism, let me say right now in justification of New Zealanders' traits and mode of living, that statistics indicate that New

¶ *An American toured New Zealand, and in a friendly chat, offers some criticism of our scenery and mode of living, in a book recently published. It is intended to create some impressions wholly untuned to our way of life. Primarily it is intended to be argumentative and has no serious complaint, although it could put New Zealand in the raw for the innocent. So this is my answer.*

Zealand is one of the healthiest if not the healthiest country in the world.

If we lose an old-world atmosphere, and its agreed drawing power, we offer a new world that is different in aspect, different in tradition, steeped in native lore, with wide open spaces, and a virile land just opening up into full maturity.

Is this not the ultimate in pleasure for the tourist seeking quietness, beauty, and rest free of the shackles of convention? When you are wandering, you take things as they come, and provided you find comfort, have no thoughts for modes of living, dress, speech, business or education, and the manner of its application.

No need to worry about the little points our American friend raised on our shortness of stature, whether our ties are a little spotted and our suits unpressed; whether we don't have socks to match our ties; and in our culinary arts, eat our carrots cooked instead of raw. All these things, more or less, are common in every country. In the matter of dress, a kaleidoscope of change in our wanderings lends interest.

Our American friend disavows trips that seem commonplace. In most countries when it comes to mountains and rivers, they are similar, yet different, and very materially different when you analyse them at close hand, and study the geological, climatic, scenic, and social conditions.

You don't live on the casual glance of a mountain, other-

wise you need not shift from home. You live with it, absorb its atmosphere and its tradition, and there is a lot of adventure before you get there.

There may be a lot of Mt Cooks in America, but the one in New Zealand will give you a lot of thrilling adventure in reaching it. You sail blue seas, skirt coral islands, land on sunkissed shores, travel through strange and interesting towns and villages, hit an everchanging panorama of bush and cultivated lands, land at hostels to meet a bracing climate, make friendships, enjoy the various aspects from a comfortable lounge, and take part in the pleasures of tramping and ski-ing, or of watching others.

The same thing will apply, my friend, when we leave our Mt Cook and visit yours, and enjoy all the thrills of adventure that a new vista brings.

Really, if you have difficulty with your food and drink, you should change your cook, but we warn you, with the problems we have to contend with perfect dietitians are hard to come by. We are so inured to this "take it or leave it" attitude on the part of domestic helps that any departure from the straight and narrow leaves us indifferent.

However, we can still make a tasty cup of coffee or a cup of tea, if you want it other than at 7 a.m. That little tea enforcing episode must have been a bad case of collusion. Some silly maid had a secret arrangement with another maid to pay you out for some fancied wrong. Forget it! But tea off the ice. Phew! We never heard of such a thing.

You complain that our business hours are one of the most galling aspects of an American's visit. Really, Mr America, this is astonishing. Not only that, it is unnatural. Even the heathen can live a natural life. This sounds almost like desecration of God-given restful hours. Would it not be more decent for respectable people to keep respectable hours? They usually get at least twelve hours of sunlight to do it in.

Have you such a preponderance of labour that you can afford to double and treble shifts? We haven't, and we wouldn't want to if we had.

Do you remember the biblical injunction, six days shalt thou labour—not nights, and keep the Sabbath holy.

To suggest that courtesy is not needed in business is like denying nature. I've had them both ways, and the courteous are an honoured memory.

Then again, 50,000,000 people are not necessarily all cultured. Methinks a lot of them visit the Art Galleries for other reasons.

"With one exception," you say, "the North Island is a land of unending enchantment to the American." I am pleased to see that exception is not Napier. So tourists will be well repaid for a visit, and they can take in the South Island because it is much like home—friendly and sociable. That is what makes for a happy holiday.

For a scholar, my friend, your data should be religiously correct.

It is true that Napier is "a delightful little city with a fine Marine Parade. Justifiably called the finest in the Southern Hemisphere, and a perfect resting place for a weary traveller", but the earthquake was in 1931, not 1933, and far from being a trick of fate, it corrected many faults.

We always had a shingly beach right up to the road stone parapet, and seas occasionally washed over it. The earthquake, however, lifted it up and laid open an area that is now the beautiful Parade. The shingly beach had receded, and the area makes for a clear and insectless atmosphere, and still provides a fine shingly walk along the path of the breakers, and a pleasant rendezvous for surfers.

Finally, a few words of criticism on the format of the book itself.

The bookseller's greatest concern is spine publicity.

Errata

Furthermore, first book publishers are correcting this tendency for thin books, and thin spines, for obvious reasons. It would have been better for your page to be stepped down a little and the book given more bulk, in the interests of showmanship and spine publicity. A more imposing spine would have been better.

Fortunately a few of us with room can give it front cover display for a while, until relegated to the shelves.

This stepping up in size, at the expense of bulk, is unfortunate. It upsets the uniformity we are trying to attain. We have recently had to rebuild a section of our standard eight-inch shelves to meet a small but annoying custom springing up.

THIRTY THOUSAND CLUB

THE wise men of the nineteen-tens had visions of a city. To help make it so, they formed themselves into a corporate body and went all out for population. Not satisfied with a mere twenty thousand—the basis of a city—they stepped it up to thirty thousand, and thus the Thirty Thousand Club was born.

My first acquaintance with their activities was a Mardi Gras at Nelson Park, in which the local entertainment side was largely responsible for its success.

Later, as McLean Park was developed, the festivities were transferred there, and each year played to improved crowds. The enthroning of the carnival queen was one of the Club's major activities, and McLean Park on one occasion was the scene of a record crowd for the enthroning of Queen Cherry.

The Christmas festivities became a popular rendezvous for visiting crowds, and to cater for these in a more convenient setting, the Mardi Gras was transferred to the Marine Parade.

In the pre-earthquake period, the facilities for entertainment were not available as they are now. A portion of the Parade adjacent to the business area was barricaded off, and a charge was made for admission at the barriers.

This move drew ever growing crowds, but the Club was still at a disadvantage in not being able to place the festivities in a more favourable position. The beach below the roadway was still a shingle bed.

The great catastrophe that visited us in 1931 solved the

¶ *The pioneers of the Thirty Thousand Club have all passed on, an honoured body of men, whose good works follow them. In those pioneer days, they had only a shingle bed to work on, with an encroaching sea that spoilt any development, but they made use of roads and suburban parks, and built up a fund that finally found fruition in the splendid colonnades and amenities on the Parade to-day.*

problem of space for festivities on the foreshore. The lifting of Napier by the earthquake, and the subsequent reclamation that took place, under the direction of a Commission sitting for the reconstruction of the town, made available a long strip of foreshore, which, apart from the beautification scheme that transformed the Parade, provided for the Club's growing activities.

Some funds had been accumulated and held against the day when the Club might use it on this very vital area. Under the authority of the town council, who worked happily with the Club, a Sound Shell was built in a convenient position.

At the time, some adverse comments were made by a section of the public, but time has proved its worth, and indeed it was the forerunner of other improvements that have eventuated or are still to eventuate.

A colonnade now encompasses a grass plot, on which seats are placed, and the addition of a canvas drape around the whole area forms an amphitheatre for the purpose of paid entertainment. Napier is singularly fortunate in its climate in the holiday periods, and very profitable and happy use is made of this area.

With the improved facilities record crowds now gather for the Mardi Gras festivities, and it is on record that as many as ten thousand people would see the old year out on New Year's Eve. It is a memorable sight to watch that

crowd make circles, as space permits, and join as a body in "Auld Lang Syne".

The Club was now able, with the support of the business people and the fees from showmen's rights, to give free entertainment to the public. The funds are used judiciously in rewarding entertainers, and the balance placed in reserve for extensions and improvements. Very appreciable sums were accumulated, and there followed memorial arches to pioneers of the Club.

One imposing arch was dedicated to the new Napier, while a Shelter Bay has proved very popular with the public.

I entered the portals of this body on my arrival in Napier, and became an active member, and remained so for a matter of thirty-three years. During this period I have seen the founders pass on one by one, an honoured body of men whose works will live after them.

Percy Spiller, the Club's very revered secretary from the beginning, was a man of outstanding worth for such a position. He lifted the Club up to a unique position in the town, and never wavered in his determination to do his best for the town generally. He never lived to see that happy day when Napier became a city. The citizens were deeply grieved at his passing, after a long illness, borne with great fortitude.

"Dad" Lathem, whose vision foresaw the thing that the Parade has now become, had the pioneer spirit, and never saw an obstacle that couldn't be surmounted. This was borne out by a unique job he did in purchasing a deep gully on the edge of the town, of little value to anybody; but in his industrious way, filled it to street level and placed twelve houses on the area.

Bob Wright, another of the old pioneers, by his practical suggestions, found it as easy to sell the town to the world as to sell a suit of clothes. He was inimitable and breezy in his outlook.

Len Bisson, an originator of the Club, staunch and true, was a seedsman whose trade helped to beautify the town, and make it the place he wanted it to be for visitors. He died in harness in the presidential chair.

Bill Harvey, another pioneer, in his profession as accountant made the funds expand, so that the city is now the proud possessor of those useful amenities that exist on the Parade to-day.

Tom Parker, a patron of the Club, was one of Napier's most civic minded gentlemen. He donated a beautiful coloured fountain that bears his name.

Vigor Brown, a rugged type of the old school, was once mayor of the town and a patron of the Club.

P. W. Peters always had the Club's interest at heart, as well as the progress of the town generally.

Bert Wilkie was a stickler for tidiness in the city. He lived long enough to see his ideas come to fruition, and a by-law operating which forebade hoardings over verandahs, and indeed make it a model city.

The Club was fortunate in the succession of public citizens who came forward at intervals to take up active work in the Club. Among those who spent an appreciable time are the following:

A. B. Hurst, whose business as a photographer gave him interest in a beautiful and better Napier, did a very useful and farseeing service to the community in the post-earthquake period, through his association with the town planning committee. He has recently shown his affection for the city by donating a beautiful floral clock for the Marine Parade.

Jack Harris, as a manufacturer of women's finery, had a perceptive eye, and could tastefully dress the carnival queens and their attendants.

Charles Pfiefer, a useful member of the Club when any layouts or improvements were required, had architect's and surveyor's mathematics at his finger tips.

Fred W. Browne, as chairman of committee, has made a forward move in pushing affairs of the town, as well as the Club's activities.

Vic Wallis, a land agent of many years' standing, ably took over the duties of secretary on the death of Percy Spiller, and has kept the Club functioning in the tradition of its able pioneers.

W. A. Gee's ideas of beautification tend to waterways, and he has in his mind's eye a magnificent scheme to turn George's Drive and an old river bed into a picturesque watering place.

Wally Ireland is always in everything for the good of the city. He gave long service for charity objects, as a member of the Frivolity Minstrels. Like others, he has an eye for a beautiful city, being in the picture business.

Horace Cottrell, of the artistic eye, developed the Norfolk pine as an emblem of Napier.

Jack Colbert was always there to jingle the keys when any community singing or accompaniments were wanted.

So the good work goes on. Other good men and true are carrying on in the tradition of the old pioneers, and ever building up.

ON DELINQUENCY

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The controversy that flares up occasionally on reading and the moral turpitude of a nation, with special emphasis on the child life, can be placed at the door of all the arts. The truth is these things have been with us all through the ages, and never more blatant than now in the exposure of the human form. This is all done under licence, re-imposed on films and illustrations, and actually perpetrated on the stage.

Obscenity, of course, is not allowed, nor should it be tolerated, but suggestion has been with us through Roman days, in the days of Sodom and Gomorrah, and even through the pages of the Bible.

In later Victorian days, when anyone would look with horror on anything but a full-length ankle skirt or bathing suit, with bloomers and full tuck blouse discreetly covering the human form, immodesty was less liable to cater for depravity, yet it existed, as is all too patent in our records and readings.

The comics of those days were certainly devoid of any blood and thunder—with their straight humour of custard pies and snowball busting—but they nevertheless did not stop the children displaying a curious mind.

Suggestiveness, as it exists to-day in readings, illustrations, art galleries, films, on stage and on the beaches, would need to have the laws recast to suit the prudery and ineffectual philosophy of other days, if by the powers of suggestion these things are responsible for our present-

¶ *The moral turpitude of a nation can be placed at the door of all the arts, if we wish to expose them as contributing causes. The truth is, these things have been with us through the ages, all done under licence. Our laws would need to be recast to suit the prudery and ineffectual philosophy of other days, if by the power of suggestion these things are responsible for our present-day licence.*

day licence. While human nature is what it is, the subtle cunning of the depraved mind will find expression.

To try and move the issue into a state of pure innocence, would assuredly lead to a serious curtailment in entertainment value, and consequently a social and economic upheaval.

Strict control, within reason, is necessary since commercialism has a tendency to publicise crudeness and art for financial gains.

That some countries are aware of the need to recast the social laws in the interests of decency is evident in Spain, where they have recently banned the wearing of bikinis and trunks.

Notwithstanding the things a child sees and hears, it is on record in Napier city that the magistrate, during his three and a half years' experience there, had never had to deal with a case of child delinquency.

This certainly indicates that booksellers' literature is not a contributing cause to waywardness, and notwithstanding the fact now recognised, that sex education is an essential part of our education. This is followed up in a very open way in many newspapers, magazines and text books, and taken as part of our daily training.

While this exists, and its meaning is clear, guiding us along paths of right living, sexual problems are certain to confront the child unless parents are careful in their training and supervision of the child's reading, then it is just

a matter of literature, or pictures and stage exhibitions teaching the child sexual matters in a different way.

Pornographic literature should have no place in our lives. This class of filth is not available through the ordinary channels. Unhappily it comes into the country. Its only means of entry is through the hands of sailors, travellers, and depraved photographers, fortunately not to any great extent.

The power of suggestion is with us now, as it was ten, twenty, fifty and a hundred years ago. With the step up in science, the portraiture of sex in articles is a more recent innovation.

The trend of literature on this subject is apparently with us for all time, coming as it does in reputable publications of all kinds, mostly prepared and printed outside the Dominion. While I am writing these reminiscences, I have before me four with very pointed articles on sex.

Picture Post has a film review on the story of a "wanton", based, if you like, on a quotation from Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress.*

Australasian Post features a revealing article on "School for Sin", sequel to a "call girl" vice ring.

Reader's Digest has an informative article on "The Problem of Infertility".

News of the World contains the usual series of cases on sexual delinquency.

In this connection, Canon Warner, among other things, makes this comment: "With some encouragement of public opinion, and with concerted action on the part of all newspapers, there is little doubt this unsavoury competition in sex appeal could disappear in a short time."

In defence of booksellers and newsagents generally, I would say there is not one in the Dominion who would tolerate anything of a pornographic nature, and the laws of the Dominion already cover depraved minds who are unloosing this on the country.

In a freedom-loving country, to demand a form of registration is savouring of dictatorship, abhorrent to everyone.

The Government's attempt to placate the public on the isolated evidence of a child or two, who find it easy to blame a comic for delinquency, is a short view of a very wide issue. Sexual education and suggestive entertainment are still under licence.

Mr Chuter Ede, a magistrate and former Home Secretary, has said that bloodthirsty comics are not the root of juvenile delinquency. "Because a boy reads them, I do not think he will go far wrong," he said.

In the final analysis, if you smother all the alleged suggestive things that make for delinquency, you have still the instinct of nature to contend with—the ruling force of our lives. The child should know of sex in purity of mind, and that, of course, is the purpose of literature and pointed articles on the subject.

That a child falls by the wayside has many detractors to account for that. It is useless to blame a horror comic (if there are such things here), when horrible examples are perpetuated in our films and illustrated papers regularly, and this is not just fiction but fact. I have referred to these later in my Recollections.

Of children's comics featuring sex I could hardly imagine anything, unless adult literature has been classed as children's. Here in this country the public themselves have instituted a form of censorship. Some cartoon infested rubbish sailing close to suggestion, went out of production through falling sales.

We can do without this, but at the same time, no dictatorship should apply to our adult reading, providing it is within the realm of sexual knowledge and decency.

As our film exhibitors are able to show a questionable film, and place a ban on children's attendance simply by

intimidation, so should booksellers be allowed to serve into the right hands the literature the public demand.

Mr Justice Stable, in summing up a case against the publishers of a book called *The Philanderer*, claimed to be obscene, had this enlightening comment to make.

"Is the act of sexual passion sheer filth, as alleged by the prosecution?" the judge asked. "It may be an error of taste to write about it. We are not sitting here as judges of taste. We are not here to say whether we like a book of that kind.

"The literature of the world from the very earliest days when people could write, represents the sum total of thought of the human mind—literature sacred and literature profane. Are we to be reduced to the sort of books that were read to children in the nursery? The answer is, 'Of course not'.

"The book in question was obviously and admittedly absorbed with sex—the relationship between male and female of the human species. I approach that mystery with profound interest and at the same time a very deep sense of reverence. It is not our fault that but for the love of man and woman and the act of sex, the human race would have ceased to exist thousands of years ago."

The jury were given copies of the book to read at home.

"Don't pick out the highlights. Read it as a book," said the judge.

The jury found the defendants not guilty.

THE TRASHY TREND

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In the quiet of my semi-retired days, I have become somewhat of a prodigious reader, always looking for the delectable in literature and not often finding it. Instead of an upward trend there is propagated an avalanche of literature that can only be described as escapist "stuff".

I have in mind odd excellent novels that only just reached the light of day, and are fated to become financial losses, while others of a sensational nature, and of little literary merit, reach astronomical figures.

In the course of my business I find it necessary to test the value of books for ordering, and indifferently have to accede to a popular demand. This opening out of a sordid story that finds a clamouring public spreads its tentacles often through the pages of a popular newspaper to further cater for the sensational.

One popular American writes a best-seller in a sordidness that is hard to follow in a welter of rhetoric, but it finishes on a very farcical note.

Another, and this is quite a common weakness in modern authors, ambles through a variety of changing scenes, with very little plot, characterisation, or continuity to hold the reader. Their stories, more often in the case of women writers, are just a diary of social chatter, told either humorously or seriously, and ending with afternoon tea.

Some little trait of genius lifts some authors to popularity, possibly a second-rate novel, sponsored in the hope

¶ *I am always looking for the delectable in literature, and not often finding it. Instead of an upward trend there is an avalanche of literature that can only be described as escapist "stuff". Where are the Dickens, Thackeray, Reade, and Dumas of to-day?*

of reward, has the semblance of a good film plot, or has risen to fame on the wings of a short story that has qualified for a first prize.

Experience is usually the prerequisite for a good novel, and the battle front will always provide the basis of a good plot; provided it is written in the purity of the atmosphere above, and not in the baseness and coarse jests of the lines behind the front. Unfortunately the publishers at times demand this for realism and sales value.

We honour our men at the front, but there is no need to play up a certain amount of licence which army life engenders, in order to add realism to a story. That is what happened in a first novel by a New Zealander. It became a popular seller, but on the pages I found a crudeness that put it "out of bounds" for any woman and child. As a story it was well told, and may even have reached classic standards, but its flavouring of profanity will ultimately send it to oblivion.

It seems at times that authors writing trashy dialogue are simply trying to write down to the level of a reader to gain favour, instead of an uplift in their writing to encourage a purer standard of literature.

An early author, age having deepened his perspective, and given him a purer and more refined standard, has since qualified for the Nobel Prize. One could hardly imagine him tolerating some of the "trash" of his earlier work.

As we grow in authorship, we grow in wisdom. A lot of the "trash", so called, for the young, is written by syndicated "hacksters"—young people, and is harmless enough. This escapist type of literature is written for the

moment, and as intended, is soon forgotten and leaves no indelible mark on the mind. Common with many adults, as well as with children, it acts as a double check on what children read. My experience is that children are only interested in comics as comics, while the adults add the more suggestive to their reading. It is a widespread business in this form. More than half our weekly and monthly periodicals, as well as books, feature this sex business in some shape or form. To limit or control it to any extent would meet with public resentment, and cause a mild social and economic upheaval.

Our only remedy, as it has always been, is for ourselves and our children to build a barrier against these things, and fortify ourselves against temptation.

LITERATURE

★

THE greatest honour that can accrue to an author is that his new book engrosses one from cover to cover. It need not be professionally perfect, but must be told convincingly and with a continuity of action. Too often we find a mass of padding quite irrelevant to the story, dispersed through the book to bring it up to commercial standards.

Unless he has a well-defined plot, an author finds it difficult to retain the reader's interest. Often we can skip a few pages without detracting from the story—if there is one. The same thing happens to travel and biography. An author finds it hard to carry through to the commercial number of pages without boosting them up. Consequently a book becomes boring before the end; while in some, so moving is the action that we are sorry when it ends.

I have in mind two stories that never gave way to the expediency of the publishers, and appeared in modified form. They told their stories in a continuity of action and finished somewhat short of the format of the modern novel, and yet these stories are pleasantly remembered by old readers as models of plot and continuity—just as a story should be.

I refer to the books *Called Back*, by Hugh Conway (I believe I have not seen it listed for forty years) and *Call of the Wild*, which immediately suggests Jack London. In London we have a master of plot, action and continuity, never flagging, and generous in bulk for most of his works.

In *A Tale of Two Cities* Charles Dickens, in a dramatic

¶ I like a book to hold me from cover to cover, free of irrelevant padding. It need not be professionally perfect, but told convincingly, with continuity of action.

role, is a lesson in characterisation; shifting as the author dictates and the mood changes, to the whimsical characters of Mr Pickwick and his confrères. A master of fiction.

I would place Dennis Wheatley among the top authors. His novels of the French Revolution days are artistic triumphs in literature, spread, as they should be, with a romantic interest that never wavers. His appearance in many languages is a sure tribute to his gift for plot construction.

John Buchan, who found the East a happy hunting-ground for the setting of some of his novels, gave us *Thirty-Nine Steps*, an intriguing novel of his early days, and later even more interesting studies in the biographical sketches of his life.

The modern master of English literature is Winston Churchill himself. To a student of history his works stand in a class of their own—relative and authentic in construction, not by any means escapist, but solid matter unto which one must be tuned or in the mood to take it. I particularly like the lighter reading of his early days in South Africa.

When Frank Clune gets moving in the air, he is not quite so interesting as when he was a barefoot runner making his way in life in *Try Anything Once*. While missing the personal aspect, he opens up worlds of beauty, but I would much prefer to read *his* account of a climb up Everest.

Bader's own personal account in his *Reach for the Skies* would have been a little more interesting than through the eyes of the author Brickhill. Without discrediting the author in any way, Bader, in his own words, could have given us intimate sketches of more personal interest to the reader. Part of the book, of course, is routine flights, and

Bader, who is credited with a sense of humour, could have developed and played up those scenes where he bluffed his way into executive posts, and bluffed his way out of Germany, better in his own words than through the mouth of another.

I like to think of Beverley Nichols as the author who put the simple story of home in such a beautiful form in his *Down the Garden Path*. The beauty of the book lies in its simplicity and the decorating of the English language to interest readers, as Nichols makes his human progress down the garden path. It is remembered, perhaps, as his best work, on which later writings have been modelled.

We go back to the nineteenth century for real quality in literature. Then, it seems, authors wrote for the sheer love of writing, having little thought, and, at the time, little prospect of seeing their works in print, with the inadequate printing presses and materials available at the time.

It took the earlier part of this century to disclose some of these and bring into book form in beautiful format and binding—in which many of them are now available—a never-ending feast of good literature.

However, it is sad to relate, it does not occupy the important part of our reading time, being used principally as decoration for our bookshelves.

The purpose of this chapter is not to find, boost, or publicise any particular author or book, but simply to indicate the prevalence of a good class of literature, enjoyed by a literary minded public, for which there are countless authors, some good and some mediocre, catering.

PUBLISHERS AND REPS

*

During my thirty-four years in my own business, and ten years with a bookselling company prior to this, I have been associated, mostly by correspondence, with many publishers, but more particularly with their representatives.

In those days, before the advent of modern transport, publishers were rather far-off friends. Anything up to four months was needed to get results; now with air transport and faster mail services, we can get results in two months, and much faster when it is from standing orders, assisting thereby to step up business. This has had the effect of allowing the Dominion publishing date to coincide with the English date.

During the past ten years there has been a great improvement in the appearance of books, consequent on a keen competition, and a release of war economies that were operating.

A picture jacket is the selling point, and an author of mediocrity can very often get across with this. Publishers almost universally are adopting this publicity aid, but there are a few conservative firms not in line. Competition will ultimately enforce this.

A reciprocity of ideas has been generated during the last few years, and this has led to a mutual understanding between publishers and the trade.

I was much concerned for some years over a little technical trouble some of the publishers were causing me. The

Hodder and Stoughton, had little need to talk his wares. He had the list. If you were not sure of anything ask Bill, and he was usually right. Expanding trade ultimately coaxed him away from these shores.

Charlie Street, a great cobber of Bill Smart's, was loyal to Bill right to the end. Nothing was too much trouble for Charlie. Nelson's lost a good man.

George Hicks, the literary man of many publishers, could quote from his works endlessly, as well as sell them. He was honest in his criticism of a publication if he doubted its value—a failing with some reps.

Charlie, late of W. and T., has had his share of trouble, but he always comes up smiling.

William Gaw, the old stager with Hutchinson's, was one whose face will be sadly missed.

One of the most versatile of the older reps was A.A.D., of Cassell's. Nothing ever stumped A.A. He was always ready with a quip, and you had to come up with a little order.

Friend Bagster, of the many publishers, was a character of the old school. Despite his deafness he could read an order in your eyes. It was always pleasant to have a gossip with "Baggy" notwithstanding.

Friend Goodchild, of happy memories, has been for some time domiciled in Australia with his company.

E. E. Bartholomew, of my initials, and I hope of his qualities, has been long an honoured publisher's representative.

Ted Wills, like Charlie, is one of the old and tried reps.

The newer generation of reps have something to live up to. I'm sure they will meet the challenge.

Of the publishers themselves, Hodder and Stoughton, among the leaders, have set a standard of publishing that has come down through the years as a model of good printing and good binding.

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Ward Lock, a substantial name in the publishing world for many years, sharpened the appetites of fastidious eaters throughout the world by introducing Mrs Beeton, unfortunately to set an avalanche of cookery books suited to local conditions, and somewhat unsettling the imported models of the culinary art.

Cassell's, publishers of renown, have featured the world's great historians, and particularly that prince of writers Winston Churchill. They are given to works of an educational nature on sound lines.

Angus and Robertson, nearer home, that climbing firm of sound publishing ability, introduced Frank Clune to travel readers in *Try Anything Once*, and since, by their specialised publicity, have built that author into a phenomenal seller. Likewise, they put the popular travel author, Idriess, on the map.

Whitcombe and Tombs, the New Zealand publishers, have a record growth in half a century of publishing and manufacturing. I have memory of their small business in Christchurch, soon to outspan more staid and larger establishments throughout the Dominion. One cannot speak of Whitcombe's without thinking of friend Chaffey.

A. H. Reed Ltd have risen from small beginnings to a place in the sun, fostering New Zealand writers, sometimes at a loss. A willing firm, but with a difficult market for New Zealand wares. They adopted my suggestion and reversed their titling along the spines to their advantage.

Collins and Sons, of the "I Belong to Glasgow" tradition, are now among the leaders in fiction publishing, and a popular firm in reward, picture books, and classics. I had the pleasure of meeting their head and was promised his support in my campaign for the reversal of titles on the spines in the several directions that the fault lay.

The Oxford and the Cambridge Press have put the world on the right track with that most excellent book—the Bible.

Hutchinson's, whom Wheatley thanks for a generous recompense, has a colourful programme, both of literature and format; while Heinemann's, of sound publishing, introduced that excellent period writer Heyer.

Equally important at this end are the firms: Murray's, Nelson's, Blackie's, Penguin, Guild, Dymock's, Australasian Publishing, Jenkins, Odham's, Methuen's, Cape's, Putman's, Joseph's, Foulsham's, Temple Press, Iliffe's, Lutterworth Press, Cambridge Press, Constable's, Black's, Gollancz, Hammond's, Pitman's, Wise's, Macmillan's, Nisbet's, Wright and Brown, Pan Books, Harrap's, Hale's, Warne's, Eyre and Spottiswoode, Allen's and Gordon and Gotch, that colossal publisher of the world's reading.

MUSICAL INTERLUDES

★

I CAME of a singing family. Aunts, uncles, cousins, and even grandfathers combined in one rich harmony. Socials, birthdays, picnics, found us together in harmonic excellence. We could *ad lib* anything in four-part harmony from "John Brown's Body" to the "Gloria". The memory of those days lives with me, though many of the faces are gone.

In my fourteens I bought my own piano from my newspaper earnings, took up a twelve months' course of practice, and did it hard, as most children do. I became only an average amateur, acquired the professional name of Paddy (from Paderewski) from my quipping brother, but never attained to anything like that status, although I improved as the years went by. The stirring martial airs were my long suit in those days, now in my more mature age the classics interest me.

One of the hardest things I did was breaking away from the family singing group. Later, many were to follow me to Christchurch, and we got together again in happier times.

I became a member of the Terrace Methodist Church, and was appointed organist to the Men's Bible Class. During my term as organist the class devoted itself to church matters, and arranged concerts in aid of church funds. One concert particularly will be vivid in the memory of the old members, now scattered far and wide. On this occasion I was transferred to the chorus, as baritone work was particularly pleasing to me. It was part minstrel

¶ *The person that has no music in him—presumably—is like the bud that never opens to its full brilliancy. Sing, whistle, or yodel. It's good exercise. You don't need to be like Bing if you don't want to. If you keep a dog, he'll probably accompany you, but that doesn't matter. Sing!*

show, and the boys lifted the roof in "Darkies Sing a Happy Song". Amongst those fervent in voice and harmony was a very popular Prime Minister of later days.

I had a deep appreciation of part singing, and made haste to join a newly formed Glee Society, and almost missed out in a test with a particularly exacting conductor. However, I qualified, and got much pleasure from the baritone harmony in such beautiful part songs as "It Was a Lover and His Lass", "To a Wild Rose" and "The Close of Day".

During my Christchurch residence I transferred my piano to friends up North, and invested in a new one, which later came with me to Napier, and then later again, when times became a little more affluent, I traded it in for an English Marshall and Rose grand.

Missing the harmony of the family parties, my musical interests in Napier were never very intense. I joined an early Choral Soceity, with a very able conductor in the person of Varley Hudson, and later an equally able man in Percy Tombs.

This unfortunately went into recess during the war years, and remained so into the post-war period, until, under my convening, a committee reformed the society and went into production again, under the able conductorship of Madame Bella Russell. During its life term some very creditable choral works were produced, but the public response was disheartening, and the society again went into recess.

I then interested myself in the acquisition of a grand

piano for the stage of the Municipal Theatre. Getting together a committee, we went to the public, and in twelve months acquired sufficient to purchase the best eight-foot flat grand that England can produce. Its early purchase was made possible through the Government giving it its blessing, and allowing the piano to come in free of duty and sales tax.

This would not have applied had the piano been of foreign manufacture. Had one been available—which was doubtful at the time, its landed price would have put it "out of bounds". This was borne out recently by the landed cost of a foreign piano being given as two thousand three hundred pounds. This is the piano that would satisfy the oversea professional pianists, whose sparse visits we appreciate, but whose piano demands are just beyond a small city.

It is in recent years that England has acquired the high grade piano technique; in consequence, most professionals have been nursed up on foreign brands.

Pianos of any make are temperamental things. They require preening, warm and cosy housing. In effect, this may have something to do with the complaints of southern pianos, domiciled as they are in freezing cold climates, with the required attention lacking.

Happily, the Napier "Challen" is comfortably housed, and has been worked into a state of efficiency, tone and quality that has been favourably commented upon by professionals—notably at a full house performance of the Orpheus Choir, when the professional pianist was very happy about the "Challen's" performance.

The Napier Orchestral Society has been reconstituted, and its first 1955 performance was a very colourful affair, with the grand in its right setting.

"Julius Katchen, a master pianist, playing before a Napier audience," according to the local *Telegraph* report, "played with a skill and feeling that was breath taking,

and enthralled the audience at the overwhelming volume he summoned from the piano, a crescendo through which he worked from a note just audible in the silence of the theatre." A fitting tribute to a great pianist and a fine English grand piano.

HOLIDAYS IN LAKELANDS

★

Rest and repose by quiet waters. For the coasters no surging breakers or tempestuous seas, but just quiet waters stirred into ripples by gentle breezes, with beautiful native bush overhung at intervals by pohutakawas, fuchsias, orchids and other emblems of native flora bordering its waters, and reflected therein along with the blue of the sky; while in the forest glen the tui and the bellbird sing and ring their songs to a silent world.

Such is the picture of Waikaremoana, that beautiful lake hidden away in the Ureweras, North Island, and surrounded by native bush in all its grandeur.

As a guest of the accommodation house, for some years I spent my annual holidays there. I found little to do in such surroundings; but who wants anything to do in such a place. Just to walk the bush-clad roads, sit by the lake, fish if you want to, take launch trips, or climb to the Trig station, if you have the stamina and energy, would be sufficient for a fortnight's enjoyment.

The most pleasurable are the launch trips. Given a fine day, this is a special feature for the conducted tourists, who frequently visit the resort. It is usually a happy party that sets sail, full of life, quips and jokes, forgetting for the moment the cares of the world, and indeed, when you get into no man's land at the end of the lake, forgetting that there is such a thing as civilisation.

Frank, the launchman, has stowed away in the locker a basket of tasty sandwiches and fruit cake, and you walk the plank, as in the brigandage days, and gather round

¶ *Waikaremoana is forty miles from the nearest town, and if you want a quiet retreat from the hurry and bustle, this is it. The hostel provides everything for your comfort, and if you are a camper, facilities are available close by. Taupo provides a more energetic holiday.*

while the billy boils in camp style, and with years of experience behind him, Frank could make a cup of tea.

These picnics in such exhilarating climate were the feature of the outings. Frank would pass on in his breezy way the historical incidents belonging to the lake, and sometimes take out his gun and pot a shag or a deer, for which he had "ticket of leave" to hunt.

Another trip takes you past the Aniwaniwa Falls, where the boat is tied up, and you commence a walking tour through bush and forest trees to Lake Waikare-iti, situated at a higher elevation than Waikaremoana, and tucked away in untrodden bush country. If the main lake takes you away from civilisation, this one transports you into another world. It is so quiet and tranquil that the sound of a fish jumping for a fly can be heard hundreds of yards away.

Again Frank, with his knapsack of good things, and his billy of tea, is the toast of the party.

Waikaremoana being reserve, no homes or baches are allowed in its environs. This being so, I turned my attention to Taupo, a place that would give me a stake of land with a home and a free, open and healthy life.

The time I visited there, it was on the edge of a boom period, frustrated at the moment through the provisions of building control. Permits would only be issued to a person intending to live permanently in the building.

As I already had a home, and this was to be a holiday bach, I landed in the resort having some doubt of success in my quest. However, within half an hour of my arrival, I had purchased a section, and negotiated for a bach

sitting idle in a man's backyard, and had it removed to the section in a day or two.

So began my frequent journeys to New Zealand's most popular lake. While it is deficient in native bush reserves, it has everything for the enjoyment of the tourist. First of all, a climate of exhilarating freshness on a twelve hundred feet elevation; in the distance a trio of snow clad mountains a part of the year, one a skiers' paradise; another an active volcano; warm thermal waters for bathers and convalescents; geyser valleys in active operation; boating, yachting, launch trips, bowls, golf, picture shows, and last but not least, a lake famed throughout the world for its fishing.

I placed my own inboard boat on the lake, and took up the sport.

Some time after my first arrival in Taupo, I purchased a guest house on the front as a speculative venture, and disposed of my suburban interest. I then decided to build a family cottage on the newly acquired guest house land, and found the problem of timber and labour shortage very acute. The boom was on and builders were at a premium. If anyone had said to me, "Why not build it yourself", I would have said, "Tell me another"; but I began to turn over in my mind this method of self-help. So I began what seemed an almost impossible task of building my own cottage.

With the help of a practical man in the layout, I completed, with the help of my son-in-law, a very creditable cottage of four rooms with all amenities.

Owing to sale and requirements of tenancy, I eventually built two more cottages. After the third time, however, I've had enough.

FISHING ADVENTURES

★

BOATING and fishing are the extreme pleasures of almost everyone visiting Taupo. The vast expanse of lake provides ample room for the fisherman and fish alike, and the latter provide a "hide and seek" sport by moving away from the danger zones. Fishing naturally means long hours of watching and waiting, with a flying cast continually on the move, or a boat trolling a line over wide waters. Patience brings reward sufficient to satisfy the appetites of keen fishermen.

A typical trolling day, and one which I usually favour, is to take gear and lunch, petrol up the engine, idle along a short course, and, dependent on weather conditions, speed to another prospect further field in little known waters, if conditions allow and time permits.

The commercial launches have, of course, one rendezvous well afield—the Western Bays.

The small idle-along fisherman with his 150 foot line extended on a trolling rod, hung securely on a nail in the boat, or held leisurely in the hand, can almost go to sleep with the monotony of waiting. The pleasures of boating somewhat compensate for this.

At the end of an hour, or half hour, or maybe only five minutes, his attention may be called to the welcome clicking of the ratchet reel, and he springs immediately to attention, quickly tensioning the line to securely hook the fish in its first attempt at acrobatics. Then he slowly starts to pull in, giving the fish play as it attempts to get away.

¶ *I have never been able to tell a better fishing story than this. Some others can. Four before breakfast, and one in the evening. Four of them I managed to fit into the ten foot boat, the other one I had to tow behind.*

The fact that the fish is partly exhausted after its preliminary acrobatics, makes the pull in easy until it has its second breath. However, the absence of any further fight makes one suspicious that the fish has escaped through insufficient hooking, and this is at times the case. You had lost it on the first, second, or third jump. The one that got away. A well known story.

It is a strange thing that a fish, with its small head and few brains, is up to all the tricks of the angler's trade, and the latter often comes off second best.

So you try again. Extending the line to the limit, you are more alert this time. Another hour and the welcome click of the ratchet pulls you to attention, and this time the fish comes along fighting mad. Playing the line out while the fish is in spirited action, you eventually bring it within vicinity of the boat, when a last spasm of acrobatics might land it in the boat or over the edge of the net, according to your or your helper's precision movement of the net.

If the fish beats you at this point, with the strain in mid-air, it is usually away with the spoon for another lease of life, although possibly it is in for a slow death with this obstacle to digestion in its mouth. This is the only cruelty, and the fish itself is responsible for this.

There is a good story told of the colonel, the major, and the sergeant. They were on an allegedly good spot, blowing and sweating all day and no bites. Up came a little Maori boy, paddled into the water, and with a bent pin and a feather on a bit of string, pulled out an eight-pounder and walked away unconcerned. The colonel, the major, and the sergeant cursed.

This little original sonnet is typical of a fisherman's experience:

"The other night, when the moon shone bright,
And the fish were playing fine,
I threw my cast on a sparkling lake,
And a fish laid hold of my line;
I played him once, I played him twice,
And the third I brought him in;
A struggling mass, with flashing eyes,
And a tail that lashed like fury,
I fought to calm his tortured soul,
And bring end to his misery;
Twenty pounds if he was an ounce,
And the finest I've ever seen.
Pardon me, I must explain:
It was only a dream."

Fishing does not always provide the happiest of experiences. At the beginning of the fishing season—which is November 1st, since made an open season—my friends Mr and Mrs Mac and myself started out on a fine day and a placid lake for a cruise and a day's fishing round the point into one of the quiet bays.

I let the engine full out until we approached the point, and then reduced to idling speed. Putting out the line, I then trolled towards the distant bay. It was not long before I landed a six-pounder, which is considered a very good fish. Arriving at our first bay, we decided to go on shore for lunch. This little interlude was a nice break, and we enjoyed a hot cup of tea from the primus, and, needless to say, that fish.

By now, one of the unexpected westerlies was rising, breaking the water into unruly waves. We were forced to pull the boat in on a somewhat rocky bottom, and the waves were bouncing it about while we beached it.

I was not apprehensive, as the boat could comfortably weather this, and had done so on several occasions.

"Looks as though we will have to push off home." To which the Macs agreed.

The worst feature was the launching over the rocks and the unruly waves. However, it was accomplished, and we were safely on board with our gear. I started the engine and we were on the way. I had not gone more than a hundred yards when Mac exclaimed: "She is making water. Pull back to shore, quick!"

Glancing at the shaft intake, I saw a steady stream incoming. With visions of a holed bottom, due apparently to the boat bumping on the rocks, I was immediately concerned about getting my passengers back to civilisation. Although it was the mainland, it was practically no man's land, as the only egress was by water. Dense bush and hills precluded any overland journey, and dusk was drawing in.

Fortunately in our emergency landing we struck a fairly rock-free piece of beach, so Mac and I clambered out and held the boat steady for our lady passenger to step on shore. Then with our best heaves we gradually got the boat on shore above the breakers. By that time the boat had emptied itself, so my first anxious look was for a hole. Greatly relieved, I discovered it was the lock nut at the water end of the shaft, which had come loose apparently by bumping against a rock.

Carefully tightening this up, I examined the lake and found it in a very rough state.

"What do you say?" I asked apprehensively.

"We'll have to make a night of it here," ventured the Macs. This point was ten miles from town, but at this distance it was unusual to take any special food or tents. We had one canvas cover.

At 1,200 feet above sea level in early November this was of little use, and we gave up the idea of sleep. We

found a sheltered cliff, beside which we built a fire—finding excellent driftwood, and sat through the long night enjoying the fire's warm glow.

The main topic of conversation was, of course, the weather. We had no weather report, but were all prepared to prophesy rain before morning. However, it held over, and that was the end of a perfect day—and night.

The morning found a tranquil lake, and putting the boat on skids we had little difficulty in sliding it back into the water. I pushed off for a few yards, testing it for leaks, and found everything watertight.

So all aboard again for a slow troll on the way back.

Within twenty minutes I had a nice fish hooked, and was netting it into the boat when, with one of those clever acrobatic turns, it cleared the net, broke the cast, and got away with the spoon.

Soon after this, having had a long day and sleepless night—although the water and the fresh air were a wonderful refresher—I set the engine full out for home.

GETTING A TICKET

★

FIVE hundred thousand people can't be wrong. It all comes about through the action of one ogre. Depends upon its mood, whether its dinner was late or whether some silly ass has crossed it. Depends really on whether you have a merry twinkle in your eye and you catch it off guard with guile. It is a most elusive thing when you want it but an ever present source of trouble when you don't want it.

I first met this august thing back in nineteen-twenty. It was then an inoffensive little thing, of quiet mien and easy going, seeming intent on tracking a few grey ants (or other colours) crawling about, and seeing they entered their right holes. Only occasionally would you see it squash one underfoot, or put one in the "pot". It was a most disconcerting pastime, but fortunately not of frequent occurrence.

But now things are different. It has developed into a mighty ogre. I have been in fear of meeting this august thing for over a month, ever since I took my first ride. Sometimes my past would come up before indicating the final judgment, and the need for preparing for my doom. So sure is that final judgment day coming that the actual date is fixed. It doesn't come in the twinkling of an eye as prophesied, but a sure thing at a dead line.

As the first week goes by I am struggling with my control, trying to ward off the inevitable, but it is very hard to bring my life into gear. There is just that little niche you must direct your life and your hands towards. Your

course must be steadied into the straight, missing the rough and uneven places.

I had a wise counsellor and friend beside me, but he couldn't do much to quiet the torment of nerves gripping me. The only thing he could do was save me from utter destruction.

I go into the first week with sleepless nights now gripping me. The agony of suspense is now torturing. You can't seem to get the wheels of time turning in the right direction. Everything seems blurred and out of focus.

Still that fearful ogre faced me as I approached the end of my fourth week. The tentacles of feeling seemed to spread all around me, holding me bound to a nameless fear. There was no escaping it. My conscience was clear, and I resigned myself to the inevitable.

The day of execution had now arrived, and I went out to meet my fate with a resigned heart, feeling that I had at least done my best to steer a right course. If I went down, I would go down with the wheels spinning.

Ladies and gentlemen, meet the Traffic Inspector. The most magnanimous and warm-hearted person on the road.

I have just received my ticket.

FAREWELL, MY FAITHFUL FRIEND

★

You have been with me on two thousand four hundred miles of New Zealand's worst highway. In sunshine you sparkled with happiness and vim, and relished the joyous adventure. You climbed the highest hills and complained not; forded rivulets; ploughed dusty highways and shingly roads. You even battled against cyclonic winds and kept your temper against uneven odds. Your name is covered with glory, for never once did you let me down. I let you down at times, my friend, when I did not put that necessary spark into your eye, that gives you the power of accomplishing things.

Now, my friend, you are to give way to a streamlined surface of modern ingenuity. The march of science has licked you.

For your last trip I took you out two hours before dawn, just to prove that you still had a heart to carry on, and you acquitted yourself admirably. You have nothing to be ashamed of.

Great things are coming along on this highway, beauty, graded contour, ease of movement, short cuts, but, my friend, you can't live to enjoy it. The march of time requires you to rest.

Farewell, my faithful friend—my B.S.A. Bantam.

REFLECTIONS AND RECOLLECTIONS

★

YOUR daily newspaper these days becomes big business, with small profits and much work. Its value is only commensurate with other business that it may bring. In the light of present-day economics, it is unprofitable of itself, requiring, as it does, six days' service, collections of supplies at busy hours, listing of names, accounting, service in delivery, often wrapping, stamping and posting. One advantage is that it retains a customer's goodwill, and extends to him a service he would not otherwise get on distant papers.

There is one thing a bookseller provides, and that is a rendezvous for idle half-hours. The inevitable reader is attracted, and this does not become particularly irksome, except where gross inconsideration is shown by readers, and busy stands are occupied at rush hours by non-buyers.

Many years ago I overheard a lady passing my shop door remark to a companion, "I never go into these large shops", presumably meaning because of bigger prices operating. Apart from her ignorance of standardised prices, had she stopped to reflect, the shop had the same frontage as most small shops, therefore was on a similar rental and rates; but because of the greater depth could offer a large stock and a wider service for the same expense. On the same basis, what would be her reaction now to the large chain stores?

A very inconsiderate postal department is providing us with an unnecessary headache by demanding that invoices be not enclosed in parcels. Since "on the spot" invoice is essential to the quick disposal of a parcel, with invoices drifting in at later dates, it makes for confusion and mislaying of goods. Would not a rubber stamp mark "Invoice Enclosed", with the usual invoice stamp fee attached extra, satisfy a demanding department?

One of the most annoying technical troubles inflicted on stationers is the number of new models of fountain pens, with their multifarious point sections. This is done quite out of consideration for stationers handling repairs. In the olden days, and to a large extent to-day with many of the standard brands, the straight out gold nib on view, with a push-in point section, was easy of repair. Now, some brands have obscured nibs, internal fixtures, screw-in threads, patent fixed interiors, all making for difficulty in handling. Happily this trouble is lessening with makers, and the well known exposed nib is coming back into its own—the original Mr Waterman's idea.

There is a great step up in the format and appearance of books and periodicals. With the release of war economies, the size of many publications has improved. The crude printing of years ago has given place to a real art in colouring. This, of course, makes for showmanship on a buying public.

New Zealand is not very prolific in the number of its weekly journals. Years ago some fell by the wayside. Those that were left suffered from war economies, labour shortages and restricted plant, and in one case has not been able to overtake the demand. Oft-repeated requests from prospective and much surprised customers at its unavailability have brought a promise of "some day". It is such

an unusual thing in business nowadays not being able to get what you want.

During the incidence of the 1939-1945 war I carried on under essential war economies, restrictions, licences, and later bank exchange, limiting imports. Actual freedom in buying did not reach us again until 1953. Let us hope this throttle will not be put on us again.

In the nineteen-fifties I accomplished the purchase of the premises in which my business is situated, together with the taking over of four tenants. It was a particularly fortunate buy, and secured my family staff for all time. Very generous offers for a re-sale have been made, but were not considered. The interior of the shop was reconditioned and later the windows were modernised.

Any predictions or wishful thinking that mechanical forms of entertainment would ever seriously affect our reading have never given the trade any anxiety; nor need they concern us in the future should television reach our vision.

We stand just so much of these by-plays, and then return to our normal easy relaxation—that of reading.

I well remember the nineteen-tens when the flickers appeared, and for a time I was glad to escape to an entertainment less trying on the eyes. Eventually, however, the written word became a spoken word in gorgeous extravaganzas of opera and melodrama per medium of the screen, seriously curtailing the touring companies, but never lessening our reading.

Conversely, while America was free of exchange, and the dollar was at par, a growing demand for stories of the films and players gave the public a multitude of screen magazines.

With war economies, paper shortage, and price in-

creases, many of these lost their glamour. Indeed, in many cases the fans accelerated the pace with the tumbling of their heroes and heroines from their pedestals. Hollywood had lost its glamour and become an exacting commercial world.

To meet the lesser needs of fans, there cropped up in weeklies, digests, and newspapers pithy pars and gossip from the film front. This produced on occasions a simulated smile at the antics of some divorcee or bacchanalian indulger, who, perhaps only the previous night, had been in the arms of the hero in a beautfiul romantic scene.

The screen can never capture the action of a three hundred page novel. That is why people like their reading unspoiled by film technique. On the other hand, a film can boost an otherwise mediocre story by dwelling on the spectacular and not the plot. This has accounted for the success of a book as a film, while a poor seller as a book.

The Seekers, the New Zealand historical film, found a large viewing public as a spectacular picture, but little interest as a book. The reason is obvious. The plot was only mediocre, and the public could not visualise in cold print the spectacular that went to make up the highlights of the film.

In passing, while appreciably exploiting some beauty, it overemphasised the Dominion's defects in thermal and earth tremors and native arrogance, which, of course, is not typical. Then it ran to a lurid instead of a happy ending which is quite unacceptable to us.

One of the greatest pleasures that life affords us is in sea voyaging. It offers relaxation and an escape from the mundane things of life. Most of us have ambitions in this direction, but the next best is to sound your own waterways and take your leisure in your environs.

Lake Taupo provides me with a regular escape from

business, and enough boating and fishing to satisfy; a cruise across the front to the Eastern Bays, around the river mouths, across to the Western Bays and at times around the point to the more open waters, testing the depths at times for fish.

For a change, land on a remote shore and try the rocky inlets with a fly line and cast. Nothing so appetising as this with a lunch basket ready at the right moment.

After the earthquake, when some semblance of order was re-established on the Marine Parade front, the Mardi Gras was held as usual. Those were the days when barricades were used, with an absence of greenery underfoot. The big heads were brought out, the children paraded in bright fancy costumes, races were run, presents and lollies were distributed, and the bathing beauties showed their best form. The best of these things still operate under better conditions.

An original innovation I introduced at the time was gas balloons. Fortunately the gas supply was back to normal. The inflating was done with the aid of a car pump, arranged with a two-way valve, and proved quite effective. It gave the festivities quite a spectacular start, and provided the children with never-ending pleasure.

Christmas is too strenuous a time to give to this now.

Close by Napier, some twelve miles as the crow doesn't fly—it is usually gulls and tern that fly here—there is a place called Hastings. Now Hastings is inland and is nearly a city and depends for its waterways on a little river running through the suburbs; while Napier is a seaport and a capital, and doesn't have a little river running through its suburbs, but depends for its waterways on five miles of Pacific Ocean bordering the city. The two places therefore have nothing in common, except that they are both

conservative. However, this may change at the next election and obviate any chance of jealousy.

(Note: It has changed. Both Labour.)

There is a danger that with the rapid expansion of the two places, they will ultimately become one city—probably called Napier, but it is a very remote possibility, because the Government has put a man called Clive in the very centre to keep peace.

Now, Clive is a very good general, and he is likely to build up strong fortifications at the Ngaruroro River, to prevent any trespass on either property, as well as save his own little village from extinction.

Napier is very proud of its beautiful Marine Parade, and its modern new city, and Hastings is equally proud of its two decorated lines running through the centre, its congested streets and beautiful "stop" signs. The latter will probably confuse you if you are a visitor, and you will probably turn back looking for a thoroughfare, only to find you are blocked at every corner. You will probably give up trying and in desperation go on to Napier, where all is perfect.

Each place has its little spies. A wise man from the East (Coast) suggested it would be economical and serve the ends of both cities if a milk treating plant was placed at a central point in Clive. The spies got hold of this, and now we go all the way to Hastings and back for our milk.

However, Napier got one back on them. It got the Income Tax Department right on its very doorstep. Hastings, however, was not envious. "The further that department is away, the better," reported the spies. They won't miss any assessments, though.

Then the spies got busy again and reported to the "Greater Hastings Committee" that the city of Napier was putting on a monster Industrial Exhibition, and was swallowing up three acres in the doing; so the G.H.C.

went one better and added a nought, and strewed the area with flowers.

However, the two cities—the runner-up has probably got there by now—get on very well together. They each have a very fine motto: "What's mine, I have. Woe to any interloper."

Besides its tourist attractions Taupo has a very picturesque landscape in the spring of the year. The common broom, magnificent in its panorama of sweet-scented yellow blooms, spreads over thousands of acres of uplands, defying the lawmakers to remove it—being listed as an obnoxious weed. There will be many a tear when closer settlement removes this beauty.

It was the sight of this, particularly resplendent in the early days, that prompted Percy Spiller, a frequent visitor, to write a poem on its beauty. It is worthy of record here:

THE BROOM AT TAUPO

"When you take the road to Taupo, and you travel many miles,
You leave behind all thought of care and gloom,
There's a welcome waiting for you, with firm handshakes and bright smiles,
But you'll ne'er forget the glory of the broom.
The lake as clear as crystal, the three peaks snowy capped,
The Huka Falls with never-ending boom,
The rapids madly dashing, with rainbow hues all flashing,
But you'll ne'er forget the glory of the broom.

"You must have seen it shining like a field of cloth of gold
In springtime after early morning rain,
And the fragrance of its perfume wafted on the gentle breeze
For ever in your memory will remain.

The lone Tauhara standing in the middle of the plain,
Grim sentinel as silent as the tomb,
And as my thoughts they stray, I can almost hear him say,
'Oh, can't you see the glory of the broom.'

"I've seen the combers breaking on the beach at Waikiki,
And London Bridge majestic in the gloom,
The gondolas at Venice and the Great White Way,
New York,
But my heart goes back to Taupo and the broom.
So no matter where I roam, there's a place that calls me
home,
And in my thoughts there'll always be a room,
And my heart will miss a beat, when I turn and place my
feet
To Taupo and the glory of the broom."

An illustrated text of this poem was prepared, suitably framed, and was presented to the Taupo Borough Council by the Napier Frivolity Minstrels, with whom the late Percy Spiller had been associated since its inception, in memory of his good work. Its hanging in the borough office created so much interest that a thousand copies of the poem were called for in a short time.

When the second war started it seemed very far off and unattached, but it was quickly brought within our vision by the entry of the Japanese. This needed some adjustment on the home front, since we had a wide seaboard. Pillboxes were hastily erected, and a home guard was formed and called into service.

Their first job was to put the business area defences in order and take up a temporary course of first aid. I well remember the time when I was given a shovel, placed on the pay roll—although many of us accepted it as a labour of love and turned our share over to patriotic

funds—and got to work on the underground shelters. Apart from basements placed at the disposal of the public, there were three important shelters.

It was a tea drinking job, and happily a very efficient ladies' committee was on the job. On the day of the siren warning and try-out, the scene was an eerie one. All moving traffic and machinery stopped, and even the terns and the gulls held their squawking. The only sound that broke the silence was the shouts of the shelter wardens—and I was one—"Hurry on, please."

I would like to think that in a real emergency things would have gone as smoothly and free of panic as they did that day.

The laws of the land require that a criminal be given a fair trial and that trial should be in the hands of a jury. I have served on grand and common juries, being foreman on occasions. Now, however, enjoying age exemption, and while appreciating the sincerity of jurists in trying to establish justice in a jury room, I have been concerned at endless time involved and the hesitancy of decision, through the finer points of law not being available inside the jury room and a weakness that exists here. The attendance of a professional lawyer (with no voting power) for both sides if necessary would expedite decisions.

I remember on one occasion being involved as foreman of a common jury on an intricate case. We gave the decision against the accused, and I left the court hoping I had conveyed the right decision to the judge. Some years later, the accused in the case called on me, apparently reformed, introduced himself, shook hands, and said he bore me no grudge. If our democratic way of trial by jury does this, perhaps there is some justification for its retention.

While proud of my Lancashire genealogy into the third generation, very little of the dialect is left, however,

which, of course, is due to our modern system of education and the elimination of anything un-English. But I have happy memories of the Lancashire atmosphere, even to the old sod house my grandparents lived in for a time, so reminiscent of the old land even to-day.

Grandad in his typical way would coax me, "Thee be a fine laad. Bring me yon bucket." Even that typical Lancashire expression "Ee by gum!" so reminiscent of our Gracie was occasionally to be heard.

War that has passed through and devastated our home lands, and has reared its ugly head in all quarters of the world, has found few homes that some sorrow has not entered. A brother-in-law, a cousin, a nephew, going the rounds of our dear ones leaving gaps here and there. Happily my younger son went through a part of the Italian campaign uninjured.

A nephew, Ray, a pilot officer, and one of the brave band of young men who turned the tide of victory in the air, was lost over Germany and remained untraced.

Ray was of a poetical turn of mind, and he gave pen to some beautiful thoughts, even among the carnage all around. It was a poignant moment for his parents when they uncovered a collection of verses in his effects. They were edited by his sister Ida, and printed in brochure form and distributed privately.

In memory, I should like to quote this gem of Ray's, with my own poignant observation "It was not so."

"Oh, to see the flax in bloom at home,
To wander back to the friendly hills,
Catch speckled trout in crystal rills,
And never roam;
To be where the night owls hoot at night
And the Southern Cross is diamond bright—
It will be so."

One of the greatest aids in publicising your own country is through the medium of illustrated brochures. Besides taking pride in selling your own city, it becomes your privilege to sell the whole country to the world. By this means we hope to divert much tourist traffic to this "God's own country".

Napier has something to sell that some cities have not, and it has always been my policy for thirty years to provide my own illustrated booklet. Napier's mounting beauty made rearrangements necessary from time to time. One of the greatest assets and aids to beauty that the city has yet acquired will be an original and uniquely designed Memorial Hall, to be located on the Marine Parade.

Some years ago somebody with little else to do invented crossword puzzles. Readers looked at them quizzically and sometimes with a wry smile, wondering as to just what sort of interest they could be. Presently somebody took up the challenge, and the business became a sensation.

Crossword books appeared in profusion. Editors everywhere began to stare at them and presently newspapers, weeklies and magazines were running them regularly, to the detriment, of course, of the crossword books. There was something of an educational nature as well as a game in this pastime, and the public became regular addicts. The sale of newspapers went up appreciably. Several laggards among editors finally toed the line, and practically all papers and weeklies are now running the square.

It is a most engrossing pastime, and provided editors keep on the more simplified versions, it will keep the participants' pencils glued to the end. I casually picked up a pencil one day and tried one, and have been stuck on them ever since.

The demise of many magazines was one of the disasters of the war years. War economies, paper shortage—par-

ticularly art for illustrations—with mounting costs and authors' fees, were the contributing factors.

Since post-war conditions have greatly improved and shortages have been overcome, and these magazines have not come back, the obvious reason is that the public don't want them at the money.

Authors' fees in many cases have put them "out of bounds". When we read of authors receiving anything up to a thousand pounds for their stories in American magazines, we can appreciate that English magazines with much reduced turnover were mulcted of relatively high fees to secure these.

Admittedly, in many cases, authors would have cut their terms to suit, and new authors were available on cheaper terms, but the transition has taken place, and the old form will never return.

Indeed, in some of the final issues, I pondered on the thought "How are the mighty fallen." Names that stood for artistic productions became the plaything of crude cartoonists, when it came to illustrating. To depict a nose like a pyramid and legs like umbrella sticks on a human being intended to illustrate a serious story was insulting the intelligence of the reader. The only inference is that economy in production was forcing the use of cheap daub artists.

However, an avalanche of digests, and a big step up in the production of women's magazines, had something to do with the non-return of the "ancients", developed, as they were, from ever-available sources in regular newspapers and weeklies, and an array of new writers keen to see their work in print irrespective of the remuneration.

The trend was catering for men and women separately, overcoming that most annoying pastime of turning over pages and pages of uninteresting matter, and bringing the reader's leisure into right perspective and full measure in his reading.

One of the few to survive the fall is the *Wide World*. With some adjustment of its policy, it has gone on to success through its catering in real life adventure for men, and noticeably, some women.

In the early nineteen-hundreds publishers considered it quite an antique job to publish books with uncut pages. If they had any idea of some rare service for the reader, they were certainly giving the bookseller a headache. Fortunately trimming and cutting has long since been adjusted to eliminate this trouble, but occasionally a book will turn up to require attention. If a reader happens to be the first to handle it, a process of destruction is likely to take place. The inference is that uneven uncut pages only require the finger to open them.

I remember on one occasion a book with generous uncut pages was left by a casual reader with badly ripped edges through the finger having been used on every uncut page. One can hardly credit the mentality of a person thinking this was the correct procedure to apply to stock on a bookseller's shelf.

A most remarkable piece of ingenuity is reported from Iceland. The Americans have built there a concrete main running for miles, and insulated with heaped earth, and by this means are piping hot water from thermal springs to the homes. If Icelanders can do this in ice and snow, more favourably situated thermal areas could take a lesson from them.

Notably Taupo is dotted with hot water areas, which could profitably be tapped and piped to the centre, to provide thermal baths in easy accessible as well as picturesque surroundings, while providing heating and water for domestic purposes. It is done now in a measure at the springs, but the possibilities of expansion are yet to be tapped.

The most astonishing thing in the early part of this century was a dinner that could be eaten for sixpence; but more remarkable was the fact that a married man could live on three or four pounds a week, and the boss himself on four or five.

At the time, as well, substantial business houses and moderate homes could be built on the money—but then, of course, building was a pound a foot.

In those days, I was never beset by extravagances that put me in the red, thus, with the help of the profitable backyard hobbies of poultry keeping and vegetable growing—common in those days, but somewhat in the discard these days—I managed during my fifteen years in Christchurch to build my own home by contract, and, on its disposal, go on to a young orchard of ten acres with cottage, free of encumbrances.

The influence of a godly mother has much to do with the shaping and ordering of our lives, and if, away from the parental influence, some of us have drifted from the straight and narrow, that influence remains with us through life, and when some tough spots of temptation beset us, the reaction is swift and generous, "Remember what mother told us."

Sometimes she was a little too strict in her taboos. An incident in my early days comes to me. Theatre plays were not considered just the thing, and mother did not like the idea of us two elder boys going, but she was persuaded by the management of a touring company—some of whom were guests at our boarding house—to allow us this pleasure, and they generously presented us with front seat tickets for the show.

I can well remember Bill and I entering those front seats with pride and anticipation—it was our first show—and being carried away with the beauty and romance of the play, free of any suggestion of a sordid nature, and

later severely lecturing mother on her narrow-mindedness in disapproving of us going.

However, mother's fears are sometimes justified, even in these days.

My only vice reached me in my mid-thirties, when I acquired my own business and I started smoking my worries away. Many years later I gave this up, quite suddenly, and with very little effort, and since have had only one or two minor vices, such as fishing, music—and writing, as these reminiscences show, although as to the latter there has been a gap of forty years.

I have arrived at the position of security and affluence without the aid of money-making devices and liquor to cloud an active mind, which I hope I still have.

I prefer to take part in a sporting fixture rather than to observe one, provided it is free of blood lust, which is fairly common. The whole business has become so commercialised, and the craving for excitement has so obsessed our minds that nothing short of maiming, death, or at least blood letting will satisfy our ego. Talk about horror comics.

I can escape the horror of blood lust shows by not attending, but these things hit you in the eye in films and illustrated papers, and from what I see there, please save me from a live performance.

Our nation is in such a state of post-war nerves that sports will count it a poor day if something or someone does not get hurt. The S.S.C.A. must shut their eyes to many incidents they would not otherwise pass.

We see a succession of animals forced over hurdles to be maimed or killed, and their riders, as commercialised and willing subjects, meeting death or injury; we watch motorists in death-dealing stunts on hills or on tracks; matadors just asking to be gored; and even boxers, wrest-

lers, and footballers entering blood-lusting and debasing contests, all to satisfy a craving public.

Where are the days of the "game for the game's sake"? Let the Government try and put a curb on these forms of horror in the interests of delinquency, instead of concentrating on a pigmy of a thing like a comic.

After thirty-five years I took up motor cycling again—the family car not being available to suit me—and to test my original knowledge, I essayed a trip from Taupo—one of the toughest in the country, with fifty miles of hills, and fifty of flat. Let me assure readers I am not a speedster, nor do I entertain foolhardy adventures, but something was in the making that I did not anticipate.

I left Taupo on a beautiful sunny morning, and struck on the plains a southerly head wind, which delayed progress. I expected to lose it on the hills, and to some extent did, but sixty miles from Napier, when I passed my last two cars, and a little further on, the service bus, I had the whole road to myself except one car overtaking me.

This told me that things could not be too happy at the Napier end. However, I carried on fairly comfortably until I reached the half-way mark and started the Tarangi-kumu climb—a three mile stretch. I was fairly well wrapped up, but icy rain and the wind which began to whip up again made the roads awash and things uncomfortable.

I reached Te Haroto at the top, with water penetrating neck, feet, and arms, and decided I couldn't be any more miserable in this respect, so carried on the last stage. As it happened, when I passed the Mohaka bridge, I had to negotiate a small slip, and later found the Titiokura Hill everything that was bad—icy rain, road awash, head wind, and bad visibility. I placed my motor in second gear—which was usual for most of the hill-climbing on the light

weight—and made this difficult spiral hill without any trouble.

Then the more comfortable run home on a bitumen road, with misty, icy rain to contend with, leaving in its trail later a succession of slips along the road.

I have had happier trips since then.

"It's the little things in life that count." I have always hated wastefulness—a virtue retained from my young days, later measured in terms of economics through my study of accountancy, the accumulative effect of which is enormous. In the matter of food it is selfish when much of the world's population is starving.

Cheap as matches are, I always try and make one match do, and I always smoked down to a short butt instead of throwing half a cigarette away as some do. "Carrying economy too far" you would say. "Would have been better had I thrown the whole cigarette away", to which I agree now.

When I was a runner boy, I with others was allowed to go on the run without a paper check. On occasions, when I had an unexpected check and was found correct, unlike others, my prestige rose, and this gained me recognition and recommendation for better positions.

When I leave a room for a time I switch off the light. The accumulative effect of this is a distinct saving, but more important, helps to reduce the loan on an often overworked plant.

If I come upon a piece of string, I usually retrieve it, and pocket it or place it handy. At times when wanting a piece I was glad it was there.

When I feel a little hungry I always look for the crust on the bread—the part that is usually wasted. Apart from that laudable salvaging trait, I like it.

In my boyhood runner days it was the despised pennies that we usually put in the children's money boxes that

built up a fund for the great adventure. I was not able to pick up the parental cheque as some boys can.

When I was a boy buying my own piano, a little thing like a receipt had no significance. I was not aware of the weaknesses and foibles of human nature, but when I was approached to produce a receipt, owing to the defalcations of an officer, I was astonished at the importance of so little a thing. Its absence may have influenced the course of my life. Fortunately I found it.

A small thing, in a way, had to do with altering the course of my life. Over drinks at a club two heads of concerns, breaking a confidence, were discussing my application for an important position, which I missed. One of those heads was my own boss and the other was my prospective employer. After that my employment was terminated. That had very materially to do with altering the course of my life. Eventually it happened for the best. Had it not been for this diversion, I would have carried on until my young orchard had come into profit and shelter belts were matured, making poultry keeping possible as a side line.

However, I was tempted to make a start on an immature farm, with the catastrophic result that I have already reported.

My trips to Taupo are fairly frequent. With my poetic mind I cannot help but notice the dissimilarity of the water fronts at Taupo and Napier, both recognised tourist resorts.

Napier, from a stony foreshore, has created a floral and artistic scene of beauty. Taupo, however, with the finest lake frontage of any town, will one day turn that ugly stretch into a thing of floral beauty, and make it the envy of visitors, as well as local residents.

Note: A transformation is taking place.

Apparently no paper famine exists in England, and never did, when we look at some of the invoices sent out. While one publisher issues one compact invoice, another will use four times the size for similar matter; and not only that, issue us three copies, and probably reserve a copy or two at their end.

One would like to think that some economies might be given effect to, and reflected in the price of books. Since these erratic sizes in invoices have to be handled, uniformly filed, and later collected for customs entry, publishers might be inveigled into adopting something near a uniform type of invoice. Some particularly long and broad shapes are annoying to handle.

In the days of my youth I won a bicycle race. It must be considered a meritorious performance, because I was a rank outsider and carried no odds, and only just managed to shove in at the end of the line to enter the race at all.

I was given a little handicap. The scratch man never caught me, neither did I get any help from any pacers (it was a road race) and instead made the pace for the few hangers-on. It was a surprising performance for me, since I was riding against some crack riders, and it was my first, and last, race.

Sixty years ago stream-lined dentists' chairs were not in vogue, nor were the anaesthetics that go with modern surgery. I remember on one occasion going to a blacksmith's forge and sitting on a block waiting for what seemed like an execution. The blacksmith brought out a very imposing pair of pliers and proceeded with the operation, without benefit of lancing or anaesthetic, and gave me one of the toughest times in extraction I have ever had. That day warranted a sweet orange as recompense, which I got.

A magistrate was slating an elderly rider (not me) for his temerity in riding a motor cycle. This comment could only be justified in the case of a reckless driver, and this is usually the prerogative of the young.

Motoring requires the same care and control in a rider or driver of any age, and you are more likely to see the margin of safety eclipsed in the young than the old.

When the motor cyclist steps up his power from 120 cc. to 500 cc. he is asking for licence to speed, and speed in the hands of the best of riders can lead to trouble.

One of my accomplishments in my boyhood days was driving my own pony and gig. While being of service in bad weather, it gave me pleasure as a hobby.

One day, however, I was resting the pony harnessed, with feed bag at foot, and the blinkers removed for comfort, when he noticed the gear behind him and bolted. It ended up with "another little gig upon the scrap heap". That was the end of that romance.

The class of book that usually appeals to me is the down to earth practical experience, whether it is of a peer or gaol habitué, so long as it is "my story", literary or unliterary.

A travel book does not grip you unless the author is tied up in personal escapades and adventures. Just to ramble on "I crossed a desert, negotiated a forest, skirted the banks of a river, and climbed a hill", such monotonous repetition becomes boring and unattractive; but make it "I crossed a desert, got lost in trackless country, and dropped from thirst and hunger; negotiated a forest, and encountered a ferocious lion; skirted the banks of a river and saw the jaws of a crocodile coming at me; and climbed a hill only to find when I descended on the other side I had entered a walled in canyon, and darkness was approaching", and embellish that with all the personal

incidents that go to make up the escape, and you have added lustre to the story.

Christmas cards that express the Yuletide greetings in the conventional way are retaining the Christmas spirit, whether they are humorous, secular or religious. Captions such as "A Happy Xmas", "A Merry Xmas", "A Joyful Yuletide", "Happy Greetings" with humour tagged on at times, retain the Christmas spirit. They meet a varying demand, and so long as the captions are not crude, variety is essential.

If cards are produced wishing you for instance "A Beer-y Time" they are not Christmas cards, and reputable booksellers, of course, would avoid them. Anything in conflict with the Christian spirit should go by default. Themes are not always in keeping with the traditions of the country they are issued in. For thirty years I have been annoyed with the winter scenes used to portray our typically summer climate. It is done, of course, through the importation of plates for economy, and I have tried to eliminate them and as much as possible to discourage the trade in plates.

I am with ministers in their desire to see the Christian spirit retained in the cards, but this can be done without religious quotations. I provided for some years a range of all religious greetings, but I found the demand so poor that I eventually had to practically eliminate them. Even the church people were happier with the typically secular Xmas card.

There is a tendency with publishers to let the size of books get out of hand. There is nothing that annoys me more than holding a bulky book that would have gone into half the size. It is done, of course, for impressiveness, and not for economy of price. It demands several sections for

a class instead of one. This does not make for a quick and efficient service.

It will be a happy day when we see the publishers get down to some uniformity in the different classes. The only place where they come down to a tidy uniformity is usually a reprint library. Happily, some publishers retain a nice uniform standard right through.

Since I was connected with a number of social bodies in Ashburton, I became an unofficial reporter, and at times have had the pleasure of seeing these reported again after fifty years.

The most remarkable coincidence I ever experienced happened in my Christchurch garden. In a preliminary digging of my back garden, I dropped my fountain pen, unnoticed at the time. I instituted a search without result. Four years later on leaving that property, I dug a hole to bury some rubbish, and dug up the lost pen. It was in a remarkable state of preservation, and actually contained fluid ink in a reasonably clean condition.

On vacating the chairmanship of the Canterbury Egg Circle, through my removal to Napier, the members presented me with a fountain pen—an Onoto. No connection with the above.

I am not an indulger in any shape or form, and I have no desire to dictate to others, but in this age of speed, I must protest at the potential killer at every corner, not only in body but in soul, conscience, and industry. Fifty years ago we would not need to worry much about this, but now we do. A danger will always be with us until beer and speed are eliminated, at least until both are reduced to safe proportions. One is in the hands of the people, the other is up to the Government.

A reduction in power of imported cars and motor cycles would ease the tension. Why do we need to have power and with it, of course, speed?

Every professional speed track is pandering to trouble.

I have noticed the workings of the mind of an inebriate endeavouring to start a car. All he did was to stall and back into a kerb. One or two further attempts and then a hazy idea that he was not fit to drive, and an adjournment to a restaurant for a rest. For this one who caught himself in time, there would probably be two others who didn't, and turned themselves into potential killers.

A dream, of course, is a fantasy of happenings; weird, strange, and at times most unorthodox. Sometimes it borders on the ethereal, and the spirit of a loved one appears before us.

I well remember a vivid dream, some time after the passing of my mother. In her singing days, as I mentioned earlier, she had a beautiful voice; she used it to broadcast a spiritual message, and she is always remembered for that gift.

My dream centred her in my shop, and she was singing "Where is my Wandering Boy To-night?" a favourite, while entranced customers stood silently listening, reminiscent of a scene in church in my early days, and brought to me in this enchanting fashion.

The song faded in the silence of a reverent audience, illustrative of her passing; but it left on my mind the happy thought of a vision I had seen, and of a beautiful voice heard once again.

Since I did not keep a diary, many of the incidents of these Recollections were born in the dark hours, sometimes on sleepless nights.

Although I happily found a profitable vocation in life, I have always been a little sorry for missing that beautiful vocation that trees had inspired in me. Since I studied fruit growing and secured my ticket in the art, the subject intrigued me. I was only involved in the early planting stages before I had to leave it, and the really interesting period was only opening up.

As we train our young, I was to see that the feet were planted in good soil; that the trunk and arms were trained strong and healthy; that the body of the tree was clean and kept free of disease.

I missed, however, the little pink buds and their gradual unfolding into many bunches of flowers, as is common in the commercial orchards. Fruiting is not encouraged in young trees, so my successor would have the pleasure of watching the unfolding, and the opening up into glorious bloom that spring portends.

The fantastic and almost superhuman success attained by the world's leading *Digest* is reflected in a magnanimous recompense which it offers contributors to "Life in This Wide World" section. For about two pages of anecdotes the fees offered to contributors work out at £400. Many an author would be glad to receive this in royalties on a book.

Since this can be earned by an amateur, one can expect a favoured author being able to retire for life on one condensation of a book.

Such is the power of millions—in circulation.

I have just seen a cinemascope presentation of Lloyd Douglas's admirable book *The Robe*. One would not have expected to see a certificate attached "Recommended by censor for adults" on this essentially religious story of Pilate and the Christ.

The literal unfolding of the story culminated in scenes

of horror unacceptable to the child mind, and in this respect not fulfilling a sermon on Christian living for the young.

Though it unfolded in a tense silence before a reverent adult audience, in a matinee to which children had access the whole beauty of the theme, especially Pilate's final court scene, was spoilt by children clamorously acclaiming the hero and denouncing the villain, as in a Wild West show.

Waikaremoana is known as the "Sea of Rippling Waters". It is aptly named, as I can testify to its tranquillity in the summer days of my visits. The lake is wholly enclosed by bush-clad hills which give it shelter and calm rippling waters, seldom apparent on Lake Taupo, with its exposure to all weathers.

Rumblings attributed to Ngauruhoe have been an occurrence over the years, and are felt at Taupo, some fifty miles away.

To the relief of Taranakians, the rumblings in their area could come from the same source, although a hundred miles away. Some evidence of this was before me at the time of the reported rumblings in Taranaki.

I was seated in my cottage in Taupo, when there was a pronounced rumbling. Discrediting it as coming from thermal activity or earthquakes, I immediately looked out and saw Ngauruhoe burst into activity after a quiescent period.

The great forest fire in the Taupo County area that blackened the country for miles in forty-nine, like the Napier earthquake, proved to be in some ways a blessing. A lot of hill and undulating lands, as well as some forest areas, were laid bare, which, with a further burning off, has opened up thousands of acres of country for grazing.

So extensive is the forest area that the loss will hardly be noticed, but it had the effect of focusing the attention of the Government on these vast pumice wastelands, and a mechanical transformation has taken place.

Where once were dismal miles of scrub bordering unformed roads, there are now fenced grass fields along graded roads, and some of it on the slopes of Tauhara itself, and happily feeding on the lush growth are thousands of stock, with sheep predominating.

Truly the desert has been made to blossom.

Set in the midst of this reclaimed area is the Taupo Aerodrome. Laid out in the nineteen-thirties, it is a tidy plot, with ample room for expansion. This central point of the North Island will ultimately become an important landing place for tourist traffic.

The rehabilitated lands of the area will open up a vista of interest for the tourist.

The A.C. Baths in Taupo, providing for the Armed Constabulary in the early days of the province, have now been replaced with new baths, and the number has been doubled to cope with the demand. Mineral waters, now available to the public at several points in the Dominion, have become very popular with tourists and New Zealanders alike.

Taupo is fortunate in being able to tap the mineral waters at several points, some of which on the front are to be exploited in the interests of convenience and easy access by a large travelling public.

Just what can be done with pumice lands is well illustrated in the Taupo golf course.

Now a full-size course, with a rich green sward, set in undulating country, with enough native trees retained to

give it beauty, it is surely the acme of perfection for the discerning golfer.

The mountains Ruapehu, Tongariro, and Ngauruhoe, often providing an enchanting scene against a rainbow hued evening sky, appear across the lake to be near neighbours. On closer inspection we find them separated by miles of desolate country, some of which can lay claim to be a National Park because of a famous mountain—Ruapehu—planted there.

This highest North Island mount spells romance in all parts of the world, and because of its appeal sponsors the finest chalet in New Zealand, and an ever-flowing stream of tourists.

The more spectacular neighbour, Ngauruhoe, which lies to the north of it, provides the highlight, with its periodic volcanic action. Smoke, ash, and hot lava pour forth, often making an eerie sight at night with its belching fire.

In mediaeval times volcanic action had to do with the formation of Lake Taupo. Terraced country which ultimately became Taupo, with its strata of volcanic origin, has the appearance of being liberally sprayed close to the lake, petering out to a light spraying inland, where its ash became largely incorporated in the soil, and covers much land now reclaimed for farms.

This upheaval apparently had the effect of damming up outlets of the then lake, which caused it to rise some twenty odd feet and extend its boundaries into desert areas in the south—since blossomed into farms—to eventually cause a breach on the northern end, which developed into a river and is now the Waikato. This caused a subsidence to the lake's present level. There is evidence along the top of the cliff shore front, and for some distance back, of the original upheaval, in the appearance of thick strata

of pumice stones, some of huge dimensions, left high and dry on the shore.

Speaking of the lake, I have just witnessed a very fine performance by two girl swimmers, the Misses Margaret Sweeney and Pat Hastings, who swam the lake at its widest point, the former completing the course of twenty-six miles, outdoing her friend Pat, who retired at twenty miles.

While Taupo can boast of its hot mineral springs, their warmth was not felt, as the girls could testify on an end of January morning. Snow-capped Ruapehu was standing majestic in the background as they bent their strokes to the miles that would carry them into more congenial waters in the home stretch.

If there is one thing that makes a heroine, it is a personal physical effort, and this the large audience appreciated, as they heartily acclaimed the winner. People earn their rewards by their own exertions, not by riding horses, motor cars or motor cycles—which do the work for them.

During my tour around the reclaimed areas of Taupo, I was impressed with the texture and suitability of the land for fruit growing. The undulating nature, with warm terraces, coupled with the aspect of tree life generally which showed the vigorous growth typical of the country, clearly indicated its orchard possibilities.

There are no worse weather hazards to contend with than anywhere else. Indeed, when you place it against some South Island climates, there are less. In any case, the commercial orchardist makes provision for eventualities, and these are not unduly irksome.

What is important in rapidly growing Taupo and its adjacent towns and villages, is the need for providing orchards at the back door, to bring in fresh fruit and

eliminate transport of a hundred miles from other orchard areas.

A variety of apples would be the main consideration with a small planting of stone fruits in test positions, thus providing fruit in succession from January to April. I have proved the suitability of apples for Taupo conditions. They are vigorous growers, good bearers, and reasonably free from weather hazards.

The time is due for a check up on the possibilities of fruit growing, as well as the introduction of commercial poultry keeping.

"The longest way round is not the safest way home." This truth was painfully borne upon me when, in order to escape the hills return to Napier by motor cycle, I chose the desert journey through Ashurst—a matter of three times the hills distance.

I started from Taupo on a fine morning, and made this endless bitumen road to within the vicinity of Ruapehu—a matter of sixty miles. Instead of a nice level road, with little traffic to worry about, I found undulating country, with deep gullies and many bends to negotiate, along with plenty of traffic. When I ran into icy rain and greasy roads, I decided to turn back and go the easy way—over the hills. This I did, and accomplished the journey without any trouble.

In 1950, I had fairly substantial interests in Taupo, and in order to further improvements on the front, called a public meeting in a private hotel lounge and submitted some ideas. It was quite a representative meeting, and from it emerged a proposal by R.S.A. representatives to inaugurate a scheme for building a R.S.A. hall.

The final proposal was a combined R.S.A. and Memorial Hall and was sponsored by the residents in the form of a Queen Carnival, in which I took some part, and culmin-

ated in the erection of a Memorial Hall with appointments, at a cost of close on £20,000, financed by the carnival, with Government subsidy, and a £5,000 loan to complete. Taupo now boasts of one of the finest provincial halls in the Dominion.

I am a poor film attendant, and would be still less if I couldn't escape some of the rubbish that is thrown on the screen. Really, a lot of it insults the intelligence of the audience. Films taken from books often follow too closely the action, and with the intention of drawing out the film, run through an intricate and involved plot requiring the services of a lawyer to unravel it, as well as a humorist to appreciate the bizarre escapes that are foisted on the audience. Fortunately most of these low grade films do not reach the first rate theatres.

It seems to me that a producer has a coloured scenic in mind, and he takes a scene like a lumber camp and tangles with it a plot so involved and impossible of action, that the only thing that saves it is the scenic beauty. Forty years and still this.

Likewise, in this day of modern technical improvements in cinema projection, we see silly and nonsensical cartoons on the screen to satisfy presumably a childish audience. The assumption is that what you give the public it is satisfied with, even if it is only these cheaply produced cartoons. A return to the flesh and blood days of custard pies and slapstick would be preferable.

With colour now available, some high grade humour in shorts on the lines of *Genevieve*, sponsored by some progressive producer, will come along and away with these horror cartoons.

If you want to get away from the humdrum things of life, no better place to wander to than the Western Bays,

four miles out from Taupo. Acacia Bay, which takes its name from the beautiful acacia grove near by, and Jerusalem Bay, round the bend, a veritable Garden of Eden, without the apples. On second thoughts, I found an apple tree by the roadside there, bearing apples.

You relax in native bush, storm sheltered bays, with sandy beaches, and, of course, a pure atmosphere. If you prefer the centre of things, Taupo provides the old orchard camp, a delightful rendezvous bordering the Waikato River. Other well appointed camps are available in the suburbs or around the eastern shore, as you desire.

The Waikato River, which finds its source at Taupo lake, is the great power waterway of the North Island. It provides stepping stones for power plants along its whole length, and will be the greatest unit for power in New Zealand.

The huge dam that is to span the Waikato just above the Aratiatia Rapids, will develop a lake of huge dimensions. Being adjacent to Taupo and Wairekei, this lake will have holiday resort attractions.

One will expect people retiring to a quiet and healthy spot, or holiday people taking their leisure beside its quiet waters.

A journey through the Waikato to the environs of Rotorua is a panorama of rich pastures, and can rightly be claimed as one of the richest dairying districts in New Zealand. It has meant an upward boost for Rotorua, which originally had to depend mainly on its tourist traffic.

My desire to spend the first day of the year in Rotorua, took me by motor cycle through this evergreen country to a rendezvous with the happy spirits—not in liquid form—pervading Rotorua on the first. I was somewhat disappointed at this trip. The city fathers had released to the speedway people a strip of roadway, and motorists were

actually practising tests within its confines before a limited audience.

One had to forget that had they been doing this outside the barrier, they would have had a string of traffic cops after them. While this was going on, the showmen were doing a freeze at the other end of the town.

It was the Breeze of Breezes. A remarkable denouement led me to give it this caption. A breezy atmosphere was developing to the south-east, and the air was uninviting for the lark on the wing, not to mention an aerial display by an aeronaut in a gas balloon.

The breeze had shifted from the early morning and placed the launching site in somewhat of a hazardous position. The Ashburton Domain was well tree lined, and only suitable provided you found a favouring breeze. The event was unique for the place and a goodly crowd had gathered. The show must go on.

The inflating was protracted in the hope of improvement, but the shades of evening were approaching. A worried aeronaut surveyed the elements.

The expectant crowd watched the completion of the inflation and looked for some manipulation of the anchor ropes. In a matter of life and death, they made no demonstration.

A sympathetic silence pervaded the ground as preparation was made to release the balloon. Presently the murmur went up, "She's rising!"

In the direction in which it was moving with the breeze, the crowd saw momentarily that the basket and trailing ropes must entangle with the trees, and watched anxiously for the aeronaut's manoeuvre.

Although disappointed at the failure of the ascent, there was a sigh of relief as the aeronaut came sliding through the branches of a tree, having quickly disengaged from the basket, and landed unhurt.

Thus lightened, the balloon cleared the trees and continued on, losing height, apparently through escaping gas, for half a mile, where it wrapped itself around Breeze's house property, thus qualifying for the Breeze of Breezes.

I have made mention of the horror in sports that is perpetuated on the racecourse, motor speedway and boxing, all run through our illustrated papers and film displays as part of our national life, and not subject to any delinquency laws.

Now we have coming crash car racing, with all its horror and nerve-racking incidents, to help provide sleepless nights for the children.

Are not these wild and daredevil actions unsettling the child mind, and engendering a baseness and desire for blood that these sports encourage?

The thing that delinquency laws desire to control is fostering a morbid desire in children to enter into something more thrilling and gruesome than mere seesaw and swing games, that they are reported to be getting tired of.

We will next see them armed with pea rifles, daggers and spears, and bashing themselves to a frenzy with their pedal cars. What you read in these so called horror comics is simply something of the nerve-racking and bloody thrills let loose on a modern world.

We need to clean up some of the sports and remove some of the horrors from our everyday reading.

Children enter wholeheartedly into the sport of roller skating on Napier's Marine Parade. An ideal setting, and one that can be indulged in all the year. If there was more of this healthy sport, there would be no need to worry about delinquency reports.

To provide for an ever growing audience, the Borough Council are fostering the completion of what will be the

finest skating rink in the Dominion, still on the ideal Parade setting, but providing every facility for the skaters and public enjoyment.

There is something remarkably realistic about coincidence. It is thought transference—psychic you might call it—that lands you unexpectedly in a happy situation, or leaves you in the depths of despair.

During one of my Taupo trips, a friend happened to be passing my cottage in a new car to his own residence near by. I had at the time no particular reason to follow him in (I was on my motor cycle) but since he was driving a brand of car I was interested in, I thought I would pass the time of day over it.

Never dreaming of anything except a friendly chat, and congratulating him on his acquisition, I learnt that the car was available for purchase, and he was just waiting for the right person to turn up. He was "running the car in" preparatory to disposing of it, when delivery of a larger model was obtained, which he required in the interests of his business.

This gave me a sure and early delivery of a "run in" car, and relieved me of the anxiety of early delivery on an uncertain market consequent on a preponderance of waiting lists.

Memories of early childhood crowd in when things of later life are forgotten. Apparently of a scientific turn of mind, one of my early experiments was with gunpowder. Playing with it now would frighten me, but I had no qualms about it then. Wishing to find out what it was made of, I made a little pile (don't know where I got it from) in the back lane of my Christchurch home as it was at the time, lit a match, seemingly indifferent to the danger, and applied it to the heap.

What happened then is very vivid in my memory. A

stinging sensation in the face, in which I thought I would lose my features, and ultimately my life. A thoroughly frightened boy screamed for help, to meet a mild rebuke, but from a sympathetic mother, who nursed and mended me completely in a few days. I have never touched gunpowder since.

Harking back to the chapter on delinquency, very pointed evidence is coming to light that pornographic pictures—which I have referred to—are being surreptitiously distributed by depraved photographers and others. These pictures would have the most debasing result on the young adolescent mind.

A case is reported of fifty-seven pornographic studies found in the hands of young people. No laws will stop the trend of misdemeanour while such depravity exists, and it cannot be laid at the door of the bookseller. Multiply that fifty-seven into thousands, easily as this can be accomplished by a depraved person without detection, and it can be seen that no new law will have much effect. The laws of the country already cover this sort of thing, yet it still goes on.

I found a very subtle way of bamboozling your friends and confounding your enemies if you so desire.

For the purpose of correcting my sight I use a different pair of horn-rimmed glasses for inside and outside. Known chiefly by the colour of my rims on the inside, my journeyings outside in a different colour give me some amusement, as I slip by friends and dodge my creditors undetected.

It is strange how you remember a person, perhaps fifty years since, by some pithy remarks or axioms quoted. Two pithy remarks by an uncle fifty years ago always

give me a vision of his face, and the sly glint in his eye when I remember these two:

"Ted," asked mother, "why didn't you clean the back of your boots this morning?"

"A good soldier never looks behind."

And the other: "If we had some bacon, we would have some bacon and eggs, if we had some eggs."

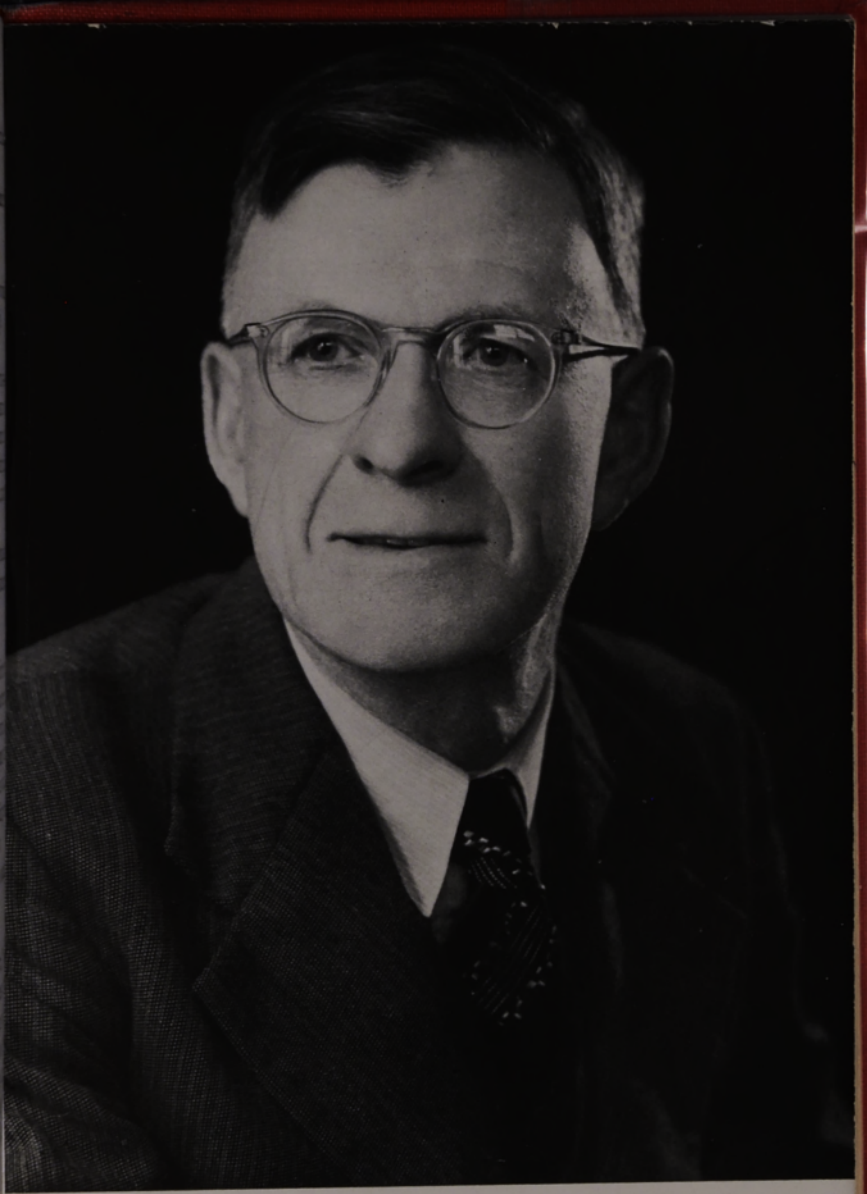
As I said, I lived among music in my early days—among a family that could step up from a pianissimo to a double forte in harmonic excellence, but unfortunately I have not been able to produce it in my own family. Ensemble work, that harbinger of perfect music, has not eventuated, and I am the poorer for it.

I can sit and indulge in harmonic rhapsodies, and if the dogs don't howl, feel sure that the neighbours are enjoying it.

Did you ever sit and listen to the wind in the eaves and find your mind wandering back to some happy or sad past? Usually it is associated with some trial or sadness. Days of family bereavement, and that singing wind in the eaves is a requiem for the departed; or it is a wind of fury sobbing forcibly round the eaves, foreboding a harbinger of disaster, as it did to me on one occasion.

Ever after, its more gentle murmur is a soothing balm for a more fearsome foreboding.

During my early manhood in Ashburton, I was connected with several bodies as chairman, secretary, organist, librarian respectively, and received flattering valedictory notices on leaving, but the one I prize the most is the one "round the stone". In it culminates the long and happy friendship with some fine workmates and management—some of whom have long since travelled the "long road".



The author.

Photo: A. B. Hurst & Son.

I could do nothing better here than perpetuate a happy memory by quoting verbatim that report:

"A very pleasant little gathering 'round the stone' took place at the *Mail* and *Guardian* office this afternoon, to say goodbye to Mr E. E. Marsden, who has been connected with this office for the past six and a half years, and is now leaving for Christchurch. On behalf of the staffs of the printing and publishing departments, Mr Thomas Hancox expressed the regret felt at Mr Marsden's departure, and handed him a gold sovereign case, suitably inscribed. Messrs A. J. Tyrell, Baxter and Frank Hancox, for the composing staff, and Mr Robert Bell for the literary and commercial departments, also added their tributes, and the recipient suitably responded."

Unfortunately, I was not able to enjoy the "goblins" that were revealed in that case for many years, before paper money put them into the discard. I still treasure it in memory of a happy friendship.

This is the story of the caretaker who spoilt the show. I have long thought that Taupo, with its beautiful environs and its attraction for tourists, was lacking in entertainment, and I was prepared to do something about it, having a fair knowledge of music, and the preparation of original compositions, transposing, arranging of sketches, jokes and assemblies. I had the support of the school committee, the sympathy of the headmaster, and spasmodic help from other quarters; but I needed a room and an assembly of children at the master's request, to put the big idea over. It could not be done haphazardly in seatless corridors. The ubiquitous caretaker, however, had the "floor", and he still has it.

However, in my home town, I may still do something with the junior minstrel idea I have in mind.

One of the greatest hindrances to progress and a dis-

harmoniser of social and home life is unpunctuality, or, in other words, indifference. "Take it or leave it." The imposed traits that heredity has implanted make us see things in a selfish light, unaccustomed as we are to any other ideas than our own, causing heartburnings and misunderstandings.

Being a practical accountant, trained in set times, and the rule of law and equity, anything that savours of inefficiency or shiftlessness annoys me. One of those things we put up with, because of our training, or lack of it.

I made a very interesting discovery recently on a stroll through our city Marine Parade, something that is not yet generally known, because of its secluded setting—an ideal spot to suit the particular entertainment. It was two concrete tables, complete with fixed seats, and chessboards worked in the tables in colour. Players could enjoy themselves free of charge in a game of chess or draughts right beside the sea.

We take our indoor games very seriously, but here is a chance to take them pleasurably. If any chess player sat over a move for an hour, he would certainly have something around him to break the monotony.

It could happily be extended to other parts.

"Once upon a time", in a place called Zealandia, there lived two brightly plumed birds called Walnas and Sidhol, and it was their habit to flit about from "branch to branch" praising their plumage to the skies—their own, of course.

One had a Mother Grundy doleful note that sometimes reached a double forte of jarring symphony, promising an *ad libitum* of misery should the country not escape from the hollandish doldrums; while the other had a more polished baritone voice of Peter Pan quality that reached utopian heights of rapture that left us thinking that the Walnas must have been suffering from a cracked voice.

However, the Walnas climbed the "branches" higher and higher, chanting in decorous tones until he almost toppled the Sidhol from his perch. The Sidhol, however, stuck to his high perch and sounded a fanfare of trumpets, and the Walnas flew back to his cage, followed by a strange bird called the Owenbill.

Do I approach old age with any trepidation? We take what life has to give. Measured in terms of achievement and service to our fellow men, the result should be at least that the game was worth it.

I have no ambition to be wealthy—although a generous competence has come my way—because the best things in life are not bought.

Give me a comfortable home on top of a hill, with seascape and beauty around; or on the lake front, with rippling waters, lofty peaks, and nature aglow, and I am content. These things I have, with the wife and myself still engaged in our backyard hobbies. We are able to collect our egg fruit all the year, and for five months of the year stone and pip fruit from an orchard of fifty trees.

SOME TOPICAL FUN

★

After looking through *Pears* for a while in the hope of picking up some clues for perpetuating some topical jokes, I put it down and picked up the morning paper, and found here a good avenue for ideas.

When Mr Holland puts six new shelves in his Cabinet, it is expected that the most popular one will be Shandies.

Exhibitions coinciding with the Centenary of stamps will be held in July next.
Philatelists are advised that the next Centenary will be held in July 2055.

Revenue from railway goods services topped the £50,000 mark.
It is reported that departing parliamentarians' excess luggage was responsible for this.

"No magic wand," says Mr Holland to the people, who are under the impression that the Government is in a position to hand out monetary gifts and other benefits.
Apparently they have taken the Government for the Social Credit Party.

An apparatus is to be installed in the mountains of West Norway, to give advance warning of impending landslides.
Reported the N.Z. Government will be installing one before the next election.

The collection of boxes from hotel bars for blind children's appeal took place to-day. It is said that some bottle tops were accidentally mixed with the coins.

A girl aged five fractured her arm when she fell from a Taranaki bar.
It should be made a crime to serve a child at so tender an age.

"Is it right we are in danger of losing the Huka Falls?" asked Joan.
"Yes," answered Tom, "the Minister is going to have a nasty fall."

"Do you know why Mr Goosman was looking so glum at the Wairekei steam bores?"
"No! Why was he?" Jack was curious.
"He liked it neat. He didn't like water added."

"Did you know that the Karopito geyser goes off every hour?" asked Grace.
"Yes! But I have a better one at home," answered Harry.
"What better one could you have?"
"My wife. She goes off every half hour."

"I believe Sinclair and Yates recently bored for steam at Tuck's mill without success. Is that right?" asked Jim.
"Yes! That's right," answered Bert. "Members of Parliament got in first and piped it to Parliament buildings."

Rangi Wilson, serving two years' detention, escaped on Sunday, but was caught within an hour.
Didn't even have time to change his identity.

The head of Bella the Hippo will be exhibited in the public bar of an Otahuhu hotel.

They will also see blue lizards, pink elephants and red snakes at regular intervals.

Four young women were tasting bacon and noting their reaction. They were not required to eat it and spat it out. What! at 6/- lb. What waste!

Reports from Gisborne say that stores are trying to recall one type of swimming suit said to turn transparent when wet.
It is since reported that Xmas accommodation has been overbooked, chiefly males.

An analysis reported swabs in two racehorses. They both won races the same day. Must have been "a mare's nest".

Otago and Southland sections of the N.Z. engineering and related trade unions have applied for a separate union registration.
"A rift within the flute."

P.A. message. A lone willow keeps truck out of the river. It is said that the Australians are trying desperately to buy this to stave off defeat.

I was fishing near the Taupo bridge the other day and caught a 20 lb. trout. It pulled me in. I called for help. No response. I was drifting away. I called again, "Help! Help!" A hard voice from the distance called out, "Look out! You'll fall over the spillway!" Then I fell out of bed.

Sixty banks were reported raided in thirty days. The safest place is still the old stocking.

The Napier *Daily Telegraph*, in a press message that

the Loch Ness monster had been located by radar, went on to say, "a recording machine had held the 'imagine' of the monster for three minutes."

This only goes to prove that the whole thing is imagination.

Push button control is coming, and is expected to result in millions of workless.

This is excellent news for henpecked husbands. They will be able to do without wives. All they will need to do is switch on the kitchen appliances from their beds, and their meals will be transported to them.

Estimated 4,000 more teachers wanted by 1960.

For goodness sake! Where are all the children coming from?

Discovery of a new comet is reported. This will make 100,001; but it won't be noticed.

Stolen beer vanished overnight in a northern city.

The thief, when he wakes up in the morning, will probably know where it went.

Fir trees in a park have been sprayed with a skunk mixture to keep off Christmas thieves.

It is since reported that the "skunks" don't go near the trees now.

According to a press message fleas stopped work on the Auckland wharves. The young rascals. They didn't belong to a union, either.

A bottle top has been invented which, when tapped, will blow itself off.

No need to blow the froth off now. The cap will do it for you.

A press association message said that Wellington had its first fall of rain for 11 days.

The place is fast becoming a great arid desert.

On the Prime Minister's desk stood a bottle of "heavy water" of great value.

This was probably 1950 vintage. By 1960 it will be of superlative value—if it is still there.

Did you hear of the bookie Father Christmases. The poor suckers so swamped them with pound notes that they had to unload.

We'll all get into the game, then there won't be any suckers.

A dull faced philosopher was lecturing from a platform. "Ladies and gentlemen. Medical men state that coffee is bad for you; beer is bad for you; whisky is bad for you; and now the latest, tea is bad for you. Ladies and gentlemen, what is there left for us to drink?"

A voice from the rear: "Poison!"

THE LASS OF SEVERN FARM

★

FOREWORD

THE real and the unreal are closely related in their actions, but somewhat divergent in their application. The unreal leads through chapter and chapter to the ultimate climax; while the real follows climax and climax to an undramatic, and even a weak ending.

The real is my story told in the first person, essentially devoid of dialogue, because it is action, not dialogue, that makes real life; on the other hand, the unreal finds expression in its lavish exchange of dialogue, because it is the only way to bring a story to a dramatic climax.

In my story of many years ago, "Rarer Than Gold", based on the gold rush days, I set out to prove a point: that the heroic and unselfish devotion of a woman was rarer than gold.

I propose to give a collateral of the early stories, and the method I used to reach a climax.

E.E.M.

THE great Kairoa forest was situated in the interior of the North Island. It comprised a quarter of a million acres, most of it ready for timber cutting and pulping, and was controlled by a public company.

From time to time parcels of land were bought up to complete the area, and provide a continuity of service. This was an essential policy, because it eliminated unwanted roads and thus saved their upkeep.

There were occasional instances, however, where farmers would not give up the rights to their holdings. The Severn farm was situated in the Turi valley, and the owner, John Cross, refused to negotiate. The company sent its representative to try and force a sale.

"John Cross, the company is prepared to offer you any amount within reason for this property."

"I am not interested. I have held this property as an agricultural farm for twenty years, and I am not interested in trees."

"The company is fostering a very essential industry. Your refusal is causing some embarrassment."

"Why should it? I have my rights, and I am not interfering in the company's property."

"You must remember," persisted Tom Hansen, "that with the vast expansion of the area, many public roads have become of little use, and their upkeep has been handed over to the control of the company. Those few farmers who use them do so on sufferance of the company."

"Are you threatening to block me?"

"No. Not at the moment, but your continued resistance to the company's proposal is costing the company good money to give you access."

"I was here before trees were planted around me, and I've a right to transport my goods to market."

"Very well, but you may have to work under difficulties. The company may decide to close the access road to your property, and that will leave you only with a track to a roundabout road, and that is not negotiable for certain parts of the year."

"I'll meet the trouble when it arises. Good day, sir!"

"Good day, Mr Cross. I hope you will reconsider the matter."

"What is the matter, father?" Joan Cross appeared on the scene the moment the representative had gone.

"They want to push me off the farm."

"And what did you tell him?"

"I said I wouldn't sell."

"What do they propose to do?"

"Threatened to isolate me."

"Just let them," Joan flared up.

Reporting to the Board of Directors, Tom Hansen found them annoyed at the farmer's refusal.

"The holding of the farm is absolutely necessary to the success of our Rakata swamp scheme," said the chairman. "The operation of the dam at the valley entrance is immobilising twenty thousand acres of our own land, and it is imperative that we control the farm so as to divert the river."

Tom Hansen, who was boss of Rakata Settlement, made a suggestion. "John Cross doesn't know our purpose yet. Suppose we buy an easement through his property. This may immobilise five hundred acres, but it will give him irrigation tracts along the river's edge."

"Well, put that proposition to him, and inspect the dam and see what technical difficulties have to be overcome. In the meantime close the access road against traffic. We must force the acceptance somehow."

"Very good, sir. I'll go right over."

Joan Cross, the red-haired daughter of John Cross, whose cheeks were a match for her hair, was brought up on Severn farm, and the open, free life was reflected in her personality. Not to be trifled with, and would resent any interference with the normal operations of the farm. Not yet in love.

"Tom Hansen, what is the purpose of your visit? My father keeps nothing from me. He is away at the north boundary just now."

"It is about the disposal of the farm."

"It is not for sale."

"I have another proposition to put before you. The company is prepared to buy an easement and retrack the

river through your property. By this means you will retain the main part of the farm, and have water for irrigation along its borders."

"Yes! and lose about five hundred acres of the best and most fertile part of the farm."

"The company is holding twenty thousand acres of swamp land beyond, and I have instructions to breach the dam and start the de-watering of that area. . . . Miss Cross, your beautiful face holds me with awe and wonderment now I search it again. The twinkle and sparkle of those lustrous eyes could mean only one thing—that you have a kind and understanding heart."

"Those kind and understanding eyes will see fire if you come near our boundary to do us harm. You will feel the end of my boot, and I wear heavy ones."

"Miss Cross, so unladylike."

"I may not be a lady, but I hate your forest land, shutting out as it does the sunshine on God's earth; frustrating the agricultural development of the country, when millions in other lands are starving."

"That dam is beyond your boundary—actually on our lands. We will not trespass on your property."

"At the same time, you will do us harm."

"I'll endeavour to hold any action as long as I can, while you discuss this with your father."

"I love this farm, and I hate your company and all it stands for. . . . Will you leave me?"

Glancing towards the distant west boundary, Joan noticed some activity. "What is that movement going on at the access road?"

"The foreman is under instructions from head office to obliterate that road in the interests of economy. It's getting into a state of disrepair."

"You! . . . You! . . ." flared up Joan, "would take away our means of transport and living. You would force us to use the old dog cart track. Go!"

Tom Hansen turned to her sympathetically. "Miss Cross—Joan, I'm not happy about this. Will you call me and I will help you over with your supplies."

"Go! Breach that dam and flood us out." Joan rushed into the house.

Tom went over to the foreman working on the access road.

"Look, Jake, leave a little track there. I'll take the responsibility."

"Just as you say, but it is out of my hands."

"Father," Joan met him on his return, "Tom Hansen was here on behalf of the company, offering to buy an easement for the diversion of the river, but I don't want it, do you?"

"No, but it is difficult fighting the big concerns. Sometimes I think I would like to get out, but it's you, Joan. You love the place, and I wouldn't hurt you."

"They threaten to close the access road, and to breach the dam and flood us out."

John Cross was alarmed. "I know about the former but not the latter threat. If it wasn't for the danger of flooding, I think the easement proposition would be the best, but the dam was put there because of the danger of floods. There is something in their argument about the loss of twenty thousand acres, but they knew what the position was when they bought up the tract."

"Father, I am going to test out the old track and, if necessary, hack out a new one and go into Rata for supplies. I'll take the horse and dog cart. I should be back in three days."

"Aye, lass. I hope you'll not be hindered."

"Goodbye, father."

"Goodbye, lass."

Joan followed the old track with some difficulty, dismounting occasionally to remove scrub overgrowing the

track. She reached Rata the same evening, and sought accommodation for the night.

Spring rains had been freshening up the rivers. The Severn River that adjoins the Severn farm had always been a quiet flowing stream, with never any hint of reaching danger point. Should this occur, stop banks and the dam had been built to meet the emergency.

Unprecedented rains, however, had been falling in the back hills. This had caused erosion, and slips along the course, which, in effect, dammed up the waters in places, causing a restricted flow until the debris had forced a passage, and then the waters came down the course in a mighty roar, gathering up other slips and loosening pent up waters all along.

The swelling waters were not unduly alarming, until a distant roar heralded a major flood on the way, and Tom Hansen, quickly alerted, took prompt action to warn the neighbourhood. Keeping ahead of the roar on horseback, he made for the Severn farm, warning forest workers on the way.

Within coo-ee of Severn farm, he picked up John Cross, after a little search, and shouted to him, "Move to higher ground quickly. There is a heavy flood on the way, and the dam is not likely to hold it. Where is Joan?"

"She went to Rata for supplies. Is due back to-day."

"How did she go?"

"She went by the old track, with horse and dog cart."

"My God, John, that takes her by the double crossing, and that will be in flood, and you say she is due back to-day."

"Yes, I see the water breaking at the dam now."

"Hurry," urged Tom, "save what you can. Drive your stock to higher ground. I'll hurry along the old track to meet Joan, or find out if she needs help."

"Aye, Tom; do your best for her. She's my bonny lass, and I'd have nothing happen to her."

"Neither would I. She's a girl in a million," voiced Tom, as he hurried away.

At times like these bitterness is forgotten. Your one engrossing thought is "my neighbour is in distress" and you have a charitable service to perform.

Meanwhile, Joan was on her way back, when a distant roar of waters foretold of an approaching flood. She listened intently to fix her position, not being too conversant with the old track, and decided she would meet trouble at the double crossing.

By this time Tom was waiting at the double crossing, not being able to proceed further. To proclaim his whereabouts he called "Coo-ee, coo-ee." No answer.

He waited five minutes and called again. This time an answering voice, "Who is it?"

"This is Tom Hansen."

"What have you come for? I can look after myself."

"No, you can't, Joan. You can't get through this way. Look, I'm going to ride my horse over the ridge to meet you. Wait there."

The bush-covered ridge proved rough going for the horse, but was quite impossible for a cart. Tom climbed up and down that ridge for half an hour before he landed on the road, and came up with Joan.

"What are you doing here?" was her first unfriendly greeting. "What has happened?" sensing some trouble.

"Look, Joan, I don't want to distress you. This is not the time for bitterness. It is an anxious time for us both. I have recently left your father, with the dam in the process of breaking with the flood waters."

"Oh! Our poor farm! Where is Daddy? Is he all right? Now you'll get it for your horrid forest."

"Your father is all right. If the farm has been ravaged, it can be repaired and blossom again. I'll help you."

"What," sobbingly, "don't you want the farm?"

"Joan, dear. It isn't my business to want it. You love it, and," hesitatingly, "I love you."

"Aye!" looking up surprised, a tear glistening in her eye. "What did you say?"

"I love you, Joan."

Does love break down barriers? It does. Tom studied her tear-stained and trusting face. "I'll help you build again."

"But, Tom, we're ruined. How can we? The company will still refuse us access."

"Don't you believe it, darling. We're going back the access road now. The road that leads to success."

A scene of desolation existed along the whole valley floor of Severn farm. Silt clinging to fencing wires and astride posts, and a deep ooze of mud that precluded any chance of walking in lowlying parts.

The crest of the flood had quickly subsided after the first onslaught, and left the farm and its environs a sea of mud, but towards the river, still a surging and raging flood washed the muddy boundaries. The house, being on higher ground, was not affected, and the stock were safe.

"Oh, Daddy, what are we going to do now?"

"Don't lose your nerve, lass; it might have been a good deal worse. Except for the loss that the overrunning of the area has caused, the ultimate result will be of benefit to the land. However, with the threat of floods hanging over us, we may have to consider negotiating an easement to the company."

"I wouldn't do that John, if I were you," ventured Tom.

"You wouldn't do that?" queried John, in surprise.

"Look, John, I'm not with the company in demanding this concession. You still have your little access road and we can build up that dam again to safety height."

"We!"

"Yes, John. I love your daughter, and we've an understanding."

"Well, that's news. Last time she met you, she hated you."

"Yes! She hated my business, but she loved me personally."

"What are you going to do? The company won't retain your services under those conditions."

"Unfortunately the directors are wise to my defection, because I am not reporting progress, and have hinted that they purpose transferring me to another part of the company's interests. Since I am under contract, I am obliged to go, but just as soon as I complete the term, or something turns up to enable me to waive the claim, I shall return to you."

"Oh Tom," sobbed Joan. "When we need you—well, I need you now."

"I'll claim a month's notice of transfer, and we'll get the farm straightened out in the meantime."

Tom put in his last report, stating that the Crosses still refused to negotiate, and was advised that another man would replace him on the Rakata Settlement.

Tractor out on the dried-up valley, John Cross, with the help of Tom Hansen in the dusk of evening, bent to the task of bringing the valley back into production.

"Why did you leave a wheel track along the access road, Tom?" ventured John.

"Because you have property rights, and I don't hold with the company's policy, John."

"What will the next man do about it, Tom?"

"He may overlook it. In any case you can make your own track. The only way they can stop you is by barricading the road and erecting a sign 'Trespassers will be Prosecuted', and even then I would be inclined to fight them at law on the issue."

"Thank you, Tom, for your sympathy and help. What of Joan?"

"As soon as I can get back, we will put her in the kitchen as a happy wife, and I'll take up her onerous duties."

"That's a good idea, son," mused John.

Spring was turning into summer. What floral beauty there was hung on trees, in varying shades of greenery, according to the brand—*Pinus insignis*, Douglas fir, rimu, oregon etc., a never-ending sheen of greenery for miles and miles.

Tom Hansen, under orders, was just on the point of leaving for a new settlement, when word came that a fire had broken out at the northern end of the Kairoa forest. Fanned by a northerly wind, it swept south in an awe-inspiring spectacle of flame and smoke, blanketing the sky with billowing clouds of its own, and causing the sun to shine through a haze for miles around.

Radio contact was made, calling all personnel to the spot to help fight the conflagration.

"I'm going with you, Tom. I'll saddle up old Bess."

"Look, Joan, I'd hate to dissuade you, but you don't know what you are in for."

"I can take it."

"I will love to have you, of course, but will you promise me this——?"

"What is it?"

"That you will keep close to me, and under no circumstances be tempted away into unknown areas."

"Just as you say, Tom."

"Well, prepare a knapsack, with blankets and food included."

"Daddy, I'm going with Tom to help fight the fire."

"Aye, girl. I hope you take care of yourself."

"Yes, Daddy, I will."

The fire ravaged its way through a stretch of forest for miles, with no prospect of abatement by evening. The fighters made hasty attempts with firebreaks to check its progress, but the fire leapt these, crossed roads, and

indeed crossed rivers and started fires in other areas. Happily further prepared firebreaks prevented a widespread disaster.

Next day found the fire still raging, eating up plantation after plantation like matchwood. It was a sorry sight.

Tom and Joan had caught up with the fighters ten miles north of Rakata Settlement, and joined the begrimed fighters in their efforts to check the onrush of the fire, but with little success. It looked as though it would have to burn itself out at a dead end.

Tom was immediately concerned. Rakata Settlement was not at a dead end, but in the immediate line of fire, nestling among the towering forest pines, dwarfing the homes carpeting a cleared tract of forest.

"I'm going back to the settlement, Tom, to prepare the tenants for evacuation."

"You know what you promised."

"Yes. I'm not running into danger. I'm running away from it. Emergency knows no promises."

"Good girl. Then when you have warned the tenants and shepherded them to the farm for safety, wait there for me. There is nothing much we can do until the fire has either taken the settlement or by-passed it, and reached more open country, where there is some prospect of halting it. Heavy teams are at work to that end."

The end of the second day the fire was still raging.

Joan arrived at the settlement at dusk, and there being no immediate danger, found hospitality with a tenant for the night. Daylight, however, found need for activity. Freshening winds were driving the fire on, now closely bordering the settlement.

The smoky haze and a torrid heat made the enclosed settlement land oppressive, making it imperative for a hurried departure.

"Quick, people," as Joan exhorted the tenants into a group, "or we may find the access road blocked. In that

eventuality we still have an old track that leads past the Severn River. The adults will take an axe or a grubber, in case we have to use them on the way."

The third day the fire had reached the settlement, and cut a scythe of fire through it, leaving charred homes in its path. Tom returned to the farm for a short spell and news of Joan.

"She hasn't returned yet," worriedly stated John. "I thought she was with you."

"She left me last evening to warn the settlement tenants to make preparations for quickly evacuating the place, and I expected to find them all here. Quick, John, we must go and search for them. Pray God nothing has happened to them."

Using a horse each, as the only method of negotiating the devastated lands, Tom and John set out in the direction of the settlement.

"I see the road to the settlement is blocked by fire debris. But why haven't they come out? They should have cleared the settlement at some point, even if they were forced to enter the untouched forest itself."

"There is an old track leading along the Severn River that Joan knows about," ventured John.

"If she went by that, they must be isolated, then."

"We'll cross this knoll and hack our way through the forest until we strike this track. It's late afternoon now, and we must locate them before dark."

So the search went on. Darkness was on them by the time they reached an area expected to reveal a track. No sign of one. Evidences of severe washouts by flood were about.

"They must be stranded somewhere. They couldn't have been caught by the fire or the flood. They just couldn't," reflected Tom, in alarm.

"Which was the natural direction of the track, John?"

"Let's see. The sun was in the west, so the track towards Severn farm would lead this way—south."

"Let's hope they are not above us, then. We'll go south."

They traversed the river path with difficulty for some three miles, without signs of the refugees. Across the river there opened up an expanse of lush grasslands recently brought into cultivation.

"What area are we now entering, John?"

"That is known as the Kaponga Settlement, bringing agriculture to the forest lands, as it should be. Food before trees. Isn't that a sight now after the drabness of the forest burnt out areas?"

"Yes. I must admit it is good to see. Cows and sheep grazing in quiet contentment."

Heading on through bracken and scrub country, and still no sign of Joan.

"At least we have passed the forest preserves and the danger point, with a prospect of an ending to the fire."

"Yes, Tom, we should have overtaken Joan. We are now in safe country, and apparently she has made a round trip back to Severn farm."

With her knowledge, Joan had safely conducted the refugees to Severn farm.

"I do hope Daddy is here," anxiously casting her eyes about, and noticing that the cows had lined up to be milked. "Let's try the house."

They entered the kitchen. Two refugees lifted Joan from a temporary brushwood stretcher, and placed her on a couch. "No sign of them. They must be searching for us. . . . Well, on with the kettle. It's nice to have you all here safe and well. . . . Tired, yes. So am I. Switch on the radio for news, Jane."

"The forest fires have been checked and no further trouble is expected, unless the wind changes," came the voice of the announcer.

"Splendid! That looks like Daddy and Tom coming across the fields."

The party affectionately watched Joan's eyes wander through the window and across the field.

"Joan, my daughter," as John and Tom entered the kitchen, "how happy I am to see you well."

"And you, Daddy."

"Joan, how did you make home again so quickly?" asked Tom.

"Thank these good people. There wasn't much to it, except that I was the one who knew the track, which brought us safely through. . . . Tea is on the stove. I'll go over and milk." She beckoned Tom over. "Let me whisper."

Tom leaned over her. "Tom, I can't walk. Will you carry me?"

"You can't walk, Joan darling. What is the matter?"

"Just nothing. We had to fell two trees to bridge a bad washout, and in negotiating a rocky decline, a large rock moved with me and I sprained my ankle."

"John, come here," beckoned Tom.

John looked anxiously at his daughter. "What is it, lass?"

"Daddy, I hurt my foot. Tom will carry me over to milk."

"My poor lass. You'll go to bed. I'll see to the milking."

Tom picked her up gently, and laid her on her bed.

"You can leave me now, Tom. Send in Jane."

Tom hesitated for a word of encouragement. "Joan darling . . ."

"You can see me later," Joan waved him out.

Jane entered and assisted Joan to undress, and saw her comfortable in bed.

"You tell Tom he can see me now."

Sweet and becoming, as a perfect invalid, Joan greeted Tom with a smile. "You want to see me?"

Tom approached her. "I want more than that, darling. I want you."

With an anxious look she studied Tom. "Are you going away?"

Tom flicked a smile that disarmed her. "Yes, darling. I am going away."

"Where to?" she asked indifferently.

"Auckland."

"What takes you there?"

Tom took her in his arms. "A honeymoon with you."

END

A KITCHEN INTERLUDE

★

(The characters in this story are not intended to represent any living person, but since setting the plot, a *prima donna* has materialised who would comfortably fit my heroine.)

EVENING was approaching in the kitchen of Green Vale homestead. The air took on a fetid atmosphere as Bella, somewhat tired and bedraggled, removed a tray from the oven and tipped the contents on the bench.

Andy, Tom Cowan's nephew, had just entered the room, sniffing. "Smells like something burning. . . . What are these?" He picked up a hot cake and dropping it on the floor, through burning his fingers, it made the sound of a rock falling.

"Rock cakes," scornfully exclaimed Bella.

"It sounded like it," gleefully ventured Andy.

"None of your sauce, young man. . . . What relation are you to the family?"

"I'm Uncle Tom's nephew."

"And who is Uncle Tom?"

"Who is Uncle Tom? Why, he's the boss of Green Vale. Don't you know him? What are you doing here, then?"

"Look, Jimmy boy——"

"My name's Andy."

"Look, Andy, I'm the new cook. Your Uncle Tom, of course, is Tom Cowan, who engaged me."

"Gee! What a peach of a cook. Uncle will be thrilled."

Scornfully berating Andy for his sarcasm, and hearing a

singing voice approaching, Bella asked, "Is that Uncle Tom now?"

"Yes. That's Uncle Tom all out on his specialty, 'The Green Vale Mountain Home'."

"Nice song. Nice voice. Is he married?"

"No, hasn't even a girl."

"Little boys don't know everything." She heard Tom nearing the kitchen. "Tell your uncle I am here." She hastily retired.

Tom and Jim, the foreman, entered. "Well, Andy, what's cooking?"

"Oo! You'd never believe it. Real rocks. Look, listen," letting one drop on the floor. "Bella's rock cakes."

"And who is Bella?"

"Bella's the new cook."

"Where is she now?"

"Gone to tidy herself up. She needs it, too."

"Now, Andy, you should never judge a woman by her face, or her clothes," turning to Jim, "Jim you take the east room and leave the annexe to Miss Malone."

"Ah! Tom. The larder will have to be replenished."

"Yes! You will do that in the village on Friday. Andy will accompany you."

"Andy, answer that knock at the door."

"Yes, uncle."

Opening the door, Andy stepped back in open-mouthed wonder at the dazzling lady expectantly waiting at the door.

"Is this Mr Tom Cowan's home?"

"Yes, lady."

"I'm the new cook."

Answering her announcement with some pertness and authority, Andy replied, "Thank you, lady. Our cook is already engaged."

"I'm the new cook, Andy."

"Gee! Strike me bandy. How did you know my name?"

"I'm Bella, Andy."

"Bella Andy. I hope you are no relation. . . . On second thoughts, you might be my cousin, or my second cousin. Which side of the family do you come from?"

"I'm Bella Malone, Andy, the new cook. Is that clear?"

"Did I hear Bella Malone mentioned just now, Andy," called Tom.

"She says she's the new cook."

"Well, bring her in. That's the name of the new cook."

Bella looked at Andy sympathetically. "If you look through the powder and the paint, you might see a familiar face."

Astonished, Andy allowed her to pass.

"Mr Cowan, I'm Bella Malone."

"How do you do, Miss Malone. You have already shown your hand, I believe."

"Yes! Thanks to Andy. He gave my cakes a good reception," slyly looking at Andy.

"What room are you using at the moment?"

"Oh! I believe it is your room."

"I'm afraid that won't do. We're not married . . . yet."

They both laughed. "You almost scared me, Mr Cowan."

"Just the boss's joke. . . . You will take the annexe. Jim will show you to your room . . . Miss Malone, Jim Baker," Tom introduced. "Jim is foreman of Green Vale."

"How do you do, Mr Baker?"

"I'm afraid ranch custom calls for less formality, Bella."

"Well, if that's so, Bella the cook will suit me."

"And Jim the Baker will do me."

"And Tom the Piper's son will get me," laughed Tom. "Let's have the song again. Just a sort of welcome home party. Out with your guitar, Andy. Let her go!"

"*Just in the twilight of evening,*
When the sun dips behind the grey hills;

When the song birds of light
Fold their wings in the night,
And the Vale in the gloom is so still;
Comes a song of the cowboy returning,
To the beat of the clinking stones;
When the chores of the day
Are all put away,
For the Green Vale Mountain Home."

"Strum it again, Andy. I think I've got it," exclaimed Bella. "On the first beat," raising her hand. "This time in harmony. 'Just in the twilight of evening'."

It rose and fell in a cadence of beautiful harmony and rhythm, in perfect time, and finished in ecstasy on a perfect blend of voices. With Bella's assistance, the delighted surprise at their rendering was mutually evident.

"There's something in the air that enjoins expression when you have something to sing about," ventured Tom. . . . "By the way, Bella, we're only hooting cowboys, but you had something in that voice that spelt culture. Where did you train?"

"It doesn't matter. I'm just a cowgirl now, making up a harmony and looking for a career in cooking. . . . How do you like those cakes?"

"Oh! Those. Excellent."

"And you, Jim?"

"Very good. I thoroughly enjoyed them."

"And you, Andy?"

"Me! I used mine for sling shots. I knocked over two birds, raised a lump on Buster's leg, and hit Mary on her . . . and wasn't she cross."

"Andy, that's enough," scolded Tom. Addressing Bella, "That oven needs an overhaul. It hasn't been functioning well."

"And I was blaming 'Sure to Rise'. A little music again, will we?"

"Bella, what's behind your story?"

She ignored him and raised for the beat, "On the count of three."

"You sing it yourself, Bella."

She hesitated. "All right. Your guitar, Andy."

"Here, Andy, I'll take it this time." Tom checked the tuning and nodded his readiness.

"You strum in the key of C, and you will pick me up," intimated Bella, opening up on a low C, and reaching a forte of pure tonal quality on a mezzo soprano voice. She held her audience spellbound, while Tom, overcoming his surprise, adjusted his cords to meet the situation. "The bright stars fade, the morn is breaking, the dew drops pearl each bud and leaf."

Nothing more entrancing was ever heard in the quiet of Green Vale than Bella's rich voice interpreting that beautiful aria of Hatton's, and the almost pathetic emphasis she placed on its theme words "Goodbye, sweetheart, goodbye".

Its final note held the party in speechless wonderment as she expectantly searched their faces for some reaction.

"Now I've given you that, all together again on the chorus, 'Just in the twilight of evening'," and they half-heartedly joined in.

"Step it up men. This is a nice chorus."

Tom remarked: "It sounds like a nursery rhyme against that beautiful aria. . . . Won't you tell us the story behind it, Bella?"

"Look, Tom, once upon a time there was a little girl who had a little voice, and grew up to be a little singer, and now she's come along in answer to a little advertisement to be a little cook, and to enjoy a little fresh air in this beautiful Green Vale Ranch. Could there be any better answer to your question?"

"No! Except that a fairy tale has a happy ending. This one hasn't."

"It will . . . some day," sighed Bella, beckoning Jim. "My portmanteau is in the passage."

"Yes. This way, Bella."

The morning found Bella back at the kitchen drudgery, romance and singing forgotten, and menus on the mind.

"Andy, do me a favour. Post this letter in the village when you go in."

"All right, Bella."

"And Andy, I've made you some nice little pellets for your sling, guaranteed to kill at two hundred, and cripple at three hundred."

"Oh, thanks, Bella. You're a pal."

"Here, put your head outside of this," handing him a tasty meringue, "and don't tell me they are as hard as rocks."

"Oo! Oo!" digging his teeth in, "I'll never say that again."

. . . . .

The absence of Belle Alane, of the Metropolitan Opera, was seriously exercising the minds of the directors at a Board meeting. An understudy had to be hastily called in. Harry Lyman, a leading opera star, was most disturbed at the absence of his leading lady, a consummate star of tender feeling and of happy mien, who had ensconced herself in his private life, and whose absence now was settling him to despair.

"Gentlemen, the opera will fail with a succession of understudies. It immediately dampens the enthusiasm of operagoers to see these makeshifts come on, and genuine disappointment will be felt when they find their favourite singer missing. I suggest we try and locate Madame Alane and persuade her to return."

"Do you know where her home is, Harry?"

"Yes! I have been there on occasions. She lives in Delver Avenue."

"Let's try for her on the 'phone."

He rang and located Mrs Alane. She imparted some information of importance, and Harry thanked her and rang off. "Mrs Alane has just received a letter from her daughter, and she is on a ranch at Denver—Green Vale they call it. Denver is in Colorado, some distance away. I would like to approach her mother, and arrange for us both to go over and try to get Belle to return."

"Very well, Harry. Her contract calls for another six months. We will meet any reasonable conditions she insists upon."

Harry Lyman called on Mrs Alane, and discussed the return of Belle, and proposed a journey to Denver to interview her.

"Have you any idea why she left so suddenly?" Harry asked Mrs Alane.

"No! This letter is the first intimation of any trouble. What is your opinion, Harry?"

"I cannot fathom it. We were mutually happy in our roles. She entered into the spirit of the opera, with no personal feelings, apparently, in the romantic scenes that brought us together. I, on the other hand, felt a rising feeling of regard and affection for her as we met in the tender scenes, and I would not like to think she was annoyed and resented any suggestion of personal feeling the scenes offered. I was on the point of declaring my love when she left suddenly."

"She was going on a vacation, she led me to believe. Could there have been anything else that upset her, Harry?"

"Not unless it was a total reversal of her life from the cramped confines of the opera, to the open free life of the country—a wish she has sometimes expressed."

"We will leave on the Denver express in the morning."

"As you wish."

. . . . .

Nights at Green Vale were typical "Ranch Nights".

In informal dress, with kitchen chores completed, and Bella discarding her apron, the company settled into the lounge for an informal evening.

From a round of cards they passed to the Green Vale chorus, while Andy assembled the gramophone for a night's "put out" in music. A song of home, a song of ranch days, but the one that held the company was "Goodbye, sweetheart, goodbye" sung in that beautiful mezzo soprano voice that brought a gasp of astonishment from the assembled company, not the least of which was from Bella herself. She looked at Andy in annoyance. "Andy, will you please take that off?"

Reaching "The dew drops pearl each bud and leaf", Bella again remonstrated, "Turn it off, Andy."

"Wait a minute, Andy," spoke up Tom, intrigued. "That sounds very much like a voice we know. Remove the record and let me look at it."

While Andy disengaged the record, and brought it to Tom, Bella hurried from the room. Tom studied the face of the record, reading aloud, " 'Goodbye, sweetheart, goodbye. Sung by Madame Belle Alane, of the Metropolitan Opera'. What do you think of that?" looking around the astonished company. "Our little cook is a *prima donna*."

"Phew!" exclaimed Andy. "I thought there was something cooking."

"Andy, go and fetch her. . . . On second thoughts, Jim, you go. Be diplomatic. . . . What a story. . . . Love, romance, boredom, tragedy."

Jim knocked at Bella's door. She opened to show a tear-stained face. She searched Jim's face for any hostility.

"Tom would like to speak to you."

She nodded. "Tell him I will be there in a few minutes." Jim retired, and Bella hastened to wipe her tears away and adjust her kitchen dress.

"Let's have the chorus again, boys, while she is getting

ready." The music reached Bella and she relaxed, feeling more resigned as she approached the lounge. Whimsically she looked at the singing men as she entered, and awaited the finish of the chorus.

"Don't be worried, Belle. Come here!" Jokingly appraising her outfit, "Not much of a *prima donna*, are you?"

Belle surveyed herself. "Not much," she pouted. "I prefer it this way."

"I'm frightfully interested in your story, Belle . . . Belle Alane. That's your name, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"And why this masquerade?"

"I'm not masquerading, Tom—Mr Cowan. This is what I desire."

"Come out on the terrace and tell me the story."

A half moon shone through the foliage, and the scent of jasmine was in the air. She looked at Tom for a feeling of understanding, and gave voice to her thoughts. "There is no romance in opera. The voice that reached acclaim is but a symbol of perfection in delivery. It has no meaning, except as a voice. I became bored with the monotony of repetition . . . a voice detached . . . always the voice . . . no romance."

"Belle," approaching her more intimately, "was there anything significant in the song you gave us, 'Goodbye, sweetheart, goodbye'?"

"No! Just a voice singing the song the words demand. A heart expressing what it doesn't feel."

"Love, romance . . . have you never thought of it yourself?"

"I have thought of it, but I never get it in opera. The leading tenor never moved me except as a voice."

"Was he in love with you?"

"Perhaps! I never let him test it."

"What made you come here?"

"I answered an advertisement. Nothing more unromantic than that."

"What did you expect to find?"

"Everything that opera hasn't. Freedom, fresh air, and happiness."

"Well, you've found the former. What about happiness?"

"Happiness . . . I wonder. . . . Tom, will you let me stay on as cook?"

"Of course I will if that makes you happy."

"And Tom. Don't call me a *prima donna*."

"No! I've got a better name . . . sweetheart." Picking up his guitar, "Once again, 'The bright stars fade, the morn is breaking'."

So in the stillness of the night, and in perfect voice, Belle charmed Tom and the listening company with "Goodbye, sweetheart, goodbye".

"Nothing personal, I hope," ventured Tom.

Belle smiled. "No! Only a voice."

. . . . .

No more contrasting atmosphere can be found than the interior of an opera house and the exterior of a Denver ranch. One must be excused from finding inspiration in babbling brooks, flowery groves, wooded hills, and green pastures within the confines of an opera house, so the great things of music have to be transported there.

In the doing, the artificial atmosphere created is bound to pall on the sensitive mind, wholly attuned to the exterior things of life, and so it was with Belle Alane. She revelled in the freedom that ranch life offered her. The three weeks' happy experience since she hit Green Vale was enough to blot out any memories of opera, or any chance of revoking her decision.

When Mrs Alane and Harry Lyman reached the confines of Green Vale, if they needed any answer to the

riddle of Belle's disappearance, Green Vale and its beautiful surroundings provided it.

"I will stress the sentimental idea and the fame that opera can bring her," suggested Harry, "to lift it from the mercenary spirit, and if that doesn't work, to point out her obligations under the contract."

"Yes. That is the best way to approach her," agreed her mother, "but first of all, let me speak to her."

A mid-day mail bus had brought them to the gate of Green Vale Ranch. "Remember, Harry, be gentle with her."

"Could I be otherwise, with my fondness for her?"

The front door ajar, Harry rapped on the panel. This brought Belle, who was a general help as well as a cook.

"Mother! . . . Harry! . . . What brought you here?"

"Look, darling," kissing her, "I was worried about you. Yes! I got your letter, but we just had to see you. I'm glad you are all right."

Harry took her hand gently and held it a moment, to be quickly retrieved by Belle. Appraising her appearance, "What a beautiful domestic scene. Under other circumstances, I couldn't wish for anything better. . . . Won't you come back? My position is in jeopardy without you. No one can take your place, and I feel a personal loss. You must have noticed my feelings towards you. Won't you return with us?"

"Come into the lounge. The men are away in the fields. My peace of mind and happiness are more important to me."

"You would not want to let the directors down, and more important, your clamouring public."

"I'm happy here. I've no wish for fame and the public acclaim."

"You would not forget your contract calls for another six months." Harry was almost in the throes of despair. "It is not legally possible for you to let the directors down.

I hate to sound mercenary, but you must fulfil your obligations. It may be a hobby with you, but it is my living."

"What operas does the contract cover?"

"It covers the run of the present opera."

"Repetition right through. I could hardly suffer the boredom after this. When is the next performance?"

"On the fifteenth."

"Very well. I'll see my contract through."

"That's splendid, Belle."

"You can return now. I shall be home in a few days."

Mrs Alane and Harry took their leave.

Life at Green Vale went on, but gloom pervaded the air as Belle's time drew near. She taunted the men, "Step it up, boys. When you are feeling blue, nothing like a chorus to cheer you up. 'Just at the twilight of evening'. I'll be singing that in opera, but not in these clothes."

"Belle, come here." Tom called her to the seclusion of an alcove. "Why did you do this to me? Don't you know I badly want a cook."

"Yes, and I badly want to be a cook, but I have obligations to attend to."

"Belle, is there anything or anybody causing you to make this decision?"

"No, Tom. I don't want fame. I don't want money. I don't even want Harry."

"Then what do you suggest . . . I mean about our future?"

"Nothing, except give me the sack, put on a new cook, and live happily ever after."

"Not so easy as that. Belle, will you promise me one thing?"

"Well, what is it?'"

"Will you come back?"

"On one condition, that I have my old job."

"Agreed. One other important question. What about making it your permanent home?"

"Yes, I might. I love the place."

"What about its owner? Feel the same towards him?"

"Tom, I'm not sure of my own mind, yet. You just let me come."

. . . . .

Belle gave voice again to the interpretation of opera, and reached perfection of delivery without any noticeable boredom that the country escapade might have fostered. The acclaim and plaudits of the audience she received with calm reserve befitting her new mood. When Harry Lyman wanted to test her reaction again to her operatic work, he encountered this new mood, and it was not pleasing to him. "Your voice is beautiful, Belle, but your heart does not respond. It is as if you are singing to a contract and not to a soul."

"What else could you ask, then? I'm living in the past. The future holds a promise of freedom, and I'm living for that."

"Can you go on singing that beautiful aria 'How sinks my heart with fond alarms, The tear is hiding in my eyes', without being stirred at the message which lies behind it?"

"I approach these songs only as a means to an end. They fire me with no tears of emotion or heart flutterings. Perhaps some day, under happier circumstances, they will."

"Under happier circumstances could be part of your life, were you to let me arrange it," pleaded Harry.

"It depends on where fate or the mood takes me," not wishing to commit herself.

The opera moved on towards its close. So moved closer the day of liberation, when the ties of convention would break, and release a soul into a world of happiness and freedom.

Spring came. Green Vale took on its green sward. The flowers bloomed, the trees blossomed, the birds sang, and yet there was one thing needed to complete the picture—Belle.

Tom, Jim and Andy sat by His Master's Voice listening to "the voice", and having visions of their erstwhile cook all wrapped up in a glittering array of sequins and velvet. From the hard surface came that beautiful voice to keep her memory evergreen, "The dew drops pearl each bud and leaf."

As always, in the fading light, when the chores of the day were done, and the night winds murmured through the forest groves, the cowboys returned to the song of Green Vale.

Tom wandered on to a rendezvous with a lost love, ever hoping for the vision to appear. It did come one early morning in an unmistakable voice, "The bright stars fade, the morn is breaking", and into his life stepped that very excellent cook.

"Belle!"

"Tom!"

They embraced, stung to silence for a moment in thankfulness. "You know, Tom, if you were the worst man in the world, and you could give me all this—and the cooking too, I could still love you."

"Well, darling, I'm not the worst, and not exactly the best, but if you will promise me these things, I'll turn over a new leaf . . ."

"And what are these things?"

"Love, honour, and cherish . . ."

"And be a good cook?"

"No. My wife! I already have a cook."

END

N.Z.
BOOK-
SELLER'S
REMINIS-
CENCES

Ernest E.
Marsden