

THE DIFFICULT DAYS:

Tales Of Pioneer Women

IT is impossible to read authentic tales of hardship and endurance, of courage and unswerving purpose, without deep response. That is why the crudest scrawl in the diary of a pioneer must always have value. And these were our people. Neither style nor even grammar is necessary to convey what is to be found in this slight book of pioneer memories. (*Tales of Pioneer Women. Collected by the Women's Institutes of New Zealand. Whitcombe and Tombs.*)

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Here is massacre, earthquake, fire, flood, flame—and the spirit that goes to the conquering of these things. Here are women—"young, cultivated, beautiful," and again "tall, slender, very fair . . . large blue eyes . . . dazzling complexion . . . gracious . . . logical . . ."—who witnessed cannibalism, who dealt successfully with infanticide, and who bore their own children always in fear, often in solitude.

And here, later, are young brides brought home on rough bush sledges to raupo huts with white calico ceilings that "swelled like a ship in full sail." One such, left sitting in the mud of the track with her first-born in her arms waited quietly until her husband discovered his loss and returned. To his agitated, "Why are you sitting there?" she replied demurely, "Oh—Baby and I just love the view from this spot."

Here are girls who swing ball dresses from the rafters of a fireless lean-to with saddles for hangers.

Here are women who, when earthquake deprived them of all save a snatched-up blanket and "large white frilly nightcap" put up umbrellas for respectabilities sake!

An early morning conversation between husband and wife with the earth heaving beneath them:

She: "Get up. Get up. We must get up."

He: "We can't get up—the floor's gone."

She: "The bed's here—the floor can't be gone. Get up and find it."

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Here are women who "burnt shells for lime to make lime water," and, when breast milk failed, fed their babies through "the finger of an old kid glove."

Here is one who sat all night in the bush—alone—contemplating the end of her happiness—at eighteen, a wife, a mother, and a widow. When at last day comes and the birds break into song she records, simply, "I began another day."

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Here are friendly warriors who walk 28 miles with pakeha trousers converted into flour sacks to relieve pakeha famine—mischievous brown boys who baptise yellow-crested parrakeets with blood from their fingers in order to get the price of the rarer red ones—of bullock teams which refuse to move from mid-river until the right vocabulary of curses be hurled at them—of cows that lap up the last precious drop from the pail of Holy Water.

And they could laugh at terror in those days—as these lines of epitaph, written in fun for one of our grandmothers, prove:

*They munched and crunched
Bone, flesh and muscle,
And cried "How sweet! How soft! How nice
—is Annie Russell!"*

* * *

And at the end is an old lady landed on the West Coast by 'plane. And her comment:

"Ah, well. To think the air has been here all the time and it is only now we think of using it for travel!"

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Here is a book of real value. And a book that growing daughter of yours must have at any price.

WHILE THE KETTLE BOILS

Dear Friends,

This year every New Zealander will celebrate an extra birthday—his own natal day, and New Zealand's historic hundredth birthday! Long years of living; of brave endeavour and stirring progress. Our minds go back in honour and pride to those stubborn old fighters who pioneered New Zealand's green land. Many of these were kin to us, and it is their memory we now commemorate. They shall be with us to-day, a vast shadowy army, sharing our pride; content in the knowledge that the flag they reared is still being carried forward.

The culmination of those hundred years of progress will be seen in New Zealand's Centennial Exhibition that will be opened as some of you are glancing at this page. It is a proud hour for each and every one of us, and the eyes of the world will be turned our way. England, Canada, Australia, all will be fittingly represented, and no effort has been spared to make the occasion worthy of the great ideal it embodies.

It is left for New Zealanders to enjoy the fruits of their work. Exhibition Day means Red Letter Day. There will be entertainment for young and old alike. For months the kiddies have been saving their pennies for a descent on Playland, and they will find there all the fun and excitement of the Fair.

Women, too, have been busy preparing for the important event. The heart-burning and exquisite qualms that have gone in the choice of this or that ensemble for the festive occasion! Many gorgeous evening gowns have already been paraded at the initial function of the Celebrations, the Centennial Ball. It is a long time since Wellington has emerged in such a glory of colour and splendour.

We are not often granted such a truly fitting excuse to parade all our pretties—our smartest frocks and most alluring hats. If Nature keeps on our side by giving us perfect days, summery clothes will be well to the fore.

Gaily figured prints and cool shady hats are both attractive and practical. A little word of warning. On your Exhibition day, don't wear uncomfortable, stilt-heeled shoes. By the end of the day, or before, you will find yourself a cot-case somewhere—to say nothing of spoiling your day's enjoyment. If you find yourself wearying by the time luncheon is over, the Woman's Section has a Little Theatre where you can rest your toes and be entertained by interesting Demonstrations on all subjects relating to women's interests and activities. There is something in the Exhibition to meet every mood. If you feel like a quiet hour in a picture theatre, you can have it. If you feel like dancing, there is music and a dance floor—or a cabaret to entertain you. Nothing has been forgotten in this grand show.

I wish you all a happy Exhibition Day—and a happy national birthday!

I shall be there, too, sharing in the fun.

Yours cordially,

Cynthia

PLACE YOUR HAT

A couple of quill feathers and a twist of velvet make this definitely charming into Spring hat. The secret of its chic is in the placing of it on the head and with the right profile. If you have well-defined features this prow-fronted vogue will flatter you. If not it will only succeed in overwhelming.

Its clever folds are secured by a broadish velvet band that grips the head low to the nape of the neck.

