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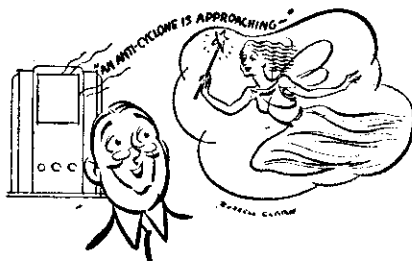
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SOME day, you may commit a murder. It will probably be your mother-in-law, your wife, your rival, the soprano next door, the office boy, or the editor of your local paper. It is the bodies of these people which are most frequently taken to city morgues. Of course murder, as an idea, may never have crossed your mind yet. You may have a very complacent disposition—but perhaps you have not so far experienced the type of climate that breeds murderous thoughts.

The Murder Climate

Why is it that Boston, the mother city of the Pilgrim Fathers, the great university centre of Massachusetts, and the foremost in culture among the great towns of America, has, in proportion to its population, six times as many murders as London has? One answer could be—the weather. In the spring and in the fall, Boston, like other cities of the northern States, has the most inspiring climate. The daily change from cool to warm, the alternation of calm and wind, the variation of sun and cloud, give the people tremendous energy in both mind and body. In commerce and industry the people are live-wires. They are world famous as go-getters. The cold of winter in Eastern America however, is sudden and severe, while the heat of summer is oppressive and enervating. Neither the central-heating system nor the ice-box can counteract entirely the severity of these two seasons. Yet the workers try to maintain the bustle they have generated in the spring and in the fall. They break down from sheer bodily and mental exhaustion. In their distraction they rush out and buy a six-shooter and a handful of slugs. Mothers-in-law must sing very small when the thermometer is well up or well down. It is then that the coroners become the bustlers.

London with its eight-million souls has a fine climate in the spring and autumn for those people who go to daily work, which is the lot of most of us.

MURDER AND THE WEATHER

THREE weeks ago we printed an address by Professor Jobberns pleading for a new approach to Geography. We do not know whether this article is the result, but it certainly approaches the subject from a new angle. The author, A. J. DEAKER, is a teacher of Geography in Invercargill.

In that great city, unlike Boston, the summer comes along gently, if it comes at all, and winter makes a slow and foggy approach. Londoners are among the most industrious on earth, but summer and winter do not exhaust the resources of the bustling. The percentage of bread-winners who suffer nervous breakdowns is small—and mothers-in-law die in their beds.

Boston, Chicago, New York and Pittsburg have swallowed thousands of immigrants from other lands. When these people followed the example of Christopher Columbus and the Pilgrim Fathers, murder was far from their minds. The climate, however, has inspired them to great deeds or to foul crimes. It has brought out all the best in the mentally strong, and all the worst in the morally weak.

Nearer Home

Now where in New Zealand can we find the type of climate that could be advanced as a defence for murder? Possibly that of Central Otago approaches fairly closely to the best American morale-shaker. It has springs and autumns that are a real delight, but the summers are hot and the winters very cold (40 degrees below freezing point last winter). In spite of this, the good people of Central Otago live to a ripe old age. In the 'sixties, however, bodies could often be seen floating down the Molyneux River. The gold-rushes had brought thousands of men to the Clutha Valley, and not all of them were honest diggers. But these murders were not the result of weather strain—no sir! So if your mother-in-law dies suddenly under an apple tree in Central Otago, the temperature and rainfall charts will not provide a good defence. The jury will pour cold water on the idea.

New Zealand Is Tops

Geographers are much more scientific in their methods than they used to be. They have decided that there are four places in the world which have the ideal climate for busy working people. According to them, the ideal climates are found in the temperate zones, in lands which lie in the track of the eastward moving cyclones. The passage of the cyclones brings that "storminess," with its regular change from cool to warm, of sun and cloud, and of wind and calm which is so essential for creating the desire to work and to think. They select England, British Columbia, Southern Chile and New



Zealand as the four places most closely approaching the ideal. Many other places have more comfortable but less stimulating climates.

Of course if you were rich and idle you would probably choose the Riviera, where the equable all-the-year-round climate would allow you to loll the time away happily with an occasional flutter at Monte Carlo. Perhaps Florida peninsula would appeal, for you could dip occasionally with the bathing beauties on Palm Beach or Miami Shore. Maybe some would prefer Honolulu, or the Bahama Islands with the chance of sunbathing with the Duke of Windsor. Murder, however, is not common at these places. The climate is neither energising nor exhausting enough for the capital crime. G. K. Chesterton, however, has pointed out that the Italians are more prone to murder than to suicide. The Norwegians and Swedes in the cooler parts of Europe, when they become depressed generally kill themselves; on the other hand, the Italians give way to despondency by killing somebody else. There is something to be said for living in a warm country.

What About Suicide?

Talking of suicide reminds us of the school-boy who wrote: "There are four crimes for which the punishment is death—murder, treason, piracy and suicide." Strangely enough, the American city that leads in suicide statistics is San Francisco. You would hardly expect this in a Californian climate which is famous the world over. There's no more inspiring climate to be found on this earth. It drives the Pacific Coast dwellers to tremendous feats of both mind and body. Californians have performed amazingly at the Olympic Games, and the State is a great nursery for tennis stars. Helen Wills, Ellsworth Vines and Donald Budge were all Californians. But the climate never lets up. The constant stimulation of the favourable temperature and the lack of relaxation through seasonal variation bring bodily and nervous exhaustion to its victims—then suicide. San Francisco, Sacramento, Los Angeles, and Oakland lead the United States records for personal self-destruction.

The climate of New Zealand is much maligned by those who live in it, but it drives comparatively few to murder or to suicide. The weather is generally pleasant enough to work in, whether it is in windy Wellington, sunny Nelson, or the muggy Canterbury nor-wester. As the old Irishwoman said when driving her pigs to market in pouring rain: "In-dade it's bad, but sure it's thankful I am to have any kind of weather."

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