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able to maintain itself against the white man, and to adopt some of the more agreeable virtues of Western civilisation without at the same time drinking itself to death. They have given up several of their ancient habits and customs, such as eating their enemies and tattooing their faces, and they send representatives to the New Zealand Parliament and build churches which are in every way as unattractive as the chapels constructed by their white masters: all of which bids well for the future, as far as the racial problem is concerned.

New Zealand is not in any way tropical. It is as far removed from the equator as Italy, and enjoys the same sort of climate. This means that it is much more likely to become a permanent European establishment than Australia. All sorts of European fruits, such as peaches and apricots and apples and grapes and oranges, can be cultivated in the valleys, while the mountain sides provide excellent grazing for cattle. A native flax, which must not be confused with the flax grown in Europe, is used for making clothes and mats, and the slow-growing trees of the North Island, exported chiefly from Auckland, make excellent timber.

Ten Minutes for Dinner

That is not exactly the way a New Zealander would distribute the emphasis in a description of his own country, but there is one other remark at the end of the same book that suggests that van Loon did know at least one of our national characteristics fairly well. On his last page, among a few parting remarks on the destiny of humanity, he says:

Thus far we have always lived as if we were a sort of accident—as if our stay on this planet were only a matter of years, or at best, of centuries. We have behaved with the indecent greed of passengers on a New Zealand train who know that they will only have 10 minutes for the three-course dinner to be served at the next halting-place.

To read that paragraph, one would conclude that van Loon either had visited New Zealand or was sufficiently impressed by someone's account of our railway-platform customs to recall it for his simile. In fact, van Loon probably did set foot in New Zealand the year after *The Home of Mankind* was published. *Who's Who in America* says he came to Australia and New Zealand on a lecturing tour in 1934, but it seems that what he really did was to travel on a luxury liner to give lectures to the passengers, and that if he landed in New Zealand he remained incognito.



HOW VAN LOON illustrated the idea of historical time. The caption to this drawing from *"The Story of Mankind"* reads: "High up in the north in the land called Svithjod, there stands a rock. It is a hundred miles high and a hundred miles wide. Once every thousand years a little bird comes to this rock to sharpen its beak. When the rock has thus been worn away, then a single day of eternity will have gone by."



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