

# THE EVERLASTING MIRACLE

A SHORT STORY, written for "The Listener"

by RODERICK FINLAYSON

AT Tidal Creek there was a young Maori called Monday Wiremu. Like most of the other boys of his gang, Monday was a hard case. He worked no more than he could help. He spent his time, and the other fellow's money, gambling and drinking. "Eh, goody-goody all right for the pakeha," said Monday. "This Maori boy means to have a good time."

Monday had a girl over Wainui way. Maggie Peka was her name. He was rather off-hand about her. She didn't get much of his money. He fancied it smart to treat women rough, as he put it.

Young Monday Wiremu was a hard case, and folk said he would live and die the same.

THEN, one night, he met the devil. That's what he said. The boys said he was drunk or he wouldn't have gone home alone late at night past the old boneyard.

Monday said his horse shied at something and threw him on his head. And

there was Old Nick all right. Old Nick said to him, "Monday Wiremu, you get to hell out of this kind of thing. Monday, you go pray to God and do folk good. Don't you forget, Monday Wiremu."

Think what you like; Monday Wiremu was a changed man after that adventure. The sight of strong drink turned him sick. He said he hardly knew one card from another, and he couldn't remember the name of one racehorse. He just yawned at the mention of such things. He didn't go with the gang any more. The boys laughed at him. They strutted behind him singing, "Holy, holy, Monday!" But it was no use. He didn't seem to mind.

Worst of all, he wouldn't go to see his sweetheart, Maggie Peka, out at Wainui any more. He said he was too busy trying to do good and heal the sick. He said you can't do good and cure the sick and run after women. Well, he cured

Turi's cough, and he did his best for Hemi's old brindle cow that had the cough too.

"That old cow is more grateful than a woman," said Monday.

All this became a bit of a nuisance for Tupara, the local tohunga, that old cure-all and fortune-teller. One day when Hoppy Crummer saw Tupara going by on his piebald nag he asked him what he thought of it.

"Hallo, Two-barrel," he said. "How do you like young Monday doing all your doctoring for you?"

"You see here, Hoppy," said Tupara, "Monday don't know a damn thing. Go round saying Jesus love you. Where the money come from, eh?"

And he went off, lammamg the old piebald with a willow stick.

"You wait. I fix him," he shouted over his shoulder.

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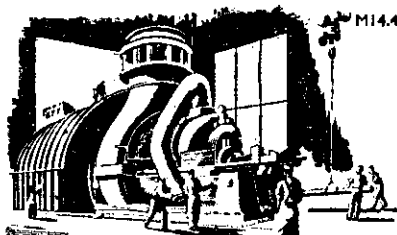
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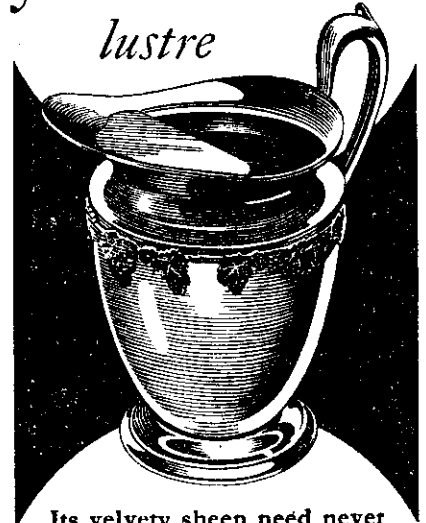
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