



of a million superficial feet of sawn timber (planks 12in. wide by 1in. thick) and something approaching 200,000 board feet (good usable timber with the sap-wood removed). If those figures are correct the biggest tree I had seen in my life before I came to Waipoua was not much bigger than a branch of some of the trees seen by Percy Smith and referred to by Kirk, since one of those had limbs 22 feet round.

I don't know how long a tree must stand to attain dimensions like those, but I find it no harder to accept the 2,000 years suggested by some authorities than I did a moment ago to believe my own eyes when I forgot where I was as I wrote and then looked suddenly up. I can believe that this tree was standing at the Crucifixion. I think the stars were looking down on it when Caesar crossed the Channel. I think it was a big tree when William the Conqueror crossed. And I feel quite sure that when Columbus blundered on America it was what I would have called a forest giant three or four weeks ago. But every schoolboy is told, and at last believes, that New Zealand has no history.

I THINK it was Mark Twain who said that he went to Italy determined not to butcher anyone to make a Roman holiday. I came to Northland as firmly resolved not to ask anyone to die after seeing Waipoua. But I ask every New Zealander to see Waipoua somehow before he dies. Meanwhile it gives me pleasure to think that two starlings I see carrying food into a hole 50 feet from the ground have nothing to fear for a week or two from weasel, hawk, or ferret.

A LITTLE north of Whangarei there is a swamp that, if drained, would support a hundred families. On the way to Whangaroa there are three or four more that would support ten or twenty families. West of Keri Keri there are several square miles of down country

**NORTHLAND PROSPECTS** now in scrub and fern that, if the soil is not barren or sick, could be converted into a little Walkato. Between Dargaville and Opononi there are half-cleared, half-drained timber areas crying out for tractors and bulldozers.

So it all appears to the visitor who goes through at from 15 to 30 miles an

hour. Northland at first astonishes him, and then bewilders him and leaves him confused. He comes expecting low scrub hills with little patches of fertility at the mouths of streams. He finds scrub, and low hills too; but he also finds high hills, great patches of heavy bush, waterfalls, gorges, and the most difficult roads he has driven on in New Zealand. Then when he is wondering where the sea is, and feeling as isolated as if he were in the Lindis Pass or on the Gentle Annie Road between Taihape and Napier, he climbs round a spur and runs into mangroves.

It is easy to understand why Northlanders do not wish to be North Aucklanders or even ordinary North Islanders and why half of them are go-getters and half victims of taihoa. I have talked to men and women here who are furious that they have not better roads and more dairy factories and freer supplies of lime and fertiliser and electricity; who can't understand why the Government should go on testing and testing and watching and waiting before opening up the land it holds near Keri Keri; who point to the results already achieved there, 30 dairy cows on a little more than 30 acres of land, and ask angrily why the returned soldier who wants to settle in the North must do so without help from the rehabilitation fund. I have talked to others who are glad that things are as they are; glad passively if not actively; relieved; happy to be living in conditions where day-long molling and toiling would be futile; where they are always warm and always have enough to eat, where they can grow vegetables without too much trouble, catch fish, run a few fowls, gather enough firewood for cooking, cut their clothes bills in halves, and go on doing these things year in and year out.

I was not there to find out who is right and who wrong or if right and wrong at all. I was a visitor and determined to be nothing else. But I could almost have believed I had discovered in Northland what a Wisconsin professor persuaded himself he had discovered throughout Christendom — men and women drafting themselves like sheep into two groups according to the shape of their heads and the multiplication rate of their corpuscles. I would not suggest that all those kind people I met are aggressive if their heads are short (as anthropologists measure them) or passive if their heads are long. I say merely that some have their eyes on the horizon and some on the earth round about them, and that whether it is cerebral or not the two groups are not likely to coalesce.

WHEN I crossed from Whangarei to Dargaville it was still raining and blowing in spasms and the roads were still showing signs of recent flooding. Here as on the other side of the peninsula everybody assured me that the weather was abnormal—that it was

### GOOD WEATHER

usually still and hot at this time of the year, with long stretches of unbroken sunshine. Again I was almost persuaded that this was true, but I met one man who assured me that it wasn't — farmer, curio collector, and in his spare time keeper of the Kaihu hotel.

It was all nonsense, he said, that the weather was getting worse. It was get-

ting better. He could remember two or three floods a month. Now it was two or three a year. But what was wrong with that? Where would they be if they had nothing but sun? A man ought to be reasonable. He'd been there 31 years, and the worst season they ever had was last summer, when it didn't rain for three months. Sun and rain was what they wanted, and that's what they got.

(To be continued)

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