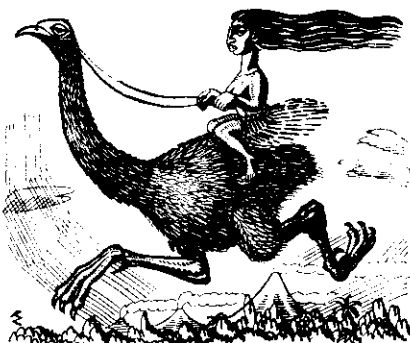


SPOKEN ENGLISH, or The Muse Bemused

A dozen years or so ago
Go in Christchurch I would go a
Couple of times a week to look at the moa
Bones in the museum there. I know a
Thing or two about the moa.
Not just the bone-and-skinny moa
But the sort that Hinny-moa
Used to ride,
Astride,
With meat and feathers
(On the bird, I mean, for where there's
Two nouns, folk get confused).
Anyway I used
To look at this skeleton
With a Latin name too long to speleton
This page—and to myself I'd imagine
The life of the lasses and lagine
Those far off dark and bowery days,
(They were dark of course being mowery
days).
I thought
Of all the Sport
They'd have. These'd be moas to ride
Astride.
(I did that rhyme before, sorry)
And an occasional morry, orry
To eat for Sunday dinner. The last named
(i.e., the morry orries) can hardly be
blamed
For resenting this, and they grew surlier
From getting up urlier
Only to be absorbed at luncheon
With a most distasteful munchion
By some old Maori potentate
Who'd sleep in late.
(Look
at any history book
For stories
of the Mory ories.
They were earlier than the Maoris, were
not tattooed, but daubed
Were killed off and absorbed).
Well, as I say, I used to stand
And
Think of Maori days and Maori lore—
I knew their legends by the score, or even
more, galore.
There was one all about
A girl called Hinemoa who went out
Fishing on a Friday
And pulled up quite a tidy
Bit of landscape, which she
Moored to a pig's bladder, a very fish she
Story. And oh, the sweet cadence
Of their names, these Maori men and
madence.
Like for example
(and one will be ample
To illustrate the aforementioned cadence
Like silver dollars falling, though they were
padence
Sea-shells, not money—but to end this
Parenthesis).
Like for example, 'Hinemoa.'



I do not know a
Prettier name. When she got to grow a
Little fatter they called her Wahinemoa.
She always was a bit of a gad-a
Bout, and never sailed without her bladder.
(It was a pig's bladder really
Which she could inflate freely
With a bike-pump. And I shouldin
Wonder if it was the forerunner of bagpipes
and black puddin').
Space would never al
Low me to tell you several
Other legends in which I am steeply deeped
Or rather speedily peeped,
(You know the phrase I am trying to land
on
But which I fear I must abandon
For readers curse you
If you fail to pursue
(So I have been told with some frequency)
Your narrative sequence.
Well, all this will demonstrate
What a spate
Of inspiration
Will spring just from the contemplation
Of moas.
Even lawn moas will do, though as
I have shown
You must have some bone
With no flesh on
To get the proper historic impression,
And thoa lawn moa has wheels and a handle
It can't hold a candle
To plain bones; so keep a stack round
The house to give it background.
It would seem I departed
From the theme I started
Upon—and you will wonder I spose
Why I chose
This subject anyway. Well you see a man
just rang me
To threaten and harangue me
Because my dog had gone into his garden
Buried a bone in his garden—
A dirty big bone,
And he swore down the phone,
Which set me thinking about them—bones
I mean, not phones.
And it was all so silly
Because rilly
I'd like to have busted his cursologue
Just to tell him he had the wrong number
and the wrong dogue.
—“Augustus.”

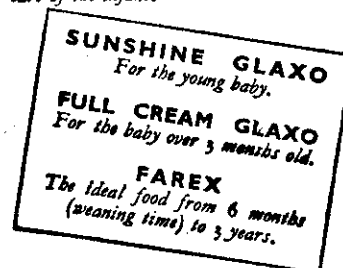


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