

by folly, partly by strife, partly by indolence and self-indulgence, and partly by the universal contempt we everywhere show for any such golden rule of conduct as giving to others what we demand from them. I am not going to try to say how much of the present cost of any service is retaliation for past plunder, but I know that what the Tamahine did to me most of us are doing to one another in a desperate attempt to recover bad debts.

[T is a far cry from Cook Strait to Camden, New Jersey, but I was not long in Picton before I smelt lilac, and looking about saw it growing in every second garden. It grows in the North Island too, of course, but not so freely as in the South, or

## COOK STRAIT TO CAMDEN

so comfortably, and it is difficult to imagine a North Island Whitman writing "When lilacs last in the door yard bloomed." But lilac could scent the memory of a South Island poet if he was not a child of the bush. It is a sign, with weeping willows and Lombardy poplars that we still belong spiritually to Europe, that the districts in which it grows most freely were settled from the South of England, that they have less rain than most of the North Island, and less wind, and that if it is now growing where the bush used to be, as in Picton and Akaroa, the men who planted it saw only timber in the big bush and rubbish in the rest and dreamt every night of Devon. I have myself never seen Devon, or Surrey, or Somerset, or any other English county. But lilacs scented every spring till I was 20 and gave me the split personality of most South Islanders, whose environment is not in sharp enough contrast with Britain to cut them away from it, and yet is not Britain physically or spiritually.

I hope the residents of Camden, whose decision to make Whitman's home a national shrine was reported just before I left Wellington, will plant a lilac bush at the back door if there is not one growing there already. But lilacs are indigenous to North America. They were never seen in New Zealand until a hundred years ago, and they encourage the

longing lingering looks behind us that should long ago have ceased.

THE boundary between Marlborough and Nelson on the west is a geographical line on the crest of barren mountains. Though it lingers on on some maps it means no more than the boundary between Hutt and Wairarapa or between Nelson city and Nelson port.

But I found no **BOUNDARIES** one on one side or the other crossing it unnecessarily. They told me in Blenheim that if you were not born in Nelson you need not apply to Nelson for a job — that the place was stagnant economically and ingrown mentally. They went to Nelson when they had to go, and co-operated with their neighbour when there was no alternative: they took power from the Cobb River, for example. In Nelson they said that Blenheim had lost its way during its first decade or two, had remained submerged in commercialism ever since, and yet had to forgo commercialism's chief aids and rewards—free communication with the world outside.

I tried not to see either place as the other saw it, and found the task easy. I had not seen either of them for many years and found precisely the same change in both—a great increase in population and trade. I thought this more marked in Nelson than in Blenheim, but it was unmistakable in both, and at this season of the year, with spring just passing and summer just coming, it calls for no special effort to be happy in either. Until I crossed another range still and reached Takaka, I thought I had never seen such gay October flowers—azaleas, bride's blossom, banksia and common red roses, pansies, lilac, and primroses. But I am sure the people of Blenheim are glad that it is not at present easy for them to listen to Nelson's broadcasting station.

I thought too that Nelson had some secret satisfaction in parading its culture in unexpected places. While Blenheim is no better than Wellington and Christchurch in its invitations to "Gents" and "Ladies," Nelson makes life easy for Men and Women—a malicious smack in the eye, I am sure, for those who call Nelsonians genteel.

(To be continued)

## Milking Before Dawn

*IN the drifting rain the cows in the yard are as black  
And wet and shiny as rocks in an ebbing tide;  
But they smell of the soil, as leaves lying under trees  
Smell of the soil, damp and steaming, warm.  
The shed is an island of light and warmth, the night  
Was water-cold and starless out in the paddock.*

*CROUCHED on the stool, hearing only the beat  
The monotonous beat and hiss of the smooth machines,  
The choking gasp of the cups, the rattle of hooves,  
How easy to fall asleep again, to think  
Of the man in the city asleep; he does not feel  
The night encircle him, the grasp of mud.*

*BUT now the hills in the east return, are soft  
And grey with mist, the night recedes, and the rain.  
The earth as it turns towards the sun is young  
Again, renewed, its history wiped away  
Like the tears of a child. Can the earth be young again  
And not the heart? Let the man in the city sleep.*

Ruth Dallas

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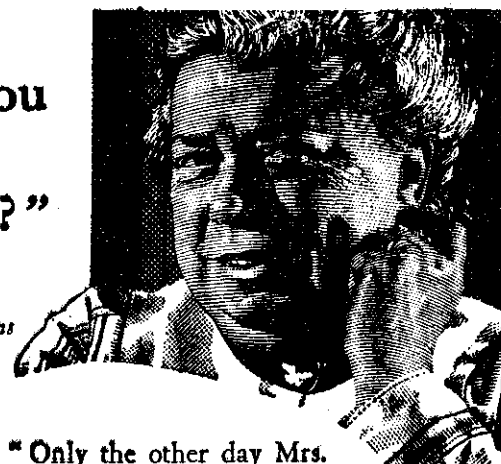
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