

New Books for the New Year

THE ROAD TO TRIESTE, Geoffrey Cox, 15/- posted. The story of the fall of Trieste, told by a famous New Zealand journalist who was also General Freyberg's senior Intelligence Officer.

CLASSICAL LANDSCAPE WITH FIGURES, Osbert Lancaster, 18/- posted. Combining superb illustrations in line and colour with his characteristic, dry, individual humour, the author has produced a distinctive book on the Greece of to-day and yesterday.

SCHUBERT, edited by Gerald Abraham, 14/6 posted. A symposium of studies on Schubert's work by a group of distinguished critics, giving a comprehensive picture of the man and his compositions.

ELEMENTS OF MATHEMATICAL ASTRONOMY, Martin Davidson, 24/3 posted. In a book invaluable to the amateur astronomer, Dr. Davidson, without involving any formidable mathematics, gives a lucid exposition of the methods of astronomers.

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Through New Zealand (XXX)

Social Geography in Marlborough

By "SUNDOWNER"

I HAD intended at Gowan Bridge to turn down to Lake Roto-roa for a night, but discovered in the store that there was a big tree across the road. Cars and light trucks could get past, but nothing bigger, and I had already had a bump in the Buller Gorge. There was nothing for it but to by-pass Roto-roa, though I did so sadly. I had been there in 1935 and hoped that I might be lucky enough again to reach the D'Urville and Sabine rivers and see what had happened to the two gold diggers I met on my first visit.

But that was not the only disappointment. I rang what used to be the lake hostel and was told that it no longer catered for visitors, that the launches had ceased to carry passengers, and that the owners had transferred their attention to cows. I can't pretend that I think travellers as important as cows; but I think Roto-roa more beautiful than Roto-iti, bigger, more primitive, and better sheltered. The bush when I saw it last ran right into the water all the way round, and a launch journey from end to end was an experience that lingered in the memory.

However, Roto-iti can be beautiful too; in certain lights almost breathtaking. When the mountains at its southern end are free from cloud and not quite free of snow the effect is grander than any view I can remember from Roto-roa, and far more arresting than the tourist photographs suggest. But there are drawbacks as well as advantages in being only a few minutes from a public highway, and it must be exasperating to the board of control when the time, money, and labour expended on elementary conveniences are treated with contempt by passing vandals.

WHEN I first saw the Wairau Valley it was the end of April, raining a little, and very cold. We had driven all the way from Christchurch, and soon after we crossed to the west bank it was dark. I can't otherwise explain why I thought it bleak, hard, and dreary country that I did not wish to see again. This time I left Roto-iti after an early breakfast and drove all the way to Blenheim in sunshine. All the way, too, I regretted the necessity of having to push on. I felt that I needed as many days as I had hours, and know that I would even then have wished to loiter longer. It is a beautiful valley—60 miles from end to end, and with

just enough creeks, bluffs, terraces and swamps to give the road variety. All the way to the sea you look up at mountains on both sides, one or two of them 6,000 feet high, with short, deep subsidiary valleys ending in bush and blackness. I could not think why I had found it so forbidding a few years earlier until I remembered that valleys and mountains are always what the light makes them.

[T] is easy to get into Marlborough and easy to get out, but not easy when you are there to find the people. All roads lead to Blenheim, but Blenheim,



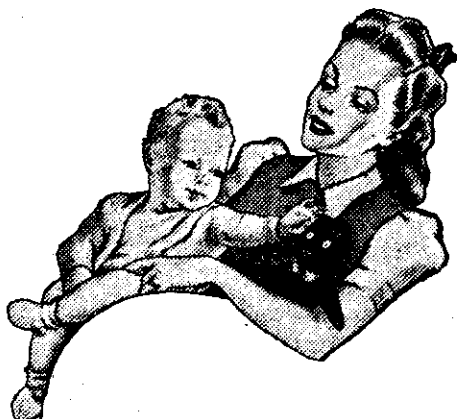
"All roads lead to Blenheim, but Blenheim, you soon discover, is not Marlborough"

you soon discover, is not Marlborough. If I called it the servants' quarters of Marlborough I would deserve the hostility of its 6,000 people, and I am not going to ask for that. But I can think of no better way of passing on the impression some of Marlborough's oldest inhabitants gave me than by saying that their attitude to Blenheim was something like the attitude of the "best people" in Christchurch to Addington saleyards. They did not despise it. They were in fact more than a little proud of it. They had planned it, created it, developed it year by year, and had no thought of living without it. But it was their down-stairs and back-door life, and the visitor who knew only that did not know them.

Geography has had something to do with it. The homesteads of Marlborough are often in valleys and pockets away from main roads. Even if there were no social aspects to it you would not see the owners of Marlborough unless you looked for them. You would not see them then unless they invited you into their

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