



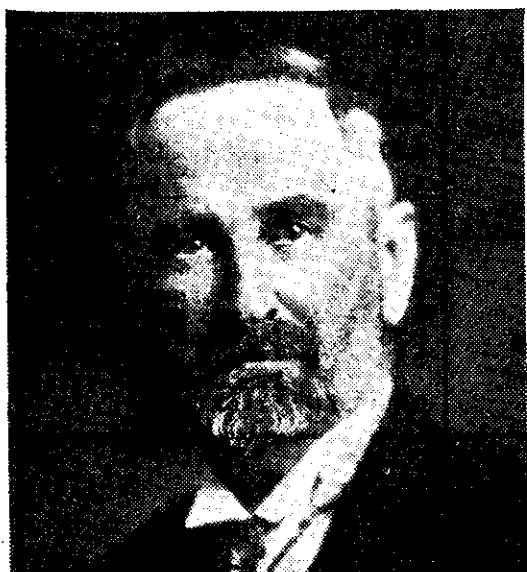
THE MAN ON THE LAND

—AND THIS IS ONE OF THEM

Pioneering The Pumice: By E. Earle Vaile. Whitcombe & Tombs, Ltd.

LET me be quite frank. When I received this book I had no inclination to read it. I was prejudiced. I knew in a vague way that somebody had gone into the pumice lands near Taupo thirty years ago and produced turnips, fat lambs, and butter. But he was a rich man, and I was not interested in rich-man pioneering.

So in my ignorance I supposed. But I had to read this book because it was sent to me



S. P. Andrew, photograph
E. EARLE VAILE

for review, and it is difficult to review a book without opening it.

So I took all my prejudices to bed and started to read. In a few pages, I knew, I would find a justification for my scepticism, and would then be able to damn the author with a grudging acknowledgment of his achievement. * * *

Well, I abase myself. I found a good deal to justify an assault on Mr. Vaile politically. His opinions are not only not my opinions: they are opinions that I hope time and change all over the world have outmoded by half a century. Old-age pensions he regards as a reward for wastrels and the unfit. Mort-

gage relief is plain swindling. The members of the Public Service are the "more or less Civil Service." A Maori is a good-natured child, sometimes honest, often dishonest, who has been "treated with extraordinary generosity." A foreigner is someone for whom Mr. Vaile "has no time." The women he likes best are the women of the good old days who did their washing in a kerosene tin and their cooking in "colonial ovens."

But I still abase myself. He is a character. I enjoy him even when I hate everything he says — partly because he says it so confidently, chiefly because he says it so well.

* * *

And he is a pioneer. I don't know how many thousands he had in his pocket when he disappeared into the pumice — with all his candour he does not tell us that — but pound notes in themselves fatten no lambs. He had conviction, and courage, or he would have enjoyed his wealth in Auckland; but neither conviction nor courage will win battles in the wilderness without brains. It was brains that made the turnips grow, and it was energy controlled by a managing mind that raised the 55 miles of fencing (all best English wire and heart of totara timber), that dug the 12½ miles of drains, built the bridges and formed the roads, started the stock sales, confused the sceptics, attracted neighbours, opened the dairy factory, planted forests, and built the home that became an open house for "swells and swaggies" however fast they arrived.

* * *

The struggle for a railway was politics as well as pioneering, and there are no politics on this page. But it fills forty pages, and will interest those who follow such controversies even when the dust of them has been laid — though laying dust does not interest Mr. Vaile so much as stirring it up. His excuse is his settled conviction that although there are "many hard-working conscientious, able and often underpaid men in the higher ranks of the Civil Service," there are far too many who justify the jibe of Mr. Punch:

*There are who in the calm retreat
Of some Department daily gather round
and bleat
Of art or scandal till it's time to eat:
Return at three and write "Dear Sir,
Yours of last year to hand and noted."
And then — disappear.*

In general, however, this is the story of Mr. Vaile's work and not an exposition of his views. Thirty-two years ago, when he was "just on forty years of age, stood five feet four inches, and weighed about nine stone," he decided to be a pioneer. Friends laughed and enemies jeered. There could be two questions only: (1) How long would he last? and (2) Who would get him first — the Official Assignee or two doctors? "Broadlands" and this book are the answers.

—Piri Piri

MEET MOTHER EWE



*You, standing there.
Your ridiculous fringe and inhibitive air,
Your four legs set out like a toy lamb on wheels
And a miniature "You" bleating "Baa" at your heels.
This pathway's for me as well as for you,
So please let me pass and make way "Mother Ewe."*

*You, chewing there,
With your hooft dug in deep, and your obstinate
stare.
Do you know how you rank in a chaotic world
Where battles are raging and flags are unfurled?
In your way you're as great as dictator or king,
In your humble estate where no plaudits ring.*

*All the warmth that we know,
The protection from blast and blizzard, and snow,
The blankets and woollies, the stocking and vest,
The top coat and cardigan, and all the rest,
You stand for our comfort the cold winter through,
For us you produce and are fleeced, Mother Ewe.*

*All this in review,
You may pass, Mother Ewe.*

Ruthyn