

HE MET US FIRST IN ICELAND

IT sounded odd, and almost absurd, when a U.S. Marine who visited our office the other day told us that the first New Zealander he ever saw dropped out of the sky in Iceland. But it was true. The Marines, it will be remembered, "took over" in Iceland from a British division, and although the man who visited us had seen a good deal of the world by that time, he had never seen a New Zealander. He was a little surprised to discover that the New Zealanders were in many ways more like the people of Iceland than the Americans themselves were.

Now that he knows us better that first impression remains. The typical Icelfander is fair, and a little reserved. So, he thinks, we are. Icelfanders know a good deal about volcanoes and hot springs, as we do. They read a good deal, as he thinks we do, and they are a very old and very determined democracy.

Oddly enough, he did not find Iceland particularly cold. "It is bleak," he told us, "and it knows how to blow, but I have seen worse snow blizzards in our Central States."

He agreed, of course, that it "knows how to blow" in New Zealand, too, and especially in Wellington, but "we get winds here," he explained, "and up there we got gales." And when with the gales there came weeks of semi-darkness, it was not easy to pretend that Iceland was "a pleasant station."

There were, however, many compensations. So far as he was concerned himself, his stand-by off duty was the films. "Yes, they have the same films as you have, or nearly the same, and about the same grade of theatres in the capital. Reykjavik is a modern city—small, but up-to-date. There are no

trams, but the buses are all right, and when we were there petrol was plentiful. I suppose they are rationed now. The kroner was worth about as much as your shilling, and the food in the eating-houses was good for those who can eat plenty of mutton and plenty of fish. There was even fruit, but it was, of course, imported, and dear."

"So it was after all not such a change to come to New Zealand as most New Zealanders would expect?"

"Oh, it was a change all right, and a very pleasant one, but some things were the same. The biggest change was your sunlight, and after that your trees. There are no trees at all in Iceland, and during the winter there is no more light in the daytime than you have at present about seven or seven-thirty at night. We started work about nine or nine-thirty, and stopped about three or three-thirty."

"And then did what? Went to continuous pictures, perhaps, or to dance halls?"

"We went to pictures when we could get to the city, and we danced, too. But we did not dance in dance-halls. The Icelfanders don't have them. I think they disapprove of them, as they disapprove of men and women walking together in the street."

"That must have been hard on the Marines."

"Well, we broke it down a little. But it is a fact that you never see Icelfanders walking in couples. You see a man followed at a short interval by a woman, but not side by side, and never in any circumstances arm in arm. However, they are kind and friendly when they get to know you, but this little country will do me."

Dual Personality Man

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HENRY RUDOLPH

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