

# The Man From Waggoners' Bend

WHEN Temple Sutherland, the author of *The Golden Bush*, was passing through Wellington the other day on his way home to Nelson, *The Listener* asked him for a few details of his past life to fill in the background of his story of gold prospecting and deerstalking in the bush behind Murchison during the 1930s. Readings from the book describing these adventurous years are at present being heard from 2XN.

Mr. Sutherland is a big, solid Scotsman who has been in New Zealand for nearly 30 years. For such a big man he is very quietly spoken, so that you have to listen carefully to catch what he is saying. He said that he was the "black sheep" of a Scottish medical family. Most of his relatives were doctors. His father was Professor of Pathology at the University of St. Andrews, and his mother was the daughter of a physician to Queen Victoria. He himself had emigrated to New Zealand in 1925 to try his luck on the land.

"I was 18 when I came out here," he said. "And I was very green. No tenderfoot was greener than I." He said that he went to Northland and worked for two and a half years on a mixed farm near Ruawai, on the Northern Wairoa.

The farm he worked on was in the gum country, and was considered pretty poor land in those days. The farmer paid him "fifteen bob a week and tucker."

After this he went to work on a Wairarapa sheep station. Then in the King Country he "looked after a place" in the Te Maire Valley for a while. He used to take one of Hatrick's steamboats down the Wanganui River from Taumarunui to this farm. The district was isolated and the farm itself "very rough," running sheep and cattle.

"But I liked it very much," Mr. Sutherland said. "I found there that I liked solitude, and I would have been quite happy to have stayed there indefinitely." However, I soon went north again. I became interested in transport, and began working as a driver on a public works job. Later I worked as an owner-driver in Ruawai, and I remained in the north until the Murchison earthquake in June, 1929, when I decided to get a job down there to help in the reconstruction. While I was in Murchison I got married, and it is more or less at that point that my book begins."

Listeners who have read Mr. Sutherland's book or heard the first of the broadcast readings from it will recall that his story opens with a description of life at "Waggoners' Bend," a small

imaginary township near Murchison on the Buller River. Mr. Sutherland said that he was astonished at the book's success, which he attributed to good luck rather than any special quality in the writing. He did say, however, that he thought there existed in New Zealand a great amount of untouched material in small backblocks communities for any number of books of the same kind as *The Golden Bush*.

He said he was at present on his way home from a journey to some of the places in the King Country and North Auckland where he had lived and worked in the 'twenties. He hoped to be able to write a second book about his youthful experiences there, although he didn't know whether he would be able to repeat the success of his first one.

"I think I might have an advantage over native-



Spencer Digby photograph

TEMPLE SUTHERLAND

"No tenderfoot was greener than I"

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