

Green to Sunburned Brown

GREEN KIWI, by Temple Sutherland; Michael Joseph, London, Whitcombe and Tombs, Australia and New Zealand, 15s.

(Reviewed by Roderick Finlayson)

THIS is a very readable account of how the author, a young Scot, broke away from the family tradition of a medical career and, for no very definite reason except that he knew an old sailor who spoke well of New Zealand, emigrated to this country in the decade before World War II. His first job was on a farm at Ruawai. His employer rather appropriately was a son of Waipu Scottish pioneers. But all here was very different from what little he had seen of farming in Scotland.

At Ruawai he learned not only how to handle cattle and sheep, but also the art of the bushman, and how rough country is best cleared and broken in. Within a year the young Scot became a real Kiwi if still a rather shy and green one. In a bush where he bached and worked with Maoris and came to understand them better than most old New Zealanders do. Indeed, he soon knew as much about the district and its history as any of the oldest residents, and more than some.

It is this combination of a quick grasp of this country's methods and traditions



Spencer Digby photograph
TEMPLE SUTHERLAND
Near enough was dead right

and the keen eye of a humorous and intelligent new arrival that gives us a far fresher picture, and I would even say a far truer picture of New Zealand than is to be found in many books written by New Zealanders. This boy in his mid-teens came here expecting

and hoping in a romantic way that everything would be different from life at home, and he was not disappointed. He mentions that when he first heard a born New Zealander speak of Home it struck him as very strange.

His own first sight of our countryside, glimpsed in the dawn after he had been put ashore alone at Ruawai by the little river steamer, was of a hitching rail and the word "saloon" (it was only a billiard saloon) painted on the weatherboards beyond. The hitching rails and the saloon seemed to him symbolic of the country. And who will say that those symbols—even though they were a mixture of fancy and fact—are not truer than the exile oaks of those who see only an imitation England? It was only later and in a different part of the country that young Sutherland saw farmland that somewhat reminded him of English countryside.

With the same freshness of outlook and natural humour, Mr. Sutherland writes of "all sorts of diverting new experiences to enjoy and interesting new words and usages to master." He tells a good story to illustrate the New Zealand philosophy of "near enough" which, the new generation should remember, was to begin with a laconic way of saying "dead right." This is a grand book for all New Zealanders, old and new.

After his first two years at Ruawai Mr. Sutherland travelled south, working, observing, learning. On the way he gives us a vivid picture of that New Zealand character, the man alone, the

backblock hermit who moves ever farther beyond the bush frontier as civilisation in the form of a clay road and a settler or two advances. But above all this is the story of Temple Sutherland himself, the likeable young Scot with the huge appetite, his problems and adventures. The fact that after mastering all kinds of farm work he became a truck driver, one of a gang of men "as crazy as a two bob watch," may prove the attainment of his true Kiwihood. And there was a spot of gold-seeking to follow. Anyway, we leave him a far from green Kiwi.

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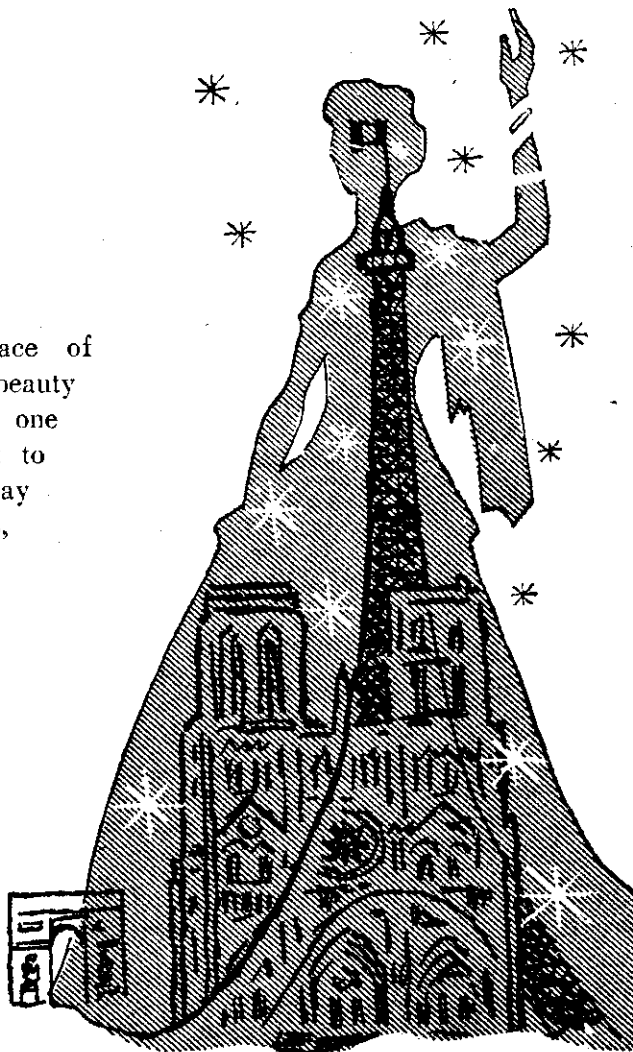
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