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Dear Aunt Daisy,

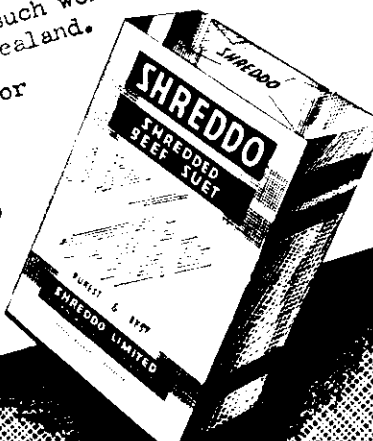
It is with pleasure that we learn that you are shortly celebrating your twenty-first year of broadcasting.

This is indeed a meritorious achievement and as one of the original members of your session we would like to congratulate you on this wonderful effort.

We sincerely trust you will be spared for many years yet to continue conducting this session, which brings such wonderful news to Women throughout New Zealand.

Best wishes for further success.

SHREDDO LIMITED




AT CENTRAL SCHOOL, New Plymouth, little Daisy Taylor (in circle) first learned to mix with wild New Zealanders.

The Aunt Daisy Story

(continued from page 12)

to Wellington on August 13, 1891. At Wellington they embarked in a smaller vessel, the *Gairloch*, for New Plymouth. Mrs Taylor had decided to settle there because she had friends in the district. By this time the Freelings, from Bishop's Stortford, had taken up a farm at Waitara, 14 miles distant.

"Our first impressions of New Zealand were wonderful," says Aunt Daisy. "We thought it was marvellous to walk along grassy paths lined with ferns and geraniums. And there were arum lilies down the gullies, growing wild! We'd never before seen more than five or six together—all hothouse.

"The people were very kind, but what struck us most was the way they made tea and had it with their meals—even when there was meat! Perhaps it was because water had to be boiled always.

"And everybody was asking you to meals—and there were tables spread with scones—always scones—everybody made batches of scones every day. And there was always sponge cake—that's the New Zealand national cake—great hunks of sponge cake with cream in the middle."

Already the colony had developed a dialect of its own. Aunt Daisy can remember Mr Dempsey, headmaster of the New Plymouth Central School, and a Belfast man, lecturing his pupils: "Don't say 'daown taown'! It's two one-syllable words, 'down town'." Having never pronounced it any other way, Daisy found difficulty in seeing what he was driving at.

But if the locals puzzled her, the precise, well-spoken, London-bred Daisy caused no little stir among the locals. "They pulled my leg," she says, "and I didn't even know what leg-pulling was. I thought it was asking a lot of silly questions. They were really taking me off all the time. I spoke very precisely and was very particular. New Plymouth was quite countrified then, and they were real country children."

DAISY discovered also that the Victorian principle that children be seen and not heard did not apply in the colonies. At the Central School she made friends with Gertie Rickerby,

daughter of the Governor of the jail, and she soon discovered that at home Gertie was the governor. Gertie was a sweet and gentle girl, but any request by her was greeted by a solicitous mother with "Whatever you would like to have, Gertie, dear. You know you have only to ask and you can have anything you would like. You have only to ask, Gertie, dear." Daisy listened fascinated. How strangely people behaved on this outer edge of civilisation! At home she treated her mother and sister to an exact mimicry of the incident. They too marvelled, and "Whatever you would like to have, Gertie, dear," became a family saying in the Taylor household.

Arriving at New Plymouth, the family had as a matter of course joined the congregation of the Church of St Mary. For New Zealand, it was an old and historic place. White settlers had taken refuge there during the Maori wars. Elizabeth Taylor and her children heard of this and reacted accordingly. "My mother was terrified," says Aunt Daisy. "We used to go for long walks up the old Hospital Road, and sometimes we'd meet some Maoris. They were perfectly harmless, sensible Maoris, of course, walking along with flax kits and ferns to trade for clothes in town. But we used to huddle together in fright."

School, at first, was frightening, too. The young English girl found it hard to mix without formality with "all those wild New Zealanders." The atmosphere was quite different from the calm and regulated order of the Academy for Young Ladies. Here, too, there were boys, a hearty, rough-spoken lot. Daisy heard their precise, Irish headmaster correcting them: "Now, boys, I was walking along the other day and I heard one of you boys—one of you—say something about a 'bloke.' A bloke! You know, that's not a very gentlemanly word—to call a man a 'bloke.'"

BUT the adaptable Daisy soon settled in, and school became an endless source of material for high-spirited play acting and mimicry. She got her comeuppance one day while satirising for a group of school-fellows the headmaster's own rendition of *The Charge of the Light Brigade*. "Flashed all their sabres bare!" she declaimed. "Flashed as they turned in air! Sabring the gunners there; charging an army—while all the world wondered!"

N.Z. LISTENER, AUGUST 9, 1957.

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