

Thames is a friendly place. Hunto's welcome gave quite the wrong impression. And it's a happy place. The even quietness of that town would not easily be disturbed. Once the townspeople and the boot-repairer had differences of opinion about prices and quality and the like. But there were no black looks or angry words. There was little said at all: the young men of the town simply didn't wear any shoes or boots for a week. It was summer and they padded round the streets with feet bare. The hot pavements made no difference. On Saturday night they dressed with usual care for the pictures; navy blue suits were as neatly pressed, white collars as stiffly starched, hair as carefully brushed. But the ban, this movement of protest, had not been lifted, they went to the pictures without shoes. It wasn't long after that the shoe-repairer left the town.

One small boat, two men, a few hours, two hundred and fifty-four dozen snapper. Estimated return—£80. Not a bad day's fishing, and with £80 in their pockets they wouldn't mind if the catch the next day wasn't as large. It's a pile of fish, but the Firth of Thames can spare them; these days, especially, the public can use them. It's one of the profitable industries of Thames.

Three freezing companies make a lot of ice, work hours of overtime. The labels on the crates in their packing-rooms surprise you: all over the North Island down to Wellington orders are regularly sent. That packing is simple enough. The fish are taken from the cooler, cleaned, weighed, and flopped into the boxes. A thick slab of ice is broken over the top. Four smacks of a hammer, the lid is on. She's all set to go.

Many of the trawlers of the peacetime fishing fleet have been serving since the war as mine-sweepers. That explains the general shortage of fish in city shops; it explains why crates from Thames have labels for places so far away. These days the price of nets is high, the cost of running and manning a boat is high,

but the price of fish is high, too. Returns are good. Snapper in the winter, snapper and flounder in the summer—they make the main catches. Crayfish and sharks are good side lines (these sharks do make holes in the fishermen's nets, but not their pockets: the new industry in New Zealand of processing fish oil has made the price for shark livers high enough for the net-mending not to matter so much).

If you don't wish to be bitten by more than Hunto there's one thing in Thames to be careful about, not to be too curious over. It's the Thames deep-water harbour. They spent £66,000; they built a new wharf, approaches to that wharf, a railway siding, tide walls, they dredged and they dredged. They did everything, in fact, but get a deep-water harbour, even a shallow-water harbour. Unexpected difficulties came to light from that sea. The scheme had to be completely abandoned. But the money had been spent. It's a sore point. Now they haven't a harbour at all except for the small wharf on the river where the scows and fishing-boats slip in over the mud with the 5 ft. of water at high tide.

Three days it's been since we came with the scow "Pono" out of the night to find Thames sleeping in the grey light.

It's been pleasant, it's been interesting, we've liked the peace and quiet of the sunshine, the people, the way they live. There may still be gold in those rugged hills, but the brightness of colour that we see is the hot flame of gorse—gorse which has been spreading dangerously since the wild goats have been shot from those hills. It's a nuisance, but it's beautiful. One day we'll come back to Thames. There's a lot we haven't seen, a lot we want to do. And from that little town nothing could be better than taking one of those horses from the hills to see some more of the Coromandel Peninsula. Cabbage Bay, Guntown, Slipper Island, Shoe Island, Kikowhakarere Bay, Castle Rock—we want to make sure that those names on the map are as attractive as they sound.

