

contrast. Viewed from the peacetime sophistication of city life, even the halcyon days were nothing to wonder at. But life in the field brought with it a compensation. Complex desires and needs were sloughed away, and one rediscovered the joys of simple things. A day on the beach, a swim in a river, the chance encounter with a friend long unseen; these things and others like them brought a sparkle to one's day.

And so, as I shiver a little in battle-dress, I sometimes wish, a trifle guiltily perhaps, for some of that heat I once cursed. I can't really remember so vividly the sting of the mosquito and the bite of the ant, though such things were very real and it was an enormous relief to leave them behind. If the "tactical situation," that all-enveloping, all-excusing military phrase, demanded that we camp in a patch of scrub infested with mosquitoes, it is hardly fair to judge the country on that. A stranger dumped from a ship at Napier, whirled by truck to Taupo's side, and there left to live in a tent could be forgiven for considering New Zealand a bleak, desolate waste. A sense of proportion is valuable.

Here are my memories of bygone scenes. The flamboyants in bloom in Noumea's main square, the natives sleeping on benches or leaning against the trunks of the trees and only alien traffic shattered the hush of siesta hour; evening service at the Protestant church, and a French choir singing Gounod's "Ave Maria." The view across the harbour at midday from the steps of the Roman Catholic cathedral. Sunday afternoon at Anse Vata with French paterfamilias and his brood in gay swimsuits, enjoying the warm tropic water, there clear and deep. My mind's eye roves and I see myself, with my fluent but erratic, and I fear sometimes inaccurate, French, trying to buy in Noumea's largest store the ingredients for home-brewed beer. Finally

two customers who had overheard my request joined in, trying to help, and so three Frenchmen and a lone Kiwi discussed the topic of beer from all angles, and finally, with sad shakes of the head, as though in our opinion the world had taken a turn for the worse, agreed that the ingredients did not exist. Perhaps I am wrong, and they were deploring my barbaric quest for beer when there was wine to hand, strictly unofficially, of course.

After the glare and dust of day, the cool of evening and a group of farm buildings on a ridge, black against the sunset.

On the top of Bourail Pass in the early hours of the morning with mist filling all the valleys and making the tops of the hills dark green islands under a full moon; and the pass by day as you came round the bend travelling southwards and saw before you the rolling tree-clad hills and valleys, the green of the sea close to shore, the coral reef with a lacy white foam frothing its seaward side, and beyond the deep blue of the broad Pacific; that will live till memory itself fails. To stand in the New Zealand cemetery at Bourail and look over wide plains to the distant hills standing jaggedly under a yellow tropic moon and think of the men at your feet who had looked their last at beauty; such will not fade.

And last a homely memory of comradely evenings. Two in a tent, the mosquitoes defied, and supper of French bread, moist and yeasty, tinned Australian butter, and herrings, a bottle of red wine, by a flickering candle: talk that got to essentials and made a link between two men that will last: final cigarettes and, with a sigh, clothes doffed and a dive under the mosquito net.

These are the memories I shall treasure. These are the things that will take me back.

