AEWS BACKGROUND BULLETIN VOL 3 NO 4

KORERO

VOL. 3, No. 4 MARCH 26, 1945

KORERO

IN THIS ISSUE

Contributions to Korero

You are reminded that a maximum sum of £3, payable in canteen orders where there are canteens under New Zealand control and in cash where there are not, will be divided among contributors in each issue. It is necessary, therefore, that all contributors should send us number, name, and full address. Remember, too, that articles are not the only contributions we are looking for. We would like to see also short paragraphs, black and white drawings, and verse. There is space, too, for your comments and inquiries, provided you keep them short. The address is: "D.A.E.W.S., Army H.Q., Wellington." Mark your envelopes *Korero* in the corner.

MOUNT COOK DISTRICT

A KORERO Report

IF YOU were to travel in an aeroplane from North Cape to Bluff on a clear day, the most impressive natural feature of the land you would see would probably be the central region of the Southern Alps. Here, in a compact group roughly a hundred miles due west of Christchurch and not far from the other side of the South Island, stand seventeen ice-clad mountains towering to more than 10,000 ft. This is the Mount Cook district. It has interesting post-war possibilities. With transport and accommodation problems solved, it could well become the snow-sports playground of the South Pacific. For nowhere else on this side of the Southern Hemisphere is there snow in such quantity for round-the-year ski-ing; or peaks more likely to delight the mountaineer; or alpine scenery—glaciers, icefalls, and lofty summits—more likely to charm the tourist's eye.

Certainly this is looking ahead. So is that aeroplane ride from North Cape to Bluff, these days. Just the same, an aeroplane is the thing for sight-seeing here. Fantasy should be proper for the fantastic, so let's invent ourselves a new kind of magic carpet which needs no fuel and ignores down-draughts. It will be ideal for a kea's-eye view of this incredible country.

First, we'll cruise over the lonely ocean off the coast of South Westland. From here these mountains seem to rise almost sheer from the sea. A coastal belt of darkly forested land, seamed vertically by the gleaming ice of the Franz Josef and Fox Glaciers flowing down for thousands of feet almost to sea-level; above them the great snowfields, measured by the square mile; above the snowfields the high peaks topped by the shimmering beauty of Mount Tasman (11,475 ft.) and the rugged grandeur of Mount Cook (12,349 ft.). A tremendous picture, this, twenty miles long and over two miles high. It earns a place among the scenic wonders of the world.

Now for a closer look. Turn inland, and soon the Franz Josef is beneath, to the left; the Fox, to the right. You wonder where all that ice comes from, and the answer is right ahead. Ice comes from snow, and here, above the glaciers, lie the snowfields, on a shoulder of the range at least twelve miles long and in most places not less than three miles wide. From the air this great expanse of snow looks almost flat, but in reality it reaches up in places to nearly 9,000 ft., while the lower fringes extend down to 5,000 ft. If you were a skier you would be tempted to parachute down with a pair of "sticks," for the ski-ing looks good. Plenty of undulating slopes; above all, plenty of snow—miles of it.

The high peaks are close now: Douglas on the left, Torres on the right, Tasman ahead. The Fox Snowfield pushes snow fingers high into the rock cliffs. At the top of one of these fingers lies Pioneer

Looking up at Mount Tasman from the West. The peak of Mount Cook, which is not on the Main Divide, is showing over the right shoulder of Tasman.

Pass, occasionally crossed by venturesome mountaineers. From the west you wonder why only occasionally. The approach looks easy—and it is easy. But wait until you cross into Canterbury and the difficulties show.

An understandable misconception exists about the sectional topography of this region. Probably the glaciers are responsible. On the east side of the range the main glaciers are rivers of ice ; on the west, waterfalls. This gives the impression to many that the east slopes are gradual ; the west, abrupt. A mountaineer attempting a crossing soon learns that the reverse is the case. He will find that his pass is easy to reach from the west. It is when he steps from Westland into Canterbury that his troubles start. From the top of Pioneer Pass the Tasman Glacier is not far away, but it is a long way down.

No trouble to your magic carpet, of course. Over the divide and out into the blue 5,000 ft. above what looks like a big white road. It is New Zealand's longest glacier—the Tasman, eighteen miles long and a mile wide. Notice that it doesn't flow *away* from the chain of high peaks ; it flows parallel with them, taking tribute from each in turn ; a gutter with a mighty high kerbing. At the head of the glacier stands Elie de Beaumont, most northerly of the "thousanders." Not for nothing is it called the beautiful mountain. Here the glacier has its source, to flow south past the Minarets, de la Beche, Malte Brun, Douglas, Haidinger, and Haast.

And now another phenomenon is evident. While the glacier is descending to lower levels, the mountains alongside, conversely, rise to greater heights. A mile below Pioneer Pass the famous Hochstetter Icefall comes into view. It is a masterpiece among Nature's works in ice—3,000 ft. of crystal chaos framed by mountains gone superlative in grandeur. Here, within a three-mile triangle, there is more mountain in less space than you have seen before. This is the view : at 4,000 ft. the Hochstetter joins the Tasman. Let the eye climb where no man has dared climb, up the cascade of tortured ice to the Grand Plateau. This is a shelf about a mile wide, lying at 8,000 ft. Beyond, the scenery climbs up rock rampart and hanging ice to the summits of Cook, Dampier, Silberhorn, Tasman, and Lendenfeld, standing sharp against the sky. All this, and almost heaven too, in three miles.

Cook is like an outsize tent, badly put up, with a slope in the lofty ridge pole. The mountain spreads her solid mantle on the floor of the Tasman Valley at 3,500 ft., where the impudent Ball Hut road winds among the moraines. This eastern face, a mile and a half from top to bottom, will make your magic carpet look like a moth against a skyscraper. If you linger now, it will be to take a last look at Mount Tasman.

When the sun is right, just after midday, the east face of Tasman has all the superlatives floored. It is like the draped, shadow-lit curtain at the movie theatre, only this curtain is 3,000 ft. high and a mile wide, and the drapings are of ice. The sun lights each bulge, each fluting, and throws shadows down the face. This is the queen of snow peaks—hardly a rock shows. Climbers go up and come down, and touch no rock all day. Occa-

sionally avalanches thunder down to the plateau. On a hot day the face glows wetly.

There are other valleys and other peaks, but we have seen the best. Perhaps by now you think you have seen enough. Perhaps you're worried about this magic-carpet business—certainly it would be too bad if it was to fade away and leave you here in the white wilderness. No comfortable hotels up here.

Sing of peaks that through the cloudlands burst,
And bars below for climbers with a thirst.

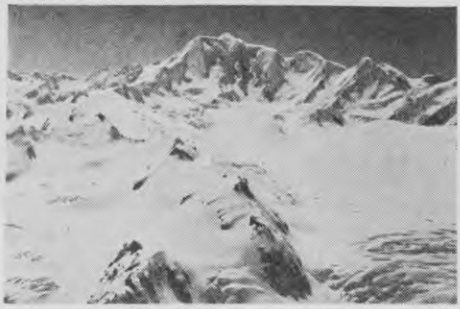
A visitor wrote this in one of the huts in the Tasman Valley, but the nearest bar is much farther away than the nearest peak.

At present, accommodation for those who come to this region is limited to hotels far below the snow-level, and a variety of huts built primarily to shelter mountaineers. The Haast Hut, at 6,800 ft., on the ridge close to the Hochstetter Icefall, is typical. It is perhaps 30 ft. by 12 ft., contains simple bunks for tired bodies, a rough table, a cupboard, and a kerosene cooker. It is difficult to reach, as are any of the high huts. In winter it is covered completely with snow. Every board and every sheet of iron for its construction was carried to the site on the sweating backs of men. Obviously the problem of adequate accommodation above the snowline cannot be solved until transport has received some attention.

Rock climbing above the Tasman Glacier.

Ice pinnacles on the Fox Glacier.

Before the war, plans were under consideration for the construction of cable-car runways to the permanent snowfields above the Franz Josef Glacier and on the Sealy Range near the Hermitage, in the Hooker Valley at Mount Cook. These developments were to cater mainly for the growing popularity of ski-ing. Where the cable car stopped, no doubt a hotel would be built, and later a ski-hoist, that admirable contraption which takes the hard work out of ski-ing. It is reasonable to expect that these projects will be resumed as soon as possible after the war. The growth of air travel should place this remote area with a few hours of any part of New Zealand and within half a day of Australia, where, in spite of very definite limitations, ski-ing has many devotees. There are airfields already in the Tasman Valley and on the Coast. With the development of air transport, cable-car ways, ski-hoists, and modern hotels near the snow, this district would have everything required to make it the year-round mecca of those who take their recreation on wood along the snow.



Mount Elie de Beaumont.

In spite of the handicaps which present conditions impose, ski-ing has made remarkable progress in New Zealand over the last fifteen years. It is a sport which is growing in popularity all over the world. In this country there have been many obstacles. Most good ski-ing snow lies above 6,000 ft. Most mechanical transport ends at 3,000 ft. or less. The difference has been enough to take the edge off all but the hardiest enthusiasts. In many districts, especially in the North Island, the sport is restricted to wintertime, when days are short and temperatures chilly. Yet, in spite of these obstacles, the game has gone ahead. There is no doubt that it will continue to do so. Even war itself has added to the numbers—many of our servicemen overseas have been taught to ski as part of their training, and others who have been in places like Canada have picked up a rudimentary knowledge of the art during their stay there.

Weather has been a difficulty always, and there is no way of changing that. Storms come and go—if they didn't, there would be no snow to ski on. The only thing that can be done about the weather is to make any enforced idleness bearable with counter-attractions. A hotel has several advantages in this respect over a hut. More rapid transport, however, and a keen eye for weather forecasts, would assist week-enders to select the right time for a couple of days with the "sticks."

The day may yet come when the high snows of the Southern Alps see hundreds of mountaineers, skiers, and tourists climbing, playing, or just drinking in the scenery among the imcomparable peaks and on the broad snows of this fascinating region, for a week-end or a week. It's a healthy life, and a grand holiday. With ski on your feet, say the experts, you can enjoy the most thrilling form of locomotion known to man. Personally, we're not experts. The most thrilling manœuvre we can do is the *sitzmark*, if you know what that is. But there will be time to learn in the days to come.

Looking up the Tasman Glacier towards the Minarets.

By CHARLES FRANCIS

WHEN THE Rehabilitation Officer says to me, "Would you like to be a shearer?" I know what I'm going to say. No, I won't be rude, I'll just look daggers at him. I can still smell them as I write.

I was floor boy; picked up fleeces, flung them on a table, dagged them, trimmed them, denecked them, rolled them up, then ran back for the next one that was always waiting for me; and in between whiles I swept the dung and off-cuts from the floor and gave a hand pressing the wool into bales. Maybe you wouldn't know what that means. Even if I told you we started at half past five in the morning, which is half-way through the night to most of you, you'd still say, "What's he moaning about?" I know, I was a townite once, one of those parasites on the community who think no more of fleecing the farmer than the farmer of fleecing his sheep.

Yes, the golden fleece—don't speak to me of the golden fleece again, it's certainly golden in places, nauseating places that have to be trimmed off with my hands. My hands—the things I use my hands for that once I would have taken a shovel to and gloves to the shovel. And when the eats arrive I have to put more jam on my scone to take away the taste of my fingerprints. And a piece of wool burns on my cigarette, and though the butt is long and cigarettes short I throw it disgustedly away.

Surely, with all these discoveries of ersatz stuff you read so much about in the latest digests, there should be no need for man to go on working like an animal to get his clothing. What are all those test-tube artists blabbing about if all their research just ends in interesting articles? Or is the whole idea a fake by the financiers to put fear into the farmers that their labours may be profitless and thus, when the farmers sell their wool, they're satisfied no matter what the price? Satisfied, I meant, relatively speaking, for a satisfied farmer would be just as big an oddity as a shearer who'd say "No, thank you," to a beer.

Then the tics, like beetles with the antics of a flea. You find them in your hair, in your shirt, in your pants—nothing sacred. And at night when you've washed away the dirt and most of the smell and you're sitting by the stove in your nice clean clothes—ouch, a tic, the blinking little beetle, or words to that effect—and you wonder where on earth or elsewhere he could have come from.

And the girl who lives on the farm just down the road—the girl whom you've been trying to meet a dozen times before—well, she comes to see how the shearing's going on and you strike a dominant pose while heaving on the baler, then some accursed shearer yells "Floor Boy!" (not very dignified), so you scoot along to where the fleece is lying on the floor, the very greasy floor, and one boot slides one

way and the other gets tangled in the wool and there you are sitting down just where the shearer wants to dump his next-to-be-shorn sheep, so you sheepishly gather yourself and the tangled fleece up and walk as calmly as possible back to the table, where you fling the wool so it falls exactly as it shouldn't. And looking towards the door you see the young woman laughing, curse her, and before you've dagged it, trimmed it, &c., &c., there's the next shearer singing out "Floor Boy!"

I could write more about it, but I'm trying to forget. There's the job of getting the last little bit of wool from what I'd swept into the corner as so much waste—but it's too sordid. There's the bruise on my leg where the sheep in its distress inadvertently kicked me. If it had felt like kicking any one, why me? I didn't want to assist in the shearing any more than it wanted to be shorn. It was just the sheep's kick against society, and I was the scapegoat.

And the pay! It's enough to live on if you're content to have nothing but something that fills to satisfy your hunger, nought but tea to satisfy your thirst, and nought but a tic in your bed. Anything else is beyond your means, it's not for you to hope for, you're but a farm hand and the meagre wages leave not a dime for fun.

They can say the life is healthier, living is cheaper, a woman likes a man who's tough—NO! — they'll have to spin a better yarn than that before they pull the wool over my eyes.

100 YEARS OF CHANGE

New Zealand's Vegetation

Condensed from "A Century's Change: Natural to Cultural Vegetation in New Zealand," by Kenneth B. Cumberland.

THE CHANGE from natural to cultural vegetation has taken twenty centuries in Europe and four in America. New Zealand has done the job in a hundred years, but this rapid change-over has only been achieved at the cost of irreparable damage to our agricultural resources. The basic causes of the injuries caused by thoughtless exploitation of the land are sketched in the following article.

This country before the Maori arrived in the fourteenth century was probably clothed entirely in forest. About 97,200 square miles of it. Until that time, no man or beast (save the moa) had been present to cause destruction. But by 1840 and the arrival of the pakeha, the area had dwindled to 53,000 miles, as a result, it is thought, of such natural agents as showers of volcanic ash and lava flows in the North Island and bush fires in the South. Other types of vegetation were bracken fern, tussock, and the high-altitude plants.

In 1840 all the districts with heavy rainfall were bush-clad, the vegetation varying so much that some parts could be

called subtropical, others subantarctic. Tussock occurred in the low-rainfall areas of Otago, Canterbury, and Marlborough, and on the porous pumice soils of the interior of the North Island. The bush was a dense rain-forest (except in the South, where the beech was dominant), and included a mass of tall timber trees, a tangle of medium-sized trees, looped lianas, massive parasites, and tree ferns, and a host of low ground plants. North Auckland had its typical taraire and kauri; but the main North Island forest was composed of the pine family—rimu, totara, matai, miro, and kahikatea—together with the tawa, kamahi, and rata.

In the South, these tall timber trees were largely replaced by the frost-resisting beech, though the subtropical and subantarctic zones dovetailed to a large extent. Beech were found in the Rimutaka, Tararuas, and Ruahines, and pines occurred as far south as Stewart Island. In general, however, the beech was confined to the steep alpine slopes, too dry and too high to support other vegetation. Even the beech gave way to the tussock in the lee of the Alps and over the plains of Central Otago, the Mackenzie country, and the Canterbury Plains. The line of contact between the tussock and forest was sharply defined, but never regular owing to the ups and downs of the country.

The earliest Europeans found more than half the South Island, or almost 25,000 square miles, a yellow-brown sea of tussock, extending from the east coast to the foothills up to about 4,000 ft. Low rain fall, wide temperature ranges, and dry winds encouraged it. The various kinds of tussock grasses had company in the tumatakuru, spear-grass, and gaunt cabbage-trees, while herbs, sedges, and grass sheltered in its shadow. This band of hardy plants reduced the effects of the wind, held the soil, and preserved the moisture in it. The land suffered no deterioration.

The Maoris, besides being few in numbers, employed a conservative agriculture. They had few cultivable crops, and the chief of these, the kumara, would grow well only in the North Island. They cleared patches of fern land and perhaps bush, and planted the kumara and taro, but their main food-supply came from the edible fruits and berries of the forest, from birds, and from the fish in the rivers, lakes, and sea. The forest of Tane was sacred and was preserved by a tapu stronger than our own laws.

Europeans, before 1840, destroyed all they touched. The seals were killed off, the cachalot whales decimated, kauris and kahikateas were exported as spars. The missionaries introduced the European system of cultivation. But no real disturbance of the land took place till the Wakefield plan of settlement took effect, with the foundation of Wellington, New Plymouth, Nelson, and Wanganui, together with the settlements in Otago and Canterbury. In 1853, inauguration of cheap land deals caused large-scale expansion of European influence, and with it the destruction of the native vegetation The land was sacrificed to the get-rich-quick greed of the squatter, the gold-miner, the sawmiller, and the "bonanza wheat" farmer. The South Island, carrying the least bush cover, was easier to exploit and so was the first to profit from the stimulus proffered by Australia at this time.

1851, gold in Australia. From all corners of the world men came to make their fortunes. But you can't eat gold. So other men became rich by selling food and clothing to the gold-diggers—wheat for bread, sheep for meat and wool. Runholders in the South Island waxed fat on the "golden fleece" and on the bonanza wheat.

Land—land—more land. Gradually the runs bit deeper till they licked at the feet of the Alps. But the tussock wasn't enough for even the hardy Merinos. "Burn the tussock—increase the flocks so that they will eat the tussock. The tussock is useless." But those bold pioneers didn't reflect that by shaving the tussock they bared the soil to the wind, and the soil reacts as a face would. It chaps—but flakes of skin become shingle slips and land slides; erosion licks his chops.

Until 1875 the South Island tussock plains were given over to sheep, but after that date the population increase due to the gold rushes and a new export trade to Australia rocketed the demand for

cash crops. Wheat became the mainstay of the small plains farmer—the tussock was ploughed in and crops were harvested year after year. As a result, soil fertility was drained away, yields declined, and the soil damage resulted. This is at the foot of many present-day problems. Gold did much for New Zealand. It conjured up population and capital. But it also left a trail of wanton destruction. Wherever the miners went with pick, sluice, and dredge, they left scars on the tortured earth, scars which breed slips and gullies to this day.

Sheep and gold weren't the only offenders. The " bush burn " farmer at least replaced the forest with grass. But the sawmiller left the land mutilated and dead. So, too, the gum-digger in the North Auckland district laid waste thousands of acres of the best timber-producing territory in New Zealand, and is largely responsible for the slow development of this district to-day.

The " bush burn " farmer in this period from 1875–90 devastated a far greater area than that touched by miller and digger—and with more ruinous effect. The process is still used in the remote backblocks: the large trees are felled, a " burn " reduces the whole area to a blackened wilderness, seed is then sown—grasses, clover, and perhaps mustard, rape, and turnips—and, the first green flame alight, sheep are turned in to tread down the seed-bed and chew out the bracken and second growth. Most of New Zealand's famous grass-lands have been brought into being by this brutal method.

In 1882 the first ship, weighted down with frozen mutton and lamb, arrived in the Thames estuary. By 1895 refrigeration had come to stay, and this practice opened a new field for agriculture. The small dairy-farmer took his place alongside the squatter, and for the first time the North Island exceeded the South in population. The new development affected the natural vegetation cover in various ways. Bush-burning and fern-crushing were extended, 14,000 square miles of forest being put to the fire, sometimes in places where soil stability seems impossible if the soil is not held together by forest. Swamp areas were drained and became some of the most productive land in the country—*e.g.*, the Hauraki - Piako lowland and the Manawatu-Horowhenua area. In the South Island a mixed arable economy flourished, with farms of moderate size, and shelter-belts and wind-breaks making a patchwork of the plains. In conjunction with this more intensive farming has come the practice of artificial fertilizing, which is doing much to restore the soil fertility lost in the old days.

To-day thirty-two million sheep and almost five million cattle browse where once was forest. From these, directly or indirectly, all New-Zealanders make their living.

In spite of the intensive development of the last hundred years, there are still three pioneer fringes against which the forces of civilization are steadily moving. In North Auckland the gum country is being reclaimed and grassed, though the struggle against the stiff clay soils is an uphill one. In the central North Island plateau, afforestation, tourist traffic—*e.g.*, Rotorua—and its development as a dairying area have done much to increase its population. In Westland a bitter struggle is being carried on against dense pine forest and the water-logged, sour soils. Timber-milling and beef-cattle raising are gradually opening up the country as far south as Jackson's Bay.

Having surveyed the natural vegetation, it now remains to look at the replacements man has made, and also to observe the way Nature is revolting against the change.

The vegetation covering the greatest area is grass-land, native and exotic; 17,000,000 acres are in artificially sown pasture and 14,000,000 acres in tussock. Together these make up almost half the total area of the Dominion. These grass-lands embrace several types.

The first class, the high-producing pastures for which New Zealand is famous, is comparatively limited. Usually they are reclaimed swamps and are consequently well watered, with mild winters. They are ideal for small dairy holdings aiming at butter, cheese, and domestic-milk production. Usually such farms are divided into small fields of rye-grass and white

clover, which are kept fertile by intensive grazing and the lavish use of artificial fertilizers. Such areas are the Manawatu and the Waikato district.

Good-quality pastures are more numerous. They occur in parts of North Auckland, in the coastal belt from New Plymouth to Otaki. In each area of this kind the grass differs due to cultural and soil factors, but cocksfoot is very common. Farming, too, is varied, with sheep as numerous as cattle. Fattening ewes and lambs is also important.

Most of the North Island and much of the South Island pastures fall into the third class, described as "surface-sown." A typical area is that from Palliser Bay to East Cape, which has been reclaimed from forest and scrub for sheep-station country. These pastures are produced either by disturbance of the original vegetation—*e.g.*, by fire—or by sowing. In time the sown types usually revert to a mixture of native and exotic grasses. This pasture is used for both sheep and cattle, and the holdings range from 1,500 acres to 8,000 acres.

In most cases this last type of pasture shows a gradual return to its original state. Erosion is common, and the original inhabitants, fern and scrub, creep back to such an extent that the annual rate of deterioration is almost 100,000 acres. In all, there are 4,500,000 acres of fern, scrub, and second growth, in which the deterioration is so great as to be a national problem. A few years ago this land was covered in forest: now it is a scene of desolation, slip scarred and scrub covered, with its population, both human and animal, being withdrawn. Parts of Hawke's Bay and the high-country tussock of the South Island are examples of this terrain, although the South Island, being originally tussock, has not suffered the same transformation as the northern areas. Overstocking, burning, and rabbits, however, have so depleted the tussock that erosion is rife.

Even to-day roughly 16 per cent. of the total area of New Zealand is under forest, two-thirds of which is in State control. Five hundred mills yearly cut out 30,000 acres, but the time is approaching when this wasteful "single crop" economy will be replaced by better methods. Unfortunately, much of the exotic forest is insignis pine situated in remote localities. It is of poor quality and mostly of one age class.

In the last twenty-five years several factors have been at work to change the agricultural position—*e.g.*, the large-scale export of apples, the trade in chilled beef, the export of pig meat, and the use of irrigation. It is safe to say that the area under pasture is now at a maximum, and the changes which will follow this war will probably be towards a decline from this point. It is by no means certain that we shall be able to rely to the same extent on our exports of butter, wool, frozen meat and, cheese as before. The threat of margarine and synthetic fibre is too real to be ignored. Thus, a diverse agriculture is indicated, practised in a declining area. At the same time, the abandonment of hill country useless as pasture would make possible an afforestation plan which would heal the soil scars of the North Island and possibly would help to prevent any further expansion of the South Island's rocky wastes. New Zealand must conserve her soil fertility and exploit to the full the natural advantages which are hers.

WILLIAM WEBSTER DEALER IN LAND

BY R M BURDON

WHEN ADAM SMITH, founder of the science of political economy, asserted that " The engrossing of uncultivated land was the greatest obstruction to its improvement," he pointed out at the same time that although the practice had been more restrained in the English colonies than in any other, it had by no means been prevented altogether. It certainly had not. The colonizing of Australia was a case in point—a case which set reformers such as Gibbon Wakefield striving to get some formula adopted by which the new world settlements, those of New Zealand in particular, might be spared the evils of unlimited aggregation of land by individuals.

For many reasons the problem was not an easy one to solve. Viewed from one aspect alone, there was a certain fascination, quite apart from the mere making of money, in becoming the proprietor of a great estate, which appealed irresistably to adventurers of all kinds. Among all nations from time immemorial the owning of land has been closely bound up with the aristocratic principle. Broad acres confer on their proprietors a respectability that cannot be so easily earned by wealth invested in other securities.

It is therefore scarcely to be wondered at that many of the new arrivals in the sparsely populated, freshly discovered countries of the Pacific had visions of themselves as founders of a new landed aristocracy based on the European model.

These visions, although inimical to the best principle of colonization, had nothing even faintly immoral about them in the eyes of our grandfathers, who saw more virtue than we do in the making of a fortune. Even to-day, when ideas on the subject have changed, one is willing to extend a measure of sympathy to the adventurer wishing to become a *bona fide* landowner, but one has nothing to say in favour of a land grabber like William Webster, a man with no idea other than that of enriching himself by speculation.

Webster made his appearance on the New Zealand coast in the year 1835, soon after which he established a trading-station at Coromandel, where he claimed to have bought land from the Maoris. Later on he established a shipyard, where he built small vessels fit for entering shallow bays and sailing up rivers. In course of time he formed other trading-stations, and sometimes found it convenient to buy the land on which they were situated, but for the most part he seems only to have bought what was necessary for his purpose. In 1839, however, when rumours of British annexation were in the air, he began to speculate on the grand scale until at the time of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi he claimed to have acquired 250,000 acres from the Maoris.

Naturally he was much disturbed by Governor Hobson's Proclamation to the effect that no purchase of land would be looked upon as valid until confirmed by the Crown, especially as he was heavily in debt to certain merchants of Sydney, whose claims he hoped to settle by making over to them some of the land he had bought in New Zealand.

Now, Webster was a citizen of the British Empire, but at this crisis in his affairs he seems to have conceived the idea of extricating himself from his difficulties by becoming an American

citizen. What steps, if any, he took towards changing his nationality are not known, but in November, 1840, he wrote to the American Consul in Sydney, claiming to have bought 500,000 acres, for which he had paid 78,000 dollars, and expressing a fear that the British Government would take it all unless the United States Government would take the matter in hand. " They have not taken any of my lands as yet," he added, " but I expect they will take all from me, and every other American, unless our Government will take it in hand to stop it."

At the same time he sought to ingratiate himself with the authorities of his newly adopted country by offering to sell them the Great Barrier Island (which he claimed to have bought) for a very small sum.

Having thus set matters in train, he concluded that his presence in New Zealand, or, for that matter, in Australia, would be a hindrance to his plans. He went to Sydney, where he chartered a bark called the " Planter," intending to take a cargo to England, whence he hoped to proceed to America and ask the United States Government to support his land claims ; but his Sydney creditors, getting word of his intentions, had him imprisoned for debt.

On regaining his freedom early in 1841 he decided to make the best of a bad job and prefer his land claims before the New Zealand Commissioners. On receiving his letter announcing this intention, Willoughby Shortland, the Colonial Secretary, was puzzled by an allusion it contained to the American Consul at Sydney. Was the claimant a British or American subject ? Shortland wrote forthwith to inquire, explaining to Webster at the same time that he could not be both ; that if he chose to be the latter he must relinquish all the rights of a British subject, such as the ownership of a British vessel which he was understood to possess.

Till now Webster had not viewed the situation in this light. He found the question regarding his nationality so awkward that he did not answer it at all, but merely wrote saying that he was willing to take his chance with the others. The reply, however, was taken to mean that he would take his chance with the other British subjects ; and as Webster appeared in person to give evidence before the New Zealand Land Commissioners there seemed to be no doubt whatever that his meaning had been correctly interpreted.

The first Land Commission awarded Webster 7,540 acres, all of which he at once sold for 20s. an acre ; but shortly afterwards an Ordinance came into force forbidding any grant to be made of more than 2,560 acres. Webster's grant was accordingly reduced, and the people to whom he had sold his land as fast as he acquired it were left with nothing for their money.

By this time Governor Fitzroy had succeeded Governor Hobson. Fitzroy felt sorry for Webster—so sorry, indeed, that on this occasion, as on many others, he allowed his better instincts to get the better of him. By his order, the whole question of the awards was referred to a second commission, by which Webster was awarded 17,655 acres—12,655 to allow him to fulfil his obligations and 5,000 for himself—all of which he sold within four months. It is worthy of note that even at the end of these transactions he was still in debt to the Sydney merchants.

Fresh difficulties now arose. When Lord Stanley, Secretary of State for the Colonies, heard of Fitzroy's generosity he wrote condemning the augmented grants of land, but his letter was not received in New Zealand until three years after the grants had been made, and, incidentally, eighteen months after Fitzroy had been replaced. The situation was without remedy. Webster, having sold all his land, could not be expected to restore it. Worse still, it was now discovered that in many cases he had not fulfilled the conditions of sale with the Maori vendors, who refused to deliver up the land to the unfortunates who had bought it from him. In order to put them in possession, the discrepancies had to be made up by a grateful country. By this time Webster had seen fit to make himself scarce.

The years rolled by until in 1856 a Land Claims Settlement Act was passed by the New Zealand Parliament for the

purpose of clearing up the muddle that still existed. Yet another Commission was appointed, and Webster's affairs figured largely in its deliberations, when it was discovered that the 17,655 acres awarded him, on being properly surveyed, turned out to be no more than 11,506. Once again a grateful country had to step into the breach, and the difference between the two acreages was made up out of the Crown estate.

The Commission's work lasted several years, during which time Webster got word of its proceedings and decided that the hour had arrived to strike again. In 1858 he asked the United States Government to sponsor a claim on Her Majesty's Government for 6,500,000 dollars "for loss and damage and indemnity for lands purchased from chiefs of New Zealand from 1835 to 1840 . . . sequestered and taken from him by the British authorities." Neither then, nor later when he applied again in 1869, would the United States Government consent to take up his cause, but Webster never gave up hope. When in England in 1874 he placed his claim in the hands of a London lawyer named Duncan who reopened his case with the Colonial Office, but Duncan soon realized what kind of a man he had to deal with. "I regret," he afterwards wrote, "that, deceived by his specious manner and plausible story—as no doubt many others have been—I should have caused the Colonial Office of Her Majesty's Government the trouble of investigating his claims anew."

How Webster employed his time or earned his living during all these years I do not know, nor have I come across any personal description of him, but one may attempt some reconstruction of his character from the facts in official documents. The Webster type is no rare phenomenon. The man with a grievance grown into an obsession, insisting, like the Ancient Mariner, on telling his story to strangers in a hurry, boring his friends to tears with the latest news of that wonderful invention which no one will accept, that famous manuscript which all publishers refuse, that just claim which no Court will recognize—have we not all met this kind of person some time in our lives?

One may also assume that after a lifetime's practice Webster was an adept at the work to which he had devoted so much time and energy. He had become an expert claimer, and this fact may explain why the United States Government, after so many refusals, at length took up his case in 1887. Possibly the national prejudice was aroused by his assertion that the claim had always failed hitherto on account of his persistent refusal, in the face of all temptation, to relinquish his American citizenship. To his former claims had now been added a sum of more than half a million sterling representing interest on the capital due to him since 1840 at 4 per cent. per annum—the total mounted up to a truly noble figure. He affirmed that although his possessions in New Zealand prior to the Treaty of Waitangi had been worth £1,000,000, yet he had never received an acre of land out of all his vast purchases. In a certain manner of speaking this was true. The Senate, duly impressed, requested the President to take up the matter with Her Majesty's Government.

The rest of the story is a tale of the writing of many letters—of the destruction of paper on a vast scale. Official correspondence crossed the Atlantic, then the Pacific, then went backwards and forwards for many years across the two oceans just referred to. Webster got nothing more. One is inclined to speculate on the mental attitude he adopted towards his own claims. Had he come in the course of time to persuade himself that they were just? Did he ever really expect them to be granted at last? Or had he come to look upon the making of fantastic demands as a sort of art worthy of a lifetime's devotion? There is no answer to the question. All that is known is that he, an obscure and probably quite unworthy individual, troubled two great nations for many years by his fabrications, his perversions, his importunities. His life and his land claims appear to have expired simultaneously in the year 1895.

CROOK COMMUNICATION

In the November, 1944, and January, 1945, issues of *Korero* there are two articles, possibly written by the same person, which have caused me considerable trouble in endeavouring to find just what is meant by the writer.

The first article is entitled " Thames," and in it the writer has begun twenty-two sentences with the conjunctions " but," " and," or " or." I have always thought that it was incorrect to commence a sentence in such a manner, since a conjunction joins thoughts together. However, since *Korero* is issued by an Educational Service, I presume that this is now correct. There are eighteen groups of words which commence with a capital letter for the first word and have a full stop at the end of the last word, but I cannot find a verb amongst them.

I also find forty-two apostrophes have been used as contractions such as " it's," " we'll," and " don't." Are these contractions now accepted in prose ?

I wonder if " . . . they'll . . . fine you £25 as QUICK in Thames as anywhere " should not be " as QUICKLY in Thames."

Is there any meaning in the following : " Soon hurrying, calmer, slower, more carefully on its way," or was it put in for effect ? Has metal a " yellow value " ?

The whole article has been written in a most jerky manner which leaves me with mental hiccoughs. But don't worry. Water in a glass. Drink it slowly. It'll fix it.

Article number two is entitled " Fishing Boat ' Rex.' " This article is written in a similar manner, with frequent use of apostrophes as contractions and groups of words without verbs.

However, I read that the crew of the fishing boat " Rex " " gathered mussels and roasted crabs." I presume that these roasted crabs were roasted and left there by Captain Cook's men in 1777.

" The fishing boat ' Rex ' was looking for fish ; not fishing, but looking." What a clever boat. Will you please excuse a cheap pun ? Perhaps she was PROWling. The next sentence informs me that she was " looking for four days," so the fishing was a blind after all.

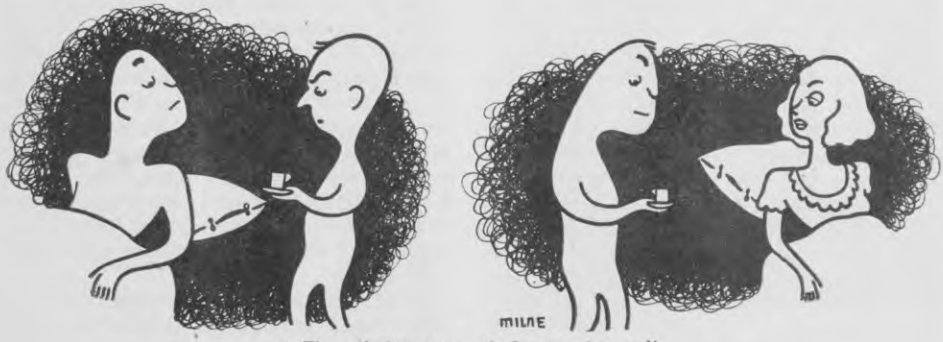
Later I read, " And ten minutes later we were eating blue cod for our lunch ; blue cod cooked in olive oil, with wedges of bread and huge pots of tea." Surely this is a new way to cook blue cod. Is the bread and tea put in with the olive oil, and when is the fish put in ? It reads like an Aunt Daisy recipe. Yes !

" They told us, with cups of tea and cigarettes . . . " is this a new sign language ?

I give it up. I cannot understand it. Can you ?

I have heard of English as she is spoke, but this must be English as she is wrote, or is it just cheap American journalism ?—

Grammar.



" The rehabilitation of Captain Brown."

Baring Head Light

A KORERO REPORT

"DEFENCE AREA. No admittance without authority." We opened the gate and climbed a steep hill to a plateau, bare and sea-encircled, over which the gravelled road dips and swings till it stops dead at a plantation. Inside the plantation there were two houses and a garage and several outhouses, set in gardens and rockeries. Outside, on the edge of a precipitous cliff, was the lighthouse. The whole picture was quite different from what we had expected.

Mind you, all lighthouses aren't like this one. If you want to know what lighthouses can be like, ask Mr. Rob. Wilson, former head keeper of Baring Head, who has been on most of the main stations of New Zealand. Mr. Wilson, who has spent thirty-eight years in the lighthouse service, is now retired, and is waiting at the lighthouse, as he says, "for his ship to float ashore." He explained his long service by his love of the sea, the same love which made him stow away aboard a barque as a boy of fourteen. Since then he has never left it.

Baring Head, said Mr. Wilson, as we sat in his brown panelled sitting-room, is the lighthouse-keeper's paradise. It is the show station of New Zealand. Not that other stations are as bad as many people imagine. The Marine Department, which is responsible for the coastal lights, has done its utmost to mitigate the hardships of the keeper's life. All lighthouses now have a fortnightly mail, and are connected to the outside world by line or radio telephone. All are furnished with comfortable dwellings which possess the main amenities, while fuel and lighting is provided. Most stations have local areas of land on which the keeper can keep enough stock to give him fresh meat and milk. Children are taught by the Correspondence School, when there is no other school available, and for recreation there is a circulating library and wireless provided.

Nevertheless, Baring Head has none of the inconveniences associated with other lights. The keeper and his wife don't have to be taken up in a basket by a derrick, as they do at the Stephen Island block in Cook Strait, in rough seas. Three men don't live alone for six months on end as at the Brothers. Baring Head, comparatively, is in the centre of a metropolis. It has a road out to civilization, regular stores and mails, snug houses, garage, cow-bail and workshop, good gardens, friends can come (with an authority), telephone, wireless—it seemed a fine life.

We heard the wind buffeting round the house like a young bull and singing in the struts of the radio pylons. It had torn

at our clothes and stung our faces. We thought that if we were lighthouse-keepers we might like to get out of the wind once in a while. Mr. Wilson said they didn't notice it. "Anyway, it's not half as bad as it was before I planted the trees." We had been surprised when we found this oasis of trees on what seemed a desolate headland. Mr. Wilson told us how he had ridden across from Pencarrow (where he was formerly head keeper), had surveyed the land (the gift of a settler), had procured hundreds of young firs, getting them landed on the beach, then had planted them in breakwinds. Now the station is a small herbarium, with pohutukawa, karo, the Chatham Islands akeake, taupata, and koromiko, together with flax from Pencarrow Head and ngaio from the Orongorongo Valley. He told us how ten years ago he had built up clumps of rocks which retained the moisture so that flowers could grow. We saw them: vermilion crassula, marigolds, ice-plant—and in between them good, green grass.

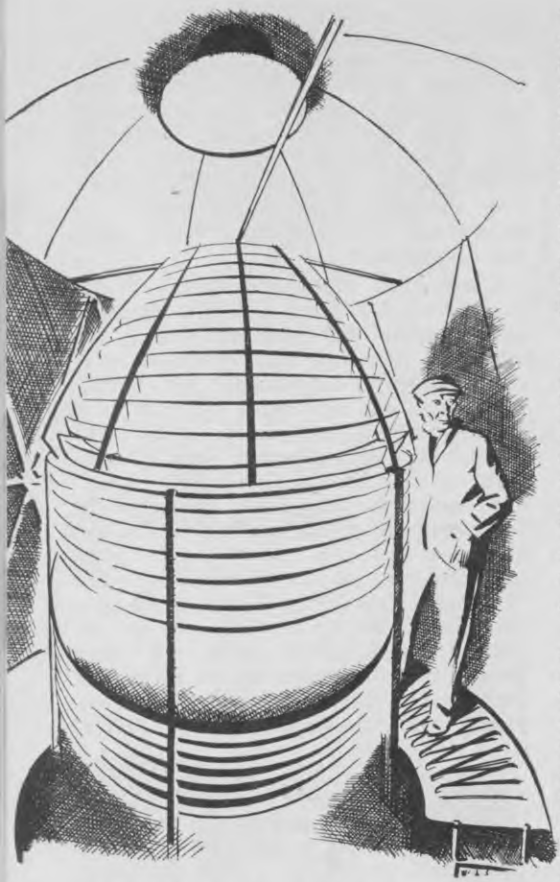
Looking back over his past experiences at other lighthouses, Mr. Wilson can tell you stories of killer whales he has seen fluking and breaching off the Cavalli Islands, North Auckland; of how they attack the humpback whales in packs, the bulls keeping them under water, while the killer cows go in and pull out the tongues by the roots, turning the surface of the sea into a lather of blood. Or he can tell you of the earthquake that struck him once in the lighthouse tower at Castlepoint, and of how he broke all records in getting out. Some of the prisms were shattered, and the mercury from the mercury bath was rolling in marbles round the tower and had to be collected in a chamber pot, that being the only china vessel large enough.

*

If you look at a large-scale map of the Wellington sea coast, you will see that Baring Head juts into the strait like a jagged eye-tooth, going well beyond Pencarrow, and lying neck and neck with Turakirae Head and Cape Palliser to the east and Sinclair Head to the west. A light on this promontory can be seen by ships rounding any of these headlands, and so covers the widest arc possible in Cook Strait. Why this, the logical site, was not chosen in the first place was known only to a few, and they are dead. Doubtless there were reasons at the time for selecting Pencarrow Head, but even to laymen like ourselves, leaning on the wind at the foot of Baring Head's white tower and looking south, east, and west over the blue-green flecked strait, this seemed the obvious place for Wellington's main lighthouse.

Later that night we stood on the balcony of the tower and saw pinpoint after pinpoint light up and flash intermittently through the summer haze. Cape Palliser — Cape Campbell — Karori Rock, and on our right the lights of Wellington, like submerged lamps. The skipper of a ship entering Wellington by night is well served with lights. There are twelve in all, from Palliser light beckoning out to the Pacific, to the red and white beacon at the end of the seven mile sandspit at Cape Farewell. For Wellington-bound vessels, Baring Head is the most important of these, for its welcoming flash warns them of their proximity to the treacherous rocks and reefs which infest the narrow heads. Later, when the skipper has left Baring

The Lighthouse-keeper.



The lamp at the top of the lighthouse.

Head on the beam, he is guided up the harbour by the Pencarrow low-level light, its white sector winking up the safe channel and the red sector flashing over foul ground.

Not the new low-level Pencarrow light, but the old white tower 322 ft. up the cliff above it, is a real curiosity in lighthouse history. Pencarrow was the forerunner to Baring Head and was the first lighthouse to operate in New Zealand. Its history over the last hundred years shows how modern science has been adapted to serve the users of the sea. A hundred years ago the light shining from Pencarrow was an ordinary lantern placed in the bay window of a cottage—now the low-level light is a Dalem-Aga apparatus, using acetylene dissolved in acetone as fuel, with automatic replacements of mantles, and automatic lighting up at sunset and cutting off at dawn. Between these two extremes was a multitude of inventions—the colza oil wick burners, the paraffin burners, the kerosene burners, with mantles like Aladdin lamps, and last of all the electric design which was installed at Baring Head in 1934, the first of its kind, so it was said, in the Southern Hemisphere.

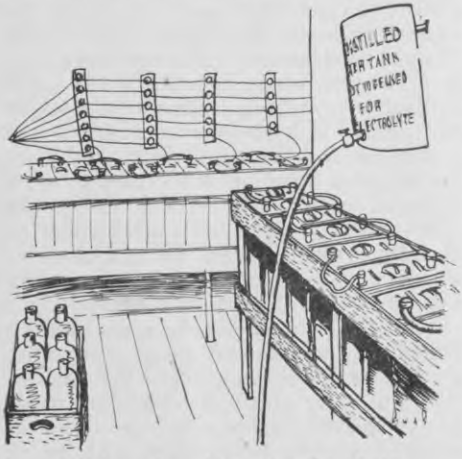
"A group occulting white light, having three eclipses every 15 sec., thus: light 5 sec., eclipse 2 sec., light 2 sec., eclipse 2 sec., light 2 sec., eclipse 2 sec., visible for 23 miles, is exhibited from a white concrete tower 40 ft. high." That is how the "New Zealand Nautical Almanac" describes Baring Head lighthouse. Not being sea captains, we wanted to know what it all meant and how the aparatus worked. So we asked Mr. Wylie, the acting keeper, to show us.

Leaving our visit to the lighthouse itself till dark, we first went to the powerhouse, which is also the control station. This is built between the houses of the two keepers and is a plain, rough-cast building, holding in its five rooms the two Diesel engines and generators which provide power for the station, the battery sets which store the power, the radio-beacon equipment (for fog signals), motors and generators for the beacon, and an anemometer (which we discovered, is a wind-measurer). The radio-beacon room is a grey-painted complication of dials, panels, boxes, clocks, switches, and valves. Mr. Wylie explained that this wireless fog signal is worked automatically by an eight-day clock, regulated from wireless time signals. At night and in foggy weather the beacon sends out from its singing aerial (the pylons were the first thing we saw at Baring Head) a continuous series of Morse signals as follows: ZLOA, followed by A's for 45 seconds, a long dash, a repetition of this, and then a silence for 250 seconds, the whole transmission taking six minutes. In fair weather from sunrise to sunset the signal is transmitted twice an hour, on the hour and at the half-hour. The signal, being a call sign, enables ships and even

aeroplanes to determine their position in bad weather.

From the radio-beacon room we moved across to the motors and generators used for the beacon. Here there are six small machines on the floor like grey pups. Arranged in duplicate groups of three, one motor to one high-tension generator and one low-tension, these run in alternate months and supply the beacon with current. Behind the beacon-room is the battery-room, with ninety-six cells, arranged in relays on three sides of the room—enough to run a car for a life-time, but they will only keep the station going for a day if not recharged. The next room was the "brain" of the distant light-house.

Mr. Wylie pointed to a panel as wide and as high as the wall of a room, saying that was what did the work and was what we should write about. He pointed out three separate divisions, one for the engines, one for the batteries, and one for the lighthouse. The panel for the lighthouse was more complicated than the others, and it is here the long-short-short effect of the light is manufactured. The main feature was a small motor coupled to a rotating contact like the balance wheel of a watch, but a hundred times bigger. As we watched, Mr. Wylie flicked a switch and the motor whirred and the rotating contact clicked round, the cylindrical contact slipping over the cams with a sound like the sucking of a



The batteries which store the power.

The tower—forty feet of reinforced concrete.

pump. It is these cams, which are varied in length to accord with the length of the flash, that give the lighthouse its characteristic signal.

To the left of the contact is the automatic mechanism for starting the engine when the battery supply falls below 110 volts. As the battery banks in turn become exhausted, a charge brush moves across a buzz-bar, and when the banks have all been used up the charge-brush strikes a limit switch and immediately starts the engine. There are two of these 9 horse-power Diesel water-cooled engines, each used on alternate days, and they are so coupled that if one should fail, the other starts before it has completely stopped, while an alarm bell rings in the keeper's house.

It was about half past seven when we entered the engine-room, and Mr. Wylie had hardly started the lantern mechanism before a sullen thumping was heard behind us and we turned to find the fly-wheel of one of the engines revolving. Mr. Wylie then went to work with a copper oil-can, burnished like a coffee-pot, while we inspected the racks of tools and the quiet, efficient 4½ kilowatt generators.

It was then after lighting-up time and the whole apparatus was at work—the engine, the lighthouse, the radio beacon (we could hear the resonant signal from the next room), the generators, and the anemometer, this hard-worked instrument scribbling with its three self-inking pens (two for wind direction, one for volume) the whole twenty-four hours of the day.

The wind was blowing hard as we bullied our way across to the lighthouse, outside the plantation belt. The sun was setting over toward Nelson and the sea had gone the colours of petrol on asphalt. The " Tamahine " was pushing in and the coastal steamer " Tiroa " was slipping quietly past the heads as we went into the base of the lighthouse tower.

This tower is somewhat unusual in design. Many New Zealand lighthouse towers have been constructed with iron, being made at foundries such as Chas. Judd's in Thames, or Luke Brothers' in Wellington. But Baring Head has 40 ft. of reinforced concrete (2 tons of reinforcement, 45 cubic yards of concrete), buttressed by six flanges, which make it look as solid as Gibraltar Rock. Its erection was undertaken by the Public Works Department, supervised by the Marine Engineer. In profile the tower differs from the usual, the balcony being kept as small as possible. A short steel ladder from the first landing gives the keeper access to the balcony from the outside and enables him to clean the transparent panes. There are forty-two in all, but those toward the land are whitewashed. The lantern itself came originally from Cape Egmont and many of the prisms are chipped from long service and transportation.

No better scene for a murder novel or a thriller film was ever described by Ngaio Marsh or photographed by Hitchcock. Above us, as we began to climb the tower, was the lantern obscured by the landings, but fitfully flashing, making long shadows wax and wane on the whitewashed lower walls. Outside (through latticed rectangular windows), the wind washing the steep walls and the light falling intermittently on the grass; inside, the runged steel ladder, glistening with oil; now at the first landing; now at the lantern, and a sudden blinding flash from the lens as the light comes to a peak—then fading—then blinding again—far out to sea the flicker of other lighthouses, as though in response. To us, strange to the lighthouse routine, it was so eerie and fascinating, the regular recurrence of that brightness, that signal reaching through the dark like a quick dawn, that for a moment or two we forgot our job.

It looks quite simple, the lantern of a modern lighthouse — two big globes (" 1,000 watts each," said Mr. Wylie), the reserve one canted over, and the other set at the focal centre of a 7 ft. wide bull's-eye lantern, and if one burns out (they hardly ever do) before its one thousand hours are up, the reserve comes up automatically and the alarm bell rings. Quite simple. But behind that delicate mechanism, and the design of those prisms and lenses, was a century of research and invention.

" Second order dioptric," says the " Nautical Almanac." That means that the lens has a focal distance of 700 mm., while the light diverging from the white-hot filament is caught by the upper and lower sets of prisms and is reflected back so that all rays emerge from the main lens in a narrow band, thus increasing their power and range. Above the lantern is a ventilated double-shelled copper dome, topped by a weather cock and a lightning conductor—below it an iron grill you can walk on. Outside the lantern (whose glass panes have to be cleaned of salt spray and dust every day) is a balcony where sometimes the birds fall after stunning themselves against the glass. If birds or stones smash the panes, as they do occasionally, there are storm panes handy which can be screwed in until the glazier can come and make a permanent job. That's all there is to this modern lighthouse—no sign of wave-pounded rock, spiral staircase, rocket gun, or lighthouse-keeper's daughters.

We asked Mr. Wylie about the famous Dalem sun-valve used as an automatic controlling device in modern lighthouses. The sun-valve starts the light at sunset and stops it at dawn by the effect of sunlight on two bulbs filled with ether, one black and the other transparent.

" We had one once," said Mr. Wylie, " but it wasn't very efficient. The moon put the light out one night, and since then we've given it up. We always start the light by hand."

Long flash—short flash—short flash—it became a pattern in our minds, and out in the ether too, the radio beacon was sending ZLOA . . . ZLOA . . . It seemed that science had at last dominated the elements in order to protect human life. Not before time. In the last hundred years there have been close on a hundred wrecks and marine accidents round the Wellington Heads—from the " David " and the barque " Tyne " in 1840 to the capsize of the scow " Echo " in 1932—but now, as one skipper said, entering Wellington Harbour was " like navigating on a tramway." Seeing the apparatus at Baring Head, we could quite believe it.

NEW ZEALAND TREES
The WHAU

By Dr. W. R. B. OLIVER, Director of the Dominion Museum, Wellington

TO SIR Joseph Banks and Dr. Solander came many pleasant surprises when in 1769 they landed from the " Endeavour " in the East Cape district. The forest must have seemed like a new world, for almost every kind of tree was new to these botanists. Among them was an exceedingly handsome plant with large, palmate leaves, large clusters of white flowers, and spinous capsules that looked like chestnuts. This was the whau or hauama of the Maoris, and its nearest relative is said to be the sparmannia of South Africa.

The whau, once common in the northern part of the North Island, now is scarce on account of its being greedily eaten by cattle and horses. It is common enough on islands off the Auckland coast. Locally, it is found as far south as the northern part of Nelson. The striking appearance of the whau makes it a desirable ornamental tree, but its large leaves suffer in windy situations. It is, however, grown with success in Wellington, provided it is reasonably protected on the south and west.

The wood of the whau when dried is one of the lightest known, its weight being from 8 lb. to 12 lb. per cubic foot. It is firm, not breaking down like the wood of the parapara. The Maoris used the wood of the whau for floats for fishing-nets and for small rafts on which they attended to their crayfish-pots.

The whau grows quickly, and if cultivated—wild trees should be strictly protected—might supply a substitute for cork, at least for such articles as lifebelts.

the TRUCIAL COAST of OMAN

by E D CROSSLEY

They saw a stretch of desert which was arid, flat and bare,
Which was barren, drear and ugly, with a death or glory air,
And they said "The very limit. We shall build a station there."
So they built one, and they laughed and called it Sharjah.

*

THE TRUCIAL Coast of Oman, on the south-east shore of the Persian Gulf, was called up to seventy or eighty years ago the Pirate Coast of Arabia, and it can still be found on old maps under that name. It was from here that large bands of pirates used to harry the East Indiamen. The capital or the pirates' headquarters was Umm ul Qwain, the present sheik of which is a staunch friend of the British.

I was stationed for approximately nine months at Sharjah, about seventy miles south of Umm ul Qwain. On the outskirts of Sharjah was Dubai, a town of about seventy thousand inhabitants, probably one of the chief pearling ports in the Persian Gulf. From time immemorial the sheiks of Dubai and Sharjah have been enemies, and it is only a few years since the present sheiks were at war with each other. British Overseas Airways had established a base at Dubai, and a temporary truce while the flying-boats were landing and taking off was part of the agreement under which the airways were operating.

About this time the sheik of Dubai had an old but very good cannon. He used to wheel this up periodically near the sheik of Sharjah's palace and fire off three or four balls, the number depending on the amount of scrap iron available. When night came he would send out foraging parties to collect the spent balls for the next day's war.

It so happened that the two sheiks went off on a visit to India at the same time, and while they were away the son of the sheik of Dubai sold the cannon for a large sum to Sharjah. When the two sheiks returned, Dubai declared war on Sharjah to get the cannon back. But the war to-day is not the bloodthirsty business it was a hundred years ago. If the casualties amount to twenty or thirty, it's considered pretty good going.

The Trucial Coast owes no allegiance to King Ibn Saud, Supreme Ruler in Arabia, nor do the British exert any influence over the administration, which is entirely in the hands of the sheiks of the various townships, the largest of which is probably Abu Dhabi. Many years ago the British authorities from the naval base at Hormuz, at the mouth of the Persian Gulf, visited the coastal sheiks and suggested a truce amongst all of them for a short period. The sheiks agreed that gun-running and free-booting and slave-trading and piracy on the high seas should cease, and the British in return agreed not to interfere with anything done on land. This truce was extended to a year, then to five years, and then for

all time. Hence the name the Trucial Coast of Oman.

I believe the coast has the hottest climate in the world; but that may be open to dispute. But I have known the night temperature there to be 110 degrees with humidity approaching 100 per cent. In July, August, and September the temperature probably averages about 100 degrees with humidity about 90 per cent. We worked only from 5 to 10 in the morning. The sea was literally too hot to bathe in after midday, and clothes, if left locked up, mildewed inside three days.

The main industry in the Persian Gulf is pearling, and since the disappearance from the market of the Japanese cultured pearl the value of real pearls has increased. I was once offered a selection of pearls which were brought in to me wrapped up in a turban. There must have been several hundreds in the bundle, which the merchant priced at 70,000 rupees (about £7,000 or £8,000). After the pearling season is finished the pearls are generally exported to India, where the rajahs and maharajahs pay extremely good prices for them.

Purdah is still the order of the day, and I did not see a girl above the age of seven or eight not wearing this peculiar and barbarous form of headgear. Natives of the coast favour a black metal strip over the nose extending to slightly above the eyes with eye-slits. By Mohammedan law—and 99 per cent. of the Arabs on the coast are of Mohammedan extraction—the Arab is allowed up to four wives at one time, and he treats his women with great respect. For a stranger or even his best friend to see any of his wives unveiled would be as bad as having raped them. Having acquired certain Western modes and fashions and wishing to abolish the veil, the Shah of Persia some years ago issued an edict that all women wearing the veil were to be regarded as prostitutes. The edict was received with much favour by the younger generation, but it was ultimately repealed because of the vigorous disapproval of the older people. The girls are often married very shortly after birth, and on one occasion I was invited to the wedding breakfast of a newly married couple, though throughout the whole evening no women were in sight. A wife costs, on an average, roughly £15, but the price depends to some extent on her beauty, position, and ability.

Visiting a well-to-do Arab is at first a difficult procedure, for there are many pitfalls for the unwary. For instance, business can never be tackled in the straightforward manner to which we are accustomed. You must always inquire after the host's health at least four times in varied phraseology. Trivial conversation must be indulged in for at least fifteen minutes. After a reasonable time the host proffers sweetmeats and coffee. You must accept no more nor any fewer than three cups of coffee. If you take less than three, the coffee is of inferior quality, and if you take more you are being greedy. After the coffee, business can be tactfully approached. You must be careful never to force an Arab to lose face, for if you do so you have not only lost a possible friend but made an enemy. On entering an Arab's house it is customary to take one's shoes off, but the educated Arab will not be offended if this is not carried out.

A follower of Sheik Sayed of Dubai had the misfortune to lose an eye in some bazaar brawl and was sent to Bahrein at the sheik's expense to be fitted with a

glass one. On his return he exhibited the eye very proudly, but one day reported for work without it. Asked why he was no longer in possession of the glass eye, he replied: "Well, what is the use of it? I can't see through it, anyway." And as far as I know, he never replaced it.

favour for him to present his uncovered forearm for the doctor's needle.

The staple food of the Arab on the coast is rice, which is provided during the war by the British authorities from India. Formerly supplies of rice, sugar, and attar (a form of flour) were given to the sheik of the district for distribution.

We used to have a regular sick parade every morning from the village of Sharjah, and it was always a trial to the doctor to deal with these patients. The main complaint was malaria, which, despite reports to the contrary, appears to affect the Arab there just as much as the white man. The doctor naturally prescribed quinine, but it was a moral certainty that by giving a man twenty pills and telling him to take six a day, two morning, evening, and night, he would be courting disaster. The Arab would reason this way: "If I take six a day for three days, I will be better, so why not take the whole eighteen to-day and I will be better three days earlier?" Many of them did this, and there were some very sick Arabs about. To give a native a course of hypodermic injections was almost impossible, as he did not appreciate the treatment, but rather considered it a

It was discovered, however, that in four cases out of five the sheiks were exporting the bulk of the supplies to the other side of the Gulf, where there was a famine, so the British Government, with the political agent's assistance, established food centres in most of the towns, where the issue to the poorer people could be supervised and checked.

Bahrein Island is the largest inhabited spot in the Persian Gulf, and it was not many years ago that the sheik and his wife were presented at Court in London. This is probably one of the few times on record that a sheik's wife has preceded her husband anywhere.

Except for a few date palms, there is no vegetation on the coast. Building materials are almost non-existent, and the Town of Sharjah is constructed from coral, which is dug from the sea-bed at low tide and mixed with a local native

cement. The poorer people live in hovels made of " barasti " (closely-woven palm leaves). There is also a very serviceable fort which was built for British Overseas Airways and is occupied by them to-day.

The Bedouin Arab is a very different customer from the semi-civilized Arab of the coast. He regards all white people of whatever race or creed as being of the ferengi (foreign) tribe, and no matter if you are British, Italian, or German, you are still to him a ferengi. He does not view the white race in general with any special regard, but because of the endeavours of the British political agents on the coast he is slowly becoming more friendly. Every so often the feared Benecitti tribe from the desert descends upon Sharjah, where, after several days of palavering, suitable presents in the shape of animals, women, pearls, and clothing are found for the tribe, and they depart in peace. They are warriors of great renown and are much feared by all coastal towns.

When flying over Arabia, pilots and aircrew are still furnished with blood chits, which are addressed to the Arab people in general soliciting good attention and delivery to the nearest civilized town with a promise of reward.

Now they said " To fit the landscape we shall make it
flat and bare,
We shall give it barasti billets with a lily here and there,
It shall be the very edge of desolation and despair."
And the Air Force drank a solemn toast to Sharjah.
" There shall be no sort of shelter from the all oppressive
light,
Neither bush nor shady palm tree to relieve the searing
white."
And the only time a man may breathe is when he prays
at night
When he prays to God to take him out of Sharjah.

" Remember back home ? "

" Remember on Nissan ? "

Journey in ITALY

By Capt. M. J. MASON, M.C.

Captain Mason left New Zealand with the 25th Bn. in the Third Echelon. He fought in Greece and Libya, and was captured at Sidi Rezegh in November, 1941.

"WHO IS the senior officer here?" asked the S.S. sergeant. A greying South African Major came forward to the barred opening. "Well," continued the Nazi, "you personally will be responsible if any one escapes out of this truck. And tell your co-prisoners that my men have orders to shoot to kill any one who so much as puts a finger outside this wagon. You understand?"

The major nodded. He understood, and we others understood, too, what the Nazis meant. There would be no cajolery or foolery with them, they were not easy-going Italians to be bluffed and badgered as the mood took you, but tough customers, to be watched carefully. Clearly they meant business.

But, even so, we just *had* to escape. For were we not on our way to Germany itself, and condemned to Lord knows how many years more of confinement? And had we not put up with enough during the twenty-two months we had been in Italy since our capture, in the second Libyan offensive of November '41? Certainly prison life was better than death, but not much better. Well, then, if there was a possible chance of getting away, we *must* seize it, and take the risk.

There were twenty-seven of us in that truck standing in the goods-yards of Mantova, North Italy. We were all officers, either South African or New Zealand, and had all come from Campo di Concentramento, No. 47, Modena, where there had been about a thousand of us. We had thought on the night of September 8, 1943, when the Italians had announced the news of the Armistice and had enthusiastically shaken hands with us through the wire, that our troubles were at last over and that our captivity would soon be just a memory. We had gone to bed dreaming of home and planning what we would do when we reached Egypt once again and what we would eat for that first real civilized meal. But things had not worked out right, and the next day, instead of starting on that so deeply longed-for trip home, we found ourselves captives again: this time of the Germans, who had quietly, efficiently, and bloodlessly taken over the whole camp, complete with inmates, from the Italians—our new Allies.

Well, you can imagine the feelings that this state of affairs caused. Freedom had been snatched from under our very noses, and that after we had held it in our grasp. Tantalus himself had had to tolerate less than we. What to do? Escape? Yes, obviously. But how? It had been virtually impossible to get away, even with wild-shooting Italians—it would be absolutely so with straight-aiming Germans. There was only the one way—to be prepared, and to hope that in the bustle and confusion of the move north there would come a fleeting chance.

And so the sad trek commenced. The first party left at the unholy hour of 3.30 a.m., and was a pitiful sight as, with disappointed faces, they trudged off bearing on their backs their worldly belongings. The second party followed the next afternoon, while we of the last group, most of whom had done a lot of manœu-

vring to get into that band, believing for some strange reason that it would offer better prospects, left a day later still.

The R.A.F. had been operating in the Po Valley, and signs of its handiwork were evident. It was because so many railway junctions were unusable and so many bridges across the Po were damaged that the first stage of our journey was made by motor-lorries. These were driven by boys barely over sixteen, and the one in charge of ours, I'll swear, had never shaved, and should still have been at school. But he did his job as well as any man, and watched us so carefully and so competently that there was never a chance for an instant of making a break.

The unhappy party duly escorted to Mantova Station at about midday, our driver and his co-fledglings left us to the tender mercies of our guards for the railway journey, who also were too young for soldiering—by our standards, at any rate. Be that as it may, the S.S. sergeant in charge knew how to work them to best advantage, and with a minimum of fuss and a maximum of accomplishment they herded us into the goods-wagons which were to take us to Germany. Every one has heard of the famous " 8 horses, 40 men " chalked up on the sides of troop-carrying box cars. Well, this was not one of that kind—it was a smaller edition, a " 5 horse, 25 men " type. Even so, the Nazis did not let it rest there—they had to cram an extra two in for luck.

As soon as the train got under way we started to take stock of the situation. Our wagon was about third from the rear van where the guards travelled, with machine guns mounted to fire along both sides of the train. The trucks were closed at each end by narrow double doors which were bolted from the outside and wired tightly together in addition. Apart from two closely grated narrow windows there was only one other exit—a heavy sliding door immovably locked. All told, the prospects of breaking out seemed pretty slim, and the whole set-up one to try the patience of a Houdini. The only bright spot, and a small one at that, was that there was no Nazi in the truck with us, so that at least we could try out our schemes undisturbed.

First off we tried to remove the window grating. But the screws were rusted firmly in, and tugging at the narrow bars even by groups of five or six produced nothing but torn hands and strained muscles. No, it was obvious we had to look elsewhere.

Then we turned our attention to the big side door. Immovable at first, it remained so despite every heave and kick and push and grunt. Another avenue was closed. That left us only the doors at either end. These at least would *have* to yield; the alternative was too grim to contemplate. So with redoubled energy we worked on: straining, puffing, tugging, and lunging. We panted away for some two or three hours, and all the while the train was clacking steadily on, bearing us to Germany. Would they never budge? And even if we did get them open we still had to jump from the moving train, risk the reaction of the Germans, and, on top of all that, make our way back to our own people. Surely Fate would help us with at least the first step. But no, the doors remained firm.

Now the train is slowing down. We peer out and see railway tracks and wagons everywhere—we are in the goods-yards of Verona. And then we notice a strange sight—one huge railway engine, belching smoke and vapour in every direction as it drags eight other huge engines. Whoever saw a train made up of nine engines in such a manner: suddenly the explanation dawns on us—the Nazis are taking them all off to Germany.

The S.S. sergeant gives us permission to open the side door and to leave the truck. Gratefully we stretch ourselves and try to snatch a word or two with the fellows from the next wagon. They tell us they have succeeded in breaking open one lot of end doors and that during the darkness they are going to make a break. Lucky fellows.

When we are moving again we discuss their good fortune. If they can do it, perhaps we can. So we return to work.

But still no luck, and night is upon us. Oh, well, perhaps later on. So we settle down to sleep as best we can . . .

But Jim Stone of the long legs is restless. Perhaps if we did this, and he put his legs so, and we pushed . . . He

did and we did, and lo! the wire is snapped. Now, if only we can force the doors apart enough to get a hand through and slip back the bolt. Damn it, we can't. But never mind, what about the other end.

So Jim puts his legs just so again, and we push and crack! the other wire is snapped. Surely we can open these doors a bit and slip that bolt . . .

Two hours later, our forearms bruised and sore, we give up. So near and yet so far, and the train is still making good speed. We both lie down regretfully and try to sleep . . .

And there is the train slowing down. Close the doors more, the Jerries might see them. For at every stop the guards left the van and patrolled the sides of the train, inquisitive, keen-eyed, looking for trouble.

Here comes one now. Cripes, he's looking at our doors. Click! he's pushed the bolt home!

The train starts again: another burst of fire. And then another. What are they firing at? There's a third, they must be firing along the train to frighten us just in case. Well, they're succeeding.

Let's open her up again. "Come on,

"I've got it open!" It's the little South African lieutenant shaking me by the shoulders. "My arm is pretty thin and I managed it."

We can hardly believe our ears. Stumbling forward to the end of the wagon, we find he has spoken the truth. Both doors are open, and we can get out on to the buffers. We must have a look round and see what is what.

"Crack, craaack"—the bullets whizz by. Down on the floor we go and close both doors to. Were they firing at us? They could not have seen us. But they might have—you never know. Better wait a bit.

Springbok, do your stuff." The doors swing back again, and we're out on the buffers once more. Yes, they must have been firing for intimidation—nothing has been hit around here.

Let's have a look at those footplates. Bit high, aren't they, about 4 ft. And if you touched that signal wire when you jumped you'd break your neck. Yes, and if you hit one of those telegraph-poles, or picked the wrong moment and crashed into the side of a cutting or a paling fence, it would not be so hot either.

Still, it is that or Germany. "Let's go, Jim." "O.K." Return for our escape kits and get going. Back we go, grab up

those haversacks carefully prepared for such a chance as this, and return to the footplate.

Confound it, she's rounding a bend, and that darn full moon is shining straight on to us. Back a bit, eh ? Don't want to take too many risks.

" O.K. Jim ? " " Righto. Hullo, hullo ! " It's Bernie Young from the next truck; they've opened their door, too.

" Well, boys, what do you think ? Risky all right : if you don't break your neck, the Jerries'll probably get you. She sure is pelting along."

" Look out . . . Jerries ! " Bernie and Co. pull back quickly, and close their door. We do the same. Somebody said they were patrolling the roof like they do in the States. Cripes, hope not.

The train slows down, finally halts. We hear the Nazis walking along the track. Here comes one to our truck again, and click ! he's rebolted the door for the second time. Lucky he is not too curious, or perhaps he thought it was another one he fixed up last stop. Whew ! You never know with them . . .

The hours pass by, the moon is higher than ever. Two o'clock goes, then three, then four. Will we never get moving ? If we don't start by daylight we won't have a chance. Come on, driver, get on with it. Hoping and cursing we doze off . . .

A jolt, she's off. " Up with you, Springbok, now or never." But the Springbok is slow and five minutes pass by. Five awful minutes. Is it worth the risk ? Perhaps I'll be killed—better another year in Germany than death here on a lonely Italian railway-line. She's moving pretty fast—perhaps it's too chancy. Cripes, I'm afraid. My hands are wet, my mouth is dry, I'm sweating all over. Will I, won't I, will I, won't I . . . ? Oh, she's open. Jim is first out. I'm next. A footplate each. Whew ! look at that track whizz by. And

see that damn wire—just the right height to upend you.

Crack, craaack ! They're at it again. To hell with them. O.K. Jim, I'm with you."

I shut my eyes, pray a moment, and leap. Crash ! I've broken my chest. I hear the train behind me, and I'm full of stings down my right side. Did they hit me ?

" Are you O.K. ? " It's Jim. " How are you, Jim ? " " I'm jake."

I pick myself up and feel all over. I can breathe all right, but these darn stings. Ah, thank the Lord—they're acacia prickles. My knee is wonky, too, and so is my thumb.

Jim suddenly breaks into a grin. " Look," he says. I look, and there are the rear lights of the train, vanishing slowly into the distance.

" We're sweet. After all this time, Jim. Put it there, boy ! "

And so, exultingly, in the middle of an Italian vineyard just south of the Austrian border, we shook hands as free men for the first time for nearly two years.

When you get back

THE PUBLIC SERVICE

The Public Service is classified in three main Divisions: (1) Professional; (2) Clerical; (3) General.

(1) To the Professional Division are appointed University graduates with appropriate Bachelors' or Masters' degrees as well as cadets with Matriculation or higher qualifications who subsequently qualify at the University.

(2) The largest Division is the Clerical, and appointments are made chiefly by clerical cadetships to youths between the ages of fifteen and twenty-one who have passed the Public Service Entrance or higher examinations, or by the appointment to the temporary staff of older applicants as clerks or office-assistants, who may later qualify themselves for the permanent staff.

(3) The General Division covers a wide range of careers, including the majority of field postions. These call for technical or practical qualifications which normally must be secured before appointment. The minimum educational qualification is the primary school Leaving Certificate, but for many positions some higher qualification is desirable. Appointees to the General Division must be between the ages of sixteen and forty years. However, temporary positions are frequently available to men over that age.

The Public Service has openings in practically every avenue of work that is met with in commercial or banking institutions as well as in the professions, and the conditions of employment are comparable with those in such institutions. Officers appointed to the permanent staff are, subject to satisfactory work and conduct, guaranteed a career by which they may advance to more responsible and better-paid work according to their ability.

The educational standards required for permanent-staff appointments are not required of temporary employees. It is likely that after the cessation of hostilities special provision will be made for returned men to study and present themselves for alternative examinations which could be accepted by the Commissioner as qualifying them for permanent appointment. Temporary officers filling permanent vacancies may apply to become contributors to the Public Service Superannuation Fund.

The bulk of the work in the Public Service can be designated as clerical. It embraces such subjects as accounting, auditing, correspondence, insurance, interviewing, investigating, law, recording, stores, statistics, and so on. Most of those activities are carried on in nearly all Departments, but not always to the same extent.

It is worth noting that the majority of executive and administrative positions in the Service are filled by officers from the clerical division.

Clerical Cadetships. — Available to youths with the following qualifications: University Entrance or higher examination—*e.g.*, Higher Leaving Certificate or section of a degree, School Certificate Examination, Public Service Entrance Examination, and any examination which in the opinion of the Commissioner, is equivalent to the Public Service Entrance Examination. Applicants with the School Certificate or higher examination must be over fifteen years and under twenty-one years of age; those with Public Service Entrance only, over fifteen and not more than eighteen years of age.

Appointees to the temporary clerical staff who do not possess any special qualifications are designated as office-assistants or clerks. The commencing salary for the more junior staff is usually determined on an age basis up to twenty-five years, or according to qualifications and experience which may have a special value. The salary of all temporary officers is reviewed annually by the Public Service Commissioner's Office.

The Commissioner's representatives in centres outside Wellington are available for interview at any time, and should further information be desired, they will assist. Their names may be obtained from Rehabilitation Officers.

Vacancies in professional and technical positions are filled by the appointment, to either the permanent or the temporary staff, of applicants who have the requisite qualifications. Cadetships are also available in draughting, engineering, forestry, science, surveying, and valuation.

The following types of draughtsmen are employed :—

Survey: Lands and Survey Department.

Architectural: Public Works and Housing Construction Departments.

Engineering (Civil, Electrical, and Mechanical): Public Works Department.

Draughtsmen on the permanent staff are expected to study and to present themselves for Department or professional examinations.

Engineering

A limited number of cadetships are available to youths with the Engineering Preliminary Examination. University graduates with the degree of Bachelor of Engineering or the Diploma of the Institute of Engineers may be appointed as Assistant Engineers.

Marine engineers are employed mainly in the Public Works Department as Hydro-electric Station Superintendents, Station Operators, &c., and in the Marine Department as Surveyors of Ships and Inspectors of Machinery. Appointments are made from applicants with Marine Engineers' Certificate.

Vacancies for radio engineers in the Broadcasting and Scientific and Industrial Research Departments are available for youths as technical trainees, and other appointments are made from applicants with a B.Sc. degree in approved subjects or who have suitable qualifications and practical experience.

THE LITTLE CRICKET SANG

This is a chapter from a book "Gunner Inglorious," by 24563 Gunner J. H. Henderson, 2 N.Z.E.F. Gunner Henderson was wounded at Sidi Rezegh and picked up by the Germans three days later. He spent a year in Bari Hospital, where one of his legs was amputated, was then sent to an Italian prisoner-of-war camp, and from there into another hospital. He was finally repatriated through Turkey, and has spent most of his time since his return in hospitals in New Zealand. His book will be reviewed in the next issue of *Korero*.

THIS IS the story of the little cricket, which sang to us, as we lay captives in the land of a foe, in old Europe, far from our home beneath the Southern Cross.

We were lying on our rough wooden beds, and the evening shadows had slowly rippled together into the dark ocean of night, beaconed with strange unfamiliar stars, when the little cricket sang to us.

There was almost silence in the white-stone prison bungalow, and in our bay about sixty men lay on their thin grey blankets, tucked around the straw palliasses on the two-tiered, double-berthed wooden bed-frames.

For within thirty minutes the lights would be out and we would be alone, alone in the dark with our precious thoughts, our precious memories of home and ones we love. No enemy could take that from us.

Two dim electric-light bulbs hung from black cords down the narrow passageway between the rows of beds. To obtain the greatest benefit from this meagre illumination men were lying feet to the top of their beds, heads and books facing the light.

Sounds of men breathing—out—in—out—the rustle and turn of pages of books, the harsh scrape of a match upon sand-paper . . . a cough or two.

It was then the cricket sang.

His spontaneous joyousness burst like a bomb upon us. One by one heads were raised from books and eyes slowly gazed to the corner where the little insect was tucking his message of happiness. It seemed his tiny frame was overflowing with vibrant good will, and he, a welcome prophet of the happy days to come, delivering tidings of courage and good cheer to the unfortunate prisoners.

Down in the corner from where the cricket sang I saw the long, thin body of Bob Creighton move. I knew from long experience Bob, in common with most descendants of the Irish, was a deeply sensitive man, sometimes emotional too, and at times eloquent.

As Bob moved, I thought of all the dainty poems, the touching tales, I had wept over in childhood, wherein little beasts of the field, birds, or even insects had comforted the distress of unhappy humans, deep in the dayless gloom of dim dungeons.

I thought of the stories of prisoners who had shared with mice their humble fare of mildewed bread and cheese. How to them they had confided their hopeless hopes, fears; consulted, confessed, and drawn comfort, as from a family priest.

In particular I recalled a poem of ponderous thought and mighty moralizing from the awful pen of Byron, "The Prisoner of Chillon," wherein a little brightly plumaged bird daily visited a wretched captive, how he grew to love it and wondered if it were an adored one disguised in different shape, how it flew away and left him doubly alone.

And here was the little cricket singing to us, who undoubtedly were genuine captives, but by no means wretched. Singing to us just as urgently, just as brightly, as Byron's blessed bird.

And here was an emotional son of Ireland gazing fixedly towards the little cricket.

If the emotional poets of olden days were so perfectly attuned to the great heart of afflicted humanity, a profound, too-deep-for-tears utterance was inevitable.

I do not exaggerate when I say with parted lips and quickened heart-beat I awaited some classical and immortal remark.

It came all right.

"What a blasted uproar," said Bob.

Oh, deeply sensitive man! Oh, emotional, Irishman! Oh, eloquence!

His gaze, which I in my sticky sentiment had interpreted as loving kindness intermingled with awe, was nothing more than annoyance, tempered with mild hatred.

But more was to come. Had Byron been there, he would have turned a back somersault and 'phoned an urgent call through to his publishers to delete "The Prisoner of Chillon" from the umpteenth edition of his works.

Failing to find the would-be altruistic cricket, Bob reached out a long, thin claw to lift up an empty powdered-milk tin. Crouched there was the little lad with his message of good cheer and what-ho to the imprisoned New-Zealanders.

Bob picked up a boot. He raised it aloft. There was a brief thud. The song of good cheer was abruptly and irrevocably terminated.

Bob wiped the pathetic crushed remains of the little body from the heel of his Number Niners.

Looking up, he caught my reproving eye.

"The darned thing was making so much row I couldn't read my book," he explained. Then, with a sigh of content, and with the comforting knowledge of having done a good turn to all, he returned to "Vintage Murder," by Ngaio Marsh.

E. V. Paul, Government Printer, Wellington