

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 cantell 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.