

"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 capsizing 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.

