

Breezes from the Capital

FROM youth upwards, most of us have been given to understand that it's an ill wind which blows nobody any good. The dyed-in-the-wool-and-whiskers Wellingtonian may, for instance, find the hat-snatching tactics of our prevailing southerly busters just a little trying. But think of the pleasure that aforementioned southerly busters give to that useful individual, the tourist. Let us explain. In the days of our extreme immaturity, Kipling, in the throes of describing the Seven Seas, the Eight Continents, or similar geographic phenomena, stopped in his stride to address no less than four lines to our very own Wellington: Auckland has never quite recovered from the shock. The four lines were as follows:

*Broom behind the windy town,
Pollen of the pine,
Bellbirds in the leafy deep,
Where the ratas twine. . . .*

This, sandwiched neatly between a sonnet on Calgoolie and an ode to Kamchatka did the trick. From that time forth, the very first thing that a tourist looks for on arriving in Wellington is the Wellington wind. And he won't be happy till he gets it. He comes armed with hat guards and chest protectors, sits down and waits for things to happen to him. Visiting Wellington on a calm and windless day is to him as tame a proceeding as rounding the Horn without being violently seasick. He feels that he might just as well, if not better, have stayed at home. When, however, he successfully loses his hat, his dignity and his temper, he knows that Wellington has given him his money's worth. One wonders if old Aeolus, the presiding genius of windy Wellington, ever feels the strain of living down to his reputation.

WORKING along the same lines, the average tourist feels dreadfully hurt if the natives of any foreign land don't wear scarlet cummerbunds, sinister smiles, and very little else: generally he writes to the papers about it. He has come from one side of the world hoping to find the other side entirely different. Of late years, New Zealand has been sadly remiss in this respect. The good old days of bowie knives and cannibalism are gone, presumably for ever. Our tourist, as a reasonable man, recognises that this is inevitable, though sad. But a greater sin of omission is ours. Almost every visitor to these our shores, having discovered, much to his surprise, that New Zealand is not situated in the middle of the Great Australian Desert, comes here firmly convinced that he is going to find an earthquake under his bed. He generally makes his will before setting out, and occasionally goes to the extent of kissing his wife good-bye. En voyage, he says to his fellow passengers, with an air of splendid unconcern: "Im patting in a week at the Shivery Isles, you know," and said fellow passengers reply in remonstrative tones: "But look here, old chap; I say, don't

you know!" Or words to that effect. Generally they try to persuade him to take up something safe, like big-game hunting in Central Africa. When, on arrival here, he wakes up in the morning to find himself still alive, and when the Town Hall positively refuses to stand on its head for his entertainment his disgust and astonishment pass all bounds. Thereafter, in talking of New Zealand, he usually confines

frighten anyone—far from it—but just supposing that The Earthquake were to happen along to-morrow, what would the Mayor do about it? So far the Mayor has declined to answer so unorthodox a question. It is to be presumed that he has not yet decided whether he would, in such eventuality, "spring from his bed with unmayoral cries," or whether he would simply put his head under the blankets, wait and pray.

up our pennies for the return fare to the Exebish. (In case you don't understand, "Exebish" is just a pet name for "Dunedin and South Seas Exhibition," which sounds—don't you think?—so cold and formal.)

While we're on this little matter of the Exebish, I wonder just what is happening behind the dense veil of mystery which surrounds the Wellington Court? Have the painters ceased from troubling? Are the glaziers at rest? Personally, although, of course, I recognise that mere females mustn't attempt to fathom the workings of the mind of Authority, I can't see our difficulty in finding exhibits sufficient to furnish any court. For instance, why not secure, stuff, and mount a specimen of the Wellington straphanger? In Wellington, as you probably know, our tramcars take a deep breath, pause for an instant, and plunge down into abysses which would make a stunting aviator feel dizzy. Not infrequently, just by way of a change, the entire car loops the loop. And all this time the confirmed straphanger is successful not only in keeping his grip, but in reading the morning's paper, executing a superior form of haka upon the toes of his neighbours, eating a currant bun and carrying on an argument as to the relation of Lloyd George to the Darwinian theory. It is popularly supposed that the first thing the proud parents of a straphanging baby (the complaint is hereditary) do, after christening the child, is to take it out, introduce it by stealth into a tramcar, insert a strap between its fingers, and leave it alone for an hour, secure in the knowledge that on their return they will find it clinging to its strap as happy and contented as a young octopus adhering to a rock. From time to time, straps have been reported as missing from the Wellington cars. The popular explanation of this is that the relatives of some deceased straphanger have severed his favourite strap, finding it quite impossible to dislodge him from same. There may, of course, be some shadow of doubt about this theory. But in any case, to return to our original contention, why shouldn't Wellington's court be the proud possessor of at least one straphanger, labelled "Gemine—very old?" If captured living, he could perform feats of endurance which would upset the nerves of an Indian fakir.

*Boys and girls, come out to play,
The moon is shining bright and gay.*

MORE and more, the somewhat conservative and retrogressive citizens of Wellington are coming to realise that "the best of all ways to lengthen your days is to steal a few hours from the night, my dear." Other and more progressive cities have moonlight tennis, moonlight lathing, and—shall golf be anywhere but in the vanguard?—moonlight golf. Wellington has moonlight trips upon its harbour. Of course, everybody writes to the papers about it. The organizers of such expeditions retaliate that they

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Miss Byrrel Ward, of Wellington

Margaret Hardie-Shaw, Wellington

himself to remarking: "Shivery Isles! Hub!" and intimating that he has derived more genuine excitement from riding on a scenic railway. At last, however, the Tourist Department, or whoever looks after these little affairs, has awakened to a sense of its responsibilities. We have it on good seismological authority that if Wellington's last earthquake had been just a little more so, the entire town would have enjoyed a sudden and altogether unexpected bathe in the waters of our admirable harbour. This, surely, was near enough to please the most exacting tourist. But better is to come. Our Government seismologist has advocated the formation of a society "to take in hand the creation of a working basis from which the whole community could be organised in case of a disastrous earthquake." He declares, in tones of deepest insincerity, that he doesn't want to

LOOKING at the matter from a patriotic viewpoint, I can't help feeling that there's a lot to be said for this Society for the Prevention and Cure of Earthquakes. For instance, the leading hotels of Wellington might (mind you, I don't say they will) inaugurate a system of earthquake drill something like this: At 3 o'clock in the morning, all gentlemen to spring out of bed, put on costume composed of bedroom slippers and bath towels, descend fire escape hand over hand, pause at bottom, place hand on heart, and exclaim: "I knew I'd forgotten something! My poor wife!"

IN the meantime, however, we'll just have to make the best of such indoor and outdoor sports as Wellington can provide such innocent diversions as bargain saleing, sun and moon-bathing, and saving