

Afflict on the Northern Coast.

SOME HOLIDAY EXPERIENCES.

(By LONGSHOREMAN.)

IV.—SOUTHWARD HO!

When I headed this article, "Southward Ho!" I had no intention of conveying the impression that we were bound in search of the South Pole. We were devoid of desire to emulate the exploits of the Discovery.

The day we left Parengarenga in early morn is chiefly memorable in my recollection for one thing True, we caught a fish trawling that day which no one could identify, and which, when placed in a kit, shook its tail at such a rapid rate for ten minutes that it not only was invisible (that is, the tail, of course), but the vibration nearly injured the boat. Poor puss, who was in the vicinity, fairly bristled, and his temper was ruffled for the rest of the day. Subsequently I learned that our strenuous fishy capture was probably a hoki. No, that was not the event that marked the occasion as a red-letter day in the calendar. It was on this particular morn that my genius in the culinary department reached its dizzy zenith. I undertook to make some soup. Dissecting a large hapuka head with the expertness that comes from years of study, and a large irresistible hatchet, I dropped it into a pot—not the hatchet, that I let fall on the nearest person's pet corn. Now, no book within reach at the moment gave any account of how to make hapuka soup that at all commended itself to my taste. An original plan had to be devised, and I assure you solemnly it was. When the head had simmered for a few hours, and all the nutriment that it ever had or was likely to have had been drawn off and disseminated in pleasing odours throughout the length of the ship, other ingredients were added. To provide these the resources of the larder were strained to the breaking point. No one ever heard of a soup for healthy people without potatoes and onions, so these were first added in plentiful quantities. Then a piece of fat bacon was dropped in the pot—no self-respecting soup is without fat bacon. As acid is a good thing to clarify fat, a lemon was sliced, and added. But, after all, you know, it is not so much what you put in a purée (that's French) of this description, as how you flavour it. Being a trifle in doubt as to the right spices for a fish soup, I thought that a general application of the contents of the spice box could do little harm. Pepper followed in gaily on the heels of allspice, cinnamon, and mace. A ribald critic suggested that to stir it with the cat's tail might impart a little of the much-coveted flavour of kangaroo's tail. The aroma by this time was penetrating, and its action laxative on the salivary glands. Demands to taste this chef-d'œuvre were clamorous, and difficult to resist. But nobly I stood firm. The soup must only be tasted in its

complete state. Stealthily half a bottle of port wine was added, and the completion of the dish was triumphantly announced amid acclamation. It was served in cups. I never shall forget the moment that everyone raised his cup to drink to the creator of this miracle of culinary perfection. The moment was awe-inspiring; tense with human interest. One second they stood there, creatures of expectation, the cat a mystified spectator; the next their heads were over the side, and they were spluttering out that soup between the expletives. Bravely I struggled with it myself, but it was no use, I retired worsted. Even the cat rebelled. Have you ever tasted a mixture of train oil and cayenne pepper compounded with equal parts of raw Irish whiskey and onion, the whole having run several hundred yards through a salt mine?—that was my hapuka soup. We had biscuits and cheese for lunch that day.

Mangonui is a quiet but pretty little place, set on a picturesque arm of the great Doubtless Bay, and here it was that we pulled up early in the afternoon. Flax of late years has added a little extra bustle to the township, and the land at the back is better than is mostly found in the North.

'Twas at Mangonui that we met the worst example (though not the only one) that we saw up North of the man who unconsciously or subconsciously swears. The swearing is entirely without intentional offence, occurs every second or third word, and goes unmodified by circumstance, time, or place. This is the sort of thing: "I said to the man, this is one of the best places in the North, and you ought to well enjoy your self." There is usually luridness, but no variety of adjective.

From the visitor's point of view there is nothing very attractive in Mangonui itself, but the Pacific cable station out on the bay some three miles from the township is most interesting. On a corner of the great Doubtless Bay, exposed to the full force of the hoisterous easterly wind, the cable station is placed at the base of barren hills, that slope to the beach. The operating room is comparatively insignificant, the large quarters, with their plain furnishing but scrupulous cleanliness, being the most prominent building. Two detached residences, one occupied by the superintendent and family, lend some slight variation to the monotony of the architecture. Quite the most interesting thing at the station, outside the absolute fascination of the remarkable instruments used in transmitting messages and in testing the cable, is the manner in which the seagulls have been tamed by the superintendent. They are to be called by a whistle, and will flock around a plate on which anything to eat is placed, while the plate is held in the hand. The noise that those birds make, and the swearing they indulge in in squabbling about the food, is the most amusing thing about them. But although the little pearly grey and white seagulls squabble among themselves, and call each other quite the most shocking names, it is etiquette, should a large greyback—a regular old man of the sea—swoop down, to moderate the language, and leave an uncontested field. The most unique point about these birds, however, is that should anyone venture ashore with a

camera all but a very few will find it convenient to absent themselves from the levee. We had no camera with us that day, so saw a good muster.

Talking of a camera I was afterwards glad that I had not brought one off the boat, for just in the dusk an ideal opportunity for a snapshot presented itself, and it would have been irritating to have had a kodak and to know that the light was just too bad for its effective use. We had been twitted during the day on not having brought our little ten-foot dingy up on the main beach, but having instead chosen a fairly quiet nook in the rocks for a landing. As the day advanced the surf on the beach did not moderate, and there was quite enough running for a small boat when we ventured out. Several of the cable staff were to accompany us to Mangonui for the evening, and they confidently boarded the dingy to make the passage to the yacht. But an illustration of the impossibility of keeping a ten-foot boat's head to a big roller was awaiting them. A little way from the beach a wave of unusual dimensions bobbed up unexpectedly, swung the dingy round, and emptied its contents into the sea, all in the twinkling of an eye. Then was to be seen a sight that only an artist might do justice to. Several fully-dressed young men were spluttering and swimming in the sea, while the dingy's crew were struggling with the overturned boat. Things looked black indeed till one man fortunately discovered that there was only about four feet of water, and then a sorry procession came ashore. Second-hand watches are cheap in Mangonui, and we have one on the boat that will be sold at an absurd sacrifice. That evening trip to Mangonui township was postponed indefinitely.

A heavy oily swell met us when we rounded Flat Head next morning, and shaped to make Whangaroa. Your real oily swell is just the sort to make even the seasoned sailor squeamish. Whether it is that the appearance of the water is in itself bilious, or that the motion is peculiarly searching, I have not yet fathomed, but the advice to avoid the sea when it heaves in glassy mountains is good. This is not introduced here because any member of our good ship's company was a sufferer that day, but purely for friendship's sake, as a piece of knowledge and impartial advice.

When we entered through the narrow entrance to Whangaroa towards midday, our luck in the matter of weather deserted us. So far we had had nothing to complain of, but once inside the harbour the rain clouds burst. We were going round to have a dip in a delightful little bay, but so heavy was the downpour that two of us—the solid and the slim—revelled on the cockpit floor and then stood up for a shower bath in the tropical downpour.

Whangaroa, like Russell, is not the place it "uster was." The harbour is still there—the most picturesque in the North, probably in New Zealand. Through the mist and rain, as we saw it that day, its beeling crags and bush-embowered peaks looked particularly fine. The conglomerate mushroom rocks of Ranfurly Bay, the delight of the amateur photographer, are as picturesque as of yore, and the precipitous cliffs and peach groves of Okahumoko Bay

are more than a tradition. But the crop has largely disappeared from the peach trees, as the Hie has departed in the townships. The fishery has gone from the harbour's ravines and creeks, and the development of the back country has resulted in the enlargement of interior townships rather than the advancement of Whangaroa. Messrs. Lane's timber mill and shipbuilding yard is still a patch of industrial life under the shadow of St. Peter's, and when we were there a large intercolonial trader of the scow class was well advanced upon the stocks, but it is a spot rather out of keeping with the Arcadian quiet and rural beauty of the scene. But you can get a tiptop meal in the Whangaroa hostelry, and that is more than can be said of much of the North. Our stay was prolonged owing to the inclemency of the weather, but the days we idled through in Whangaroa were not the least enjoyable of the trip.

The weather was not over promising when we finally did set out, and a big cross sea was tumbling in off Cape Waiwaki when we rounded into the Bay of Islands. The boat cut some capers which made the floor the safest place to lie on, and poor puss was mortally ill. It was disconcerting also to see a few feet away the fin of a shark protruding from the water a foot or so, but he had no designs on us, and our proximity did not make him deviate from his Northern course.

With sail set and flags waving we returned to Russell; not the Russell of regatta day, nor even the Russell of the day after. Along the beach front several people stood idly in their doorways; the road was deserted save for a crawling infant pulling vigorously at the tail of a dingy yellow dog, and a schoolboy with his face half buried in a pear; along the wharf rushed the one busy man of Russell. The somnolence of the atmosphere was pervasive and infectious, and only the cravings of hunger engendered sufficient energy to prepare a meal.

(To be Continued.)

OUR ILLUSTRATIONS.

THE LATE MR. A. E. WHITE.

Among our illustrations is a portrait of the late Mr. A. E. White (son of Mr. T. H. White, mill manager of the Kauri Timber Company), who died recently at the Auckland Hospital of appendicitis and peritonitis. "Dime" White, as he was familiarly known among his fellow-employees at the Kauri Timber Company, was exceedingly popular. Frank, straightforward, and manly, he won the esteem of those with whom he came in contact, and made many friends. His early demise caused much sorrow among his fellow-workmen. They were all much attached to him, and, knowing his genuineness and splendid character, they sympathise all the more deeply with his bereaved relatives.

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