

Views on the Waitakerei Coast.

(By E.A.)

To the average Auckland, whose knowledge of seascapes is limited by the perspective of our own lovely harbour, a visit to the West Coast comes as somewhat of a revelation. The sight of the rolling, tumbling waves that break along the coast fills one with contempt for the petty ripples we are used to see, to say nothing of the awe of beholding the great expanse of ocean that stretches as far as eye can see, without land or vessels in sight. I spent a few days there this summer, camping on the bank of the Waitakerei River, a swift-flowing stream, from which it is proposed to augment our water supply, and returned quite impressed with the beauty of the coast and the delights of camping. The two seascapes given herewith were taken close to the camp, and are representative of the place, but no picture could do justice to the breakers as they change from deepest blue to yeasty foam, nor yet to the spray which rises from them and dashes its force against the lofty cliffs. That has to be seen to be appreciated. The other views are pictures of a lake which lay about two miles from our camping ground, buried in a dip of the bush-clad hills, and reflecting all the beautiful surroundings on its calm surface. It is known as Shag Lake, and covers about half the area of Lake Takapuna; further inland lies another lake, quite as large and beautiful, and this goes by the name of the Serpentine, for it fills the snake-like windings of a valley between two spurs of the range. Neither of these lakes has any visible outlet, though both are above sea level, and it is thought that they drain underground to the bed of the river, and are thus responsible for the quicksands that extend for yards along and from its banks. It is a horrible sensation to put your foot in one of these. One can hardly describe it, for no sooner does the sand slide under you in a perfectly incomprehensible way than it is followed so quickly by the natural impulse to spring up and away that you haven't time to analyse your feelings.

The cliffs that line the coast are very fine specimens of conglomerate formation. They are all tunnelled by great caves, the height and breadth of which in some cases would fit them to do duty for churches should ever population become numerous in that district. Occasionally these caves go right through a jutting promontory, and then you get what is known as a blowhole, for the waves rush through these apertures with tremendous force, making a noise like heavy artillery, and, as the vent is generally smaller than the entrance, a grand effect is produced when the water bursts out, sending spray all round.

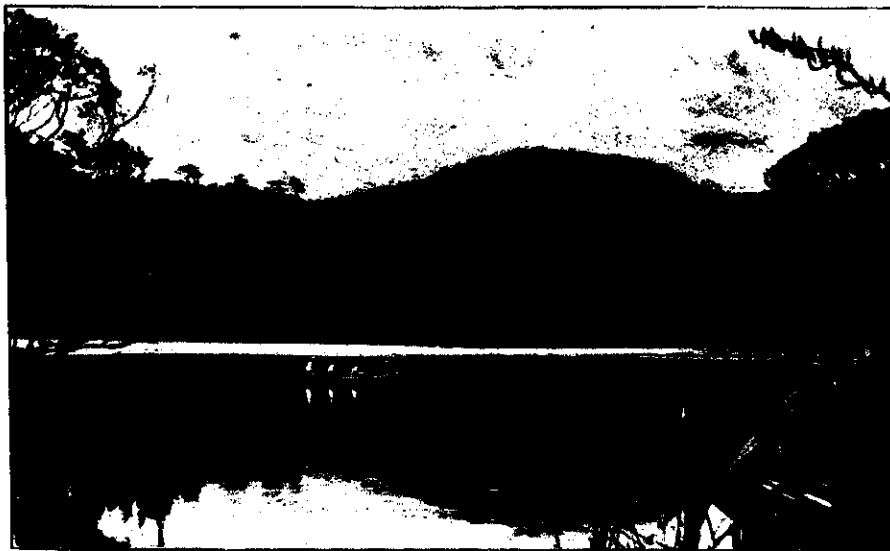
The seaweed is among the strangest met with on our coasts. It grows like strips of leather belting, and is apparently as strong; some pieces I came across were quite 15 feet long, and when seen in the water looked quite uncanny as they were tossed about. Other natural wonders of the coast are jelly-fish, that filled themselves full of air and exploded with a pop when dissected; crabs of monster size and all hues; and the sea anemones, some of which were six inches across, and of all possible colours.

So much for the beach and its attendant interests. The coast land itself has nothing to commend it, till you reach the bush, for the sand, swept hither and thither by the strong sea winds, kills all vegetation except a tough species of manuka and flax. A few sheep pick up a living in sheltered spots, and that is all. The West Coast will always make its main reputation on the beauty of its seascapes, the delights of surf bathing, and the grotesque grandeur of its cliffs, caves and blowholes.

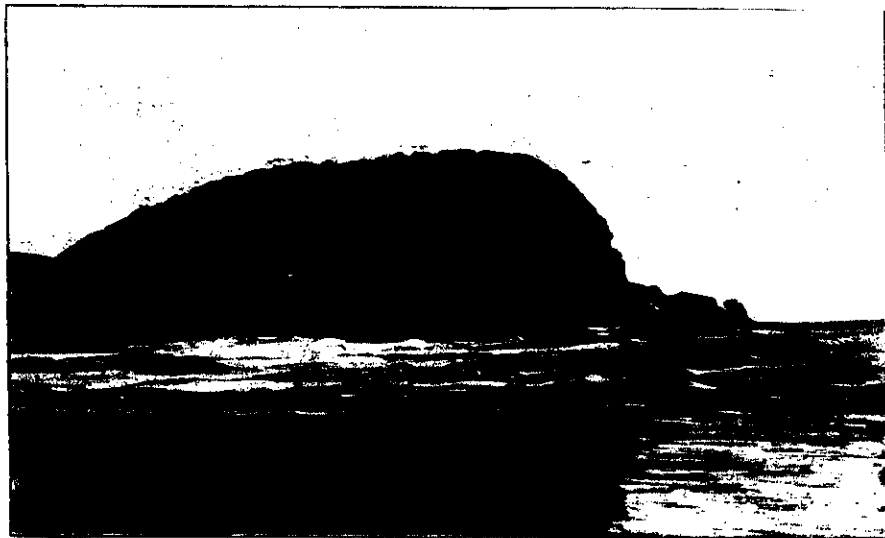
Holiday and holy day are essentially one and the same word, yet they have come to mean almost exactly opposite things. Those who celebrate a holiday shun the solemnity of a holy day, while those who worship on a holy day, to wit, the Sabbath, strenuously object to having it turned into a holiday. So great is the contrast between words and the things to which they are applied.



WEST COAST BREAKERS—A BLOWHOLE SHOWING IN THE CORNER.



SHAG LAKE, WAITAKEREI.



Photos by Aldridge.

SHADOW AND SPRAY, DIXIE ISLAND.

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