

At the Seaside.

LIVING THE SIMPLE LIFE.

(By A VICTIM.)

"Yes, my dear," remarked my spouse. "This year we will live the simple life in a small cottage by the seaside during your holidays." Having been married 20 years I naturally raised no objection, though I have ever had my doubts regarding the beauty of a simple life. Those doubts are now replaced by a certainty, and if anyone asks my opinion about a simple life my answer will be, "Suited only to simple fools." Behold me one morning getting ready for the enjoyment of simple life at the seaside. This meant getting up at an unearthly hour to catch a steamer that had to do the same with a tide. On board were many other poor deluded people in a hurry to get away from the delight of smooth pavements, nice verandahs, and picturesque shop windows. When my own stopping place was reached I took the first pleasure hurriedly, in the shape of an involuntarily dip into the briny. "Those steps are rather slippery," remarked a kind-hearted man, who helped me out, but like the famous "pardon" in the song, "it came too late." Wet to the waist, I walked about a mile to my "cottage by the sea." The wall-paper could be honestly described as picturesque, because it was composed of pictures from weekly papers. There was a tank outside, but as the tap would not turn you literally had to "get on the tank" when you wanted water. The first delight of my simple life was wandering in the scrub in a drizzling rain to try and find some wood dry enough to burn, so as to have a cup of tea. Next followed the interesting work of cutting poles to put up a tent. By the time that work was accomplished, the canvas of both fly and tent was wet through. Then the stormy winds began to blow, but, to my credit be it said, that tent stood firm. Wellington's desire for "night or Blucher" would never have been uttered had he had the couch on which I was supposed to rest that night. The only thing to be done was to get an axe and hammer a hole for one hip-bone to sink into, but unfortunately that would not soften the pillow. When the lights were out the concert started. I thought Auckland's new organ was a powerful instrument, but size for size, the mosquitoes in that cottage came an easy first. They seemed to be all fitted with giant trombones. If it be true, as I have once read, that only the hen mosquito makes music, one cannot help sympathising deeply with the silent partner of the firm. Curasa bitter and deep did I utter that night on the head of the whaler captain who deliberately sent an old cask of water full of mosquitoes ashore in New Zealand, in order to punish the Maoris for some offence. May his punishment be ever to sit in Hades surrounded by mosquitoes playing trombone solos. But, stop! Even for such a crime that punishment would be too severe.

Day came at last, bright and sunny. Now for the joys of a simple life. The women folk of the party arose languidly, and when they entered the room that was kitchen, scullery, diningroom and parlour, their faces looked as if an epidemic of small-pox had broken out. You see, those mosquitoes had been waiting a year for another Christmas performance when it was "lights out" the night before. "Nice soft beds, my dear," I remarked. "I trust you rested comfortably?" In my courtship days I thought my wife had expressive eyes, and she certainly did give me such a "killing" glance that I attempted no more pleasures of that kind. By the help of damp wood and plenty of newspaper the kettle was made to boil in about an hour and a quarter—no gas-rings in the simple life—and after breakfast we went on to the beach. Now we had the delights of wandering round bare-footed and paddling in the briny ocean. But even that has drawbacks, for the sun took notice of all flesh not used to such exposure, and at night a lot of whitening and water was required to cool the blistered necks, faces, arms, legs and feet. We had many other delights of a simple life, such as occasional visits from a Maori bug, who courteously projected an odour to intimate that he had arrived. Then, by way of diversion, one kiddie trod on the business end of a bee, and seemed much consoled upon being told that it was the bee and not the child who died

in such cases. There were other pleasures to relieve the monotony, such as blackberries and gorse about the cottage, which had an enlivening effect upon barefooted people. After a fortnight of the simple life I seemed to understand fully the remark of a quiet-looking settler. It was: "I often wonder what fun you folks see in leaving the comfort of a town when you have only two weeks in the year to really enjoy yourself."

Auckland Through German Eyes.

A BOOK BY DR. MAX HERZ.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CITY AND PEOPLE.

Dr. Max Herz, who practiced his profession in Auckland for some time, has set down his impressions in a book entitled "New Zealand: the Country and People," published by Mr. T. Werner Laurie. He was greatly impressed by the beauty of the site on which Auckland has been built, but has a good deal to say about the failure of the people to make the best of their opportunities in laying out the city, although he observes with reference to all the four chief cities of New Zealand that though scarcely fifty years old, they can yet stand comparison with European cities as far as sanitary arrangements and water supply, canalisation, lighting, medium of traffic, fire brigades, etc., are concerned. The buildings, public and private, he is severe upon. The Town Hall design is "humdrum and conventional, in the eternal monotonous so-called Renaissance style; the Art Society's hall is a fearful construction, something like a donkey's face in stone;" the new General Post-Office, like the Town Hall, is built in an unsuitable place and impossible style. Of the Art Gallery he remarks:

"The Auckland Art Gallery is certainly miles ahead of similar places in New Zealand—where soiled canvas hangs like washing on a clothes line; it contains some good English landscapes, and a fair number of copies of old masters. A true lover of art would like to see more of the latter, for only by studying them can local aspirants learn. But the absolute failure of the New Zealand landscape painter is very distressing. Such beauty around him, and nobody able to do it justice! The Maoris alone have found a faithful portrayal in the young Auckland Goldie, whose Maori heads surprise one by the accurately detailed treatment of the subject and the reality of the colouring." Of the Maori collection in our museum he has nothing but praise. Speaking of the people he says: "The people in the Auckland streets are like those of the other cities, of healthy, robust appearance; in serviceable, though not elegant clothes. The boys are generally seen cap on head, pipe in mouth, and hands in pockets. Everybody seems to know everybody. They greet each other with a familiar nod of the head and never with any special reverence. The young girls here, perhaps more than anywhere else, are, for my taste, far too fond of a fluffy, flimsy style of dress, waving ribbons and fluttering lace; too much frippery and imitation finery."

"The Auckland is filled with the spirit of citizenship. No other city has had such gifts and bequests handed over to her. Picture galleries, libraries, gorgeous parks, and a magnificent organ give evidence of the love of her children. The Auckland is hearty, amiable and hospitable, and goes out of his way to welcome the stranger. The constant contact with the outside world, the frequent visits of foreign men-of-war—German, American, French, Austrian, Italian, Russian and Japanese—have widened his horizon, cleared his head, and freed his cerebral folds from the cobwebs of prejudice and bias. To part with Auckland will sadden the heart of anybody who has ever resided there."

Here is his description of the views from Mount Eden and Cornwall Park—"But most beautiful of all is the view from Mount Eden or One-tree Hill. Who ever has once stood up there on a sunny day, and let his eyes rove over the scene, will never forget it. At his feet are deep, grass-covered amphitheatres; the old craters. Below, the broad undulations of the land; green grass as far as the eye can see; hedges of broom and gorse and rows of dark pines and cy-

presses. Low, grey, cyclopic walls of lava stone divide the landscape into large fields, where sheep and cattle graze. Far away lies the city, with a faint haze of smoke over it, and before it the green-blue mirror of the Waitemata water. Scattered among the fields are the suburbs with their villas, houses and bungalows enclosed by their flower gardens. Then the eye wanders over the isthmus towards Onehunga, dives into the Tasman Sea, and goes back over the meadows over the half-hundred extinct volcano cones, till it meets the wide expanse of the Pacific, where the beautiful outline of Rangitoto shows on the horizon. There is such breadth, such grandeur, and yet such delicate charm in this landscape picture. Evening glows up in gorgeous colours—crimson, yellow, orange, violet. Quiet spreads over the town; the city becomes empty—it is night. Sombre and black the silhouettes of the heights stand against the dark blue starry sky. Slowly the moon rises out of the sea and casts a glittering band of light over the waters that ripple towards the shores. And in this silvery path a sailing boat crosses the view—a fishing yacht on the homeward voyage. Who will blame the Aucklanders for being proud of their city? Rudyard Kipling read their souls when he said of them:—

"Last, loneliest, loveliest, exquisite, apart—
On us, on us, the unworshipping seasons smiles,
Who wonder 'mid our ferus why men depart
To seek the Happy Isles."

The author has contrived to give a large amount of information with regard to the country and its most characteristic features in a small compass. He deals with the origin of the country, according to Maori myths and in the light of geology, with its position and size, its flora and fauna, its climate, and with the life, nature and arts of the Maoris. In the section on New Zealand as a constitutional State, the writer gives an excellent resume of the history of New Zealand from its discovery until the present time. The third section shows an enthusiastic appreciation of the various phases of New Zealand scenery. The whole subject is treated in a masterly and interesting style, and the author's text is supported with over eighty pictures and a large map.

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