

THE SCENERY WITHIN OUR GATES.

Now that the great World War has resulted in the peace we all so devoutly longed for, and people are again able to pause and get the true perspective of the trend of events during the years of upheaval, many soul-searching questions are already being asked that for very shame or fear of ridicule will remain unanswered. That statement is not only true of international affairs, but it applies with equal force to the smaller affairs of life within our own Dominion.

Why, for instance, should it have required a set of War Regulations, carrying with them the embargo on foreign travel, to bring home to New Zealanders the fact that at their very doors and within the shores of their own country lies scenery of mountain, lake, and frozen glacier, rivaling and even surpassing the much-vaunted grandeur of the more civilised and tourist trodden scenic resorts of other countries?

Yet it has been so, for from north to south of the Dominion you may hear the same story from the residents of tourist resorts. Never have they had such seasons as since the war started, even in the best of the so-called tourist seasons. And bear in mind these visitors to the resorts are New Zealanders, not oversea trippers, and that these same mountains, lakes and glaciers have been silently beckoning to them for all their lives and they have taken no heed until the War Regulations closed the exits of their country, and they had to turn perforce to such resorts as lie within the Dominion.

These are the people who each year heretofore took their trip to Australia, the Islands, or even further afield, confident that their own country could offer them nothing in the way of competitive pleasure and relaxation. Will they again stray afield after having, even though by compulsion, discovered the majestic grandeur of our own scenic resources? We think not. The realisation of the magnitude of our scenic endowment is coming home very thoroughly to the New Zealander, and as each season the enterprising companies catering for our relaxation increase the facilities of travel and bring once distant beauties within easy travel reach, so each year a greater number of those who inherit this magnificent birthright get the nearer vision, and eventually, but surely, come to grips with mountain pass and snow-clad peaks.

One excursion in particular stands out in looking back over many trips to all possible, and almost impossible, places in the Dominion that we have covered, and that is "The Grand Motor Tour." The title at first sight looks an Americanism, almost flamboyant in its claim, but in actual fact it is no misnomer. It "is" grand every foot of the way, and the fact that the journey is accomplished in the utmost comfort in high-powered motors, driven by tried and skilled drivers, does not in any way detract from the pleasure experienced. It is almost too luxurious and much too swift, for although the drivers are in every way most courteous they have their schedule to keep and can afford short time to linger on the road. And those mountains want time. Time to appreciate their eternity and overwhelming grandeur, and time for the individual to realise that only clean things, and thoughts, and health belong up there.

The journey is not tiring—it is too beautiful, and the constant opening up of new vistas keeps the senses keenly strung for each fresh sight. No attempt at detailed description of the trip can be made here, it would take a book to itself, and a big book at that, to open up a mental vision of the journey. And then it would be badly done, for some things cannot be described—they must be absorbed.

A motor trip of 300 miles, which touches a height of 4000ft.—where else can it be had? Everywhere care is taken that no human need should go unserved—morning tea, afternoon tea, good meals and excellent accommodation are to be had all along the route, and at any point the journey may be broken, to be continued at a later stage when one is rested or has sufficiently absorbed the beauties of that particular spot.

To show the comprehensiveness of the tour, without attempting a description, it is sufficient to say that the following places are touched at: Starting from Fairlie, the home of the Mt. Cook Motor Co. Ltd., the order of the tour is as follows:—Lake Te Kapo, Lake Pukaki (here

a fine view of Mts. Cook and Sefton), along the shores of Lake Pukaki to Tasman Valley and the Government hostelry the Hermitage, on again to Omarama, up the Ahuriri River and over the Lindis Pass (3000ft.), through grand and wild gorges. Then Pembroke and Lake Wanaka. Pembroke to Queenstown takes one through the Cardrona Valley and over the Crown Range Pass at a height of 4000ft.

To rush this trip would be to lose much of its beauty and the mental rest that should be experienced. Break the journey, not once but several times. Those who conduct the tours are prepared for every vagary of the traveller, and courtesy, dispatch and certainty of safe arrival have done much to make the "Grand Tour" the premier trip of the Dominion.

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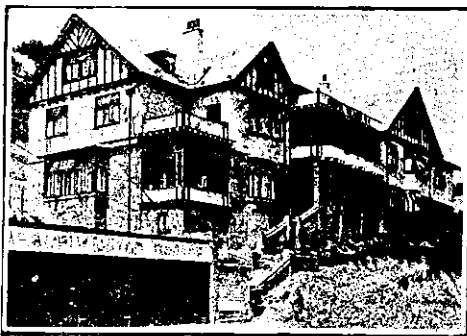
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