

bearing down on them, separating them from Bodmin and Nottingham; and who are they, anyhow?

They are caused to tremble, being only a few transplanted ordinary people, not specially tough or talented, walking in gum boots or sand-shoes among the appalling impersonal perils and strangeness of the universe, living in temporary shacks, uneasily, as reluctant campers too far from home.

They are on the defensive because if they didn't put something between them and the awful, patient, immemorial bush and the imminent Pole and the ambiguous smile of the darker race, these things would fall in on them and crush them. They would be crushed thin like dead leaves and the Polar south wind would blow them away to nowhere.

Hence the depleted vitality, the weariness of the secret, eternal struggle, the heart unrecoiled, but at home in another place, the mind preoccupied and closed against strangers, being closed against the menacing strangeness of an alien hemisphere.



“— women getting on with the chores.”

At least (Miss Kavan concludes) that's how it looks to me in my picture. And how should I presume to criticize the people who venture to trust themselves to those weird, unearthly, resplendent islands, lost, lonely islands, implacably blockaded by empty antarctic seas? In my picture these people look mad and heroic because they have courage to go

on living at all in the face of that alien terror and loveliness, nothing between them and the South Pole.

That is all of Miss Kavan's article we have space for here. The paragraphs which follow are from a letter on the same subject — New-Zealanders — by a member of the Royal New Zealand Air Force. The writer of this letter was born in Europe, where he has lived for the greater part of his life. He has been in New Zealand for a few years.

One of the first things about New-Zealanders he comments on is what he calls their method of expressing goodwill. Instead of saying you are a very nice fellow and thank you for buying a penny's worth of lollies in my shop, the friendly woman behind the counter will say, “Turned out nice again.” And the liftman, he says, having gone up and down for the 37th time and having safely guided the 150th person up to the second floor still smiles kindly at you and says “Rotten weather to-day.”

And if, he continues, you should meet the wife of a member of the 1936 “All Black” team (in other words one of the highest dignitaries in the country) it will be quite impossible to start a conversation with her other than by saying: “This season is really much wetter than the last one,” or the other way round.

It's important to note, this observer says, that the actual state of the weather has very little to do with the uttering of this strange good will signal. It may be overcast and windy, yet you will still meet a smiling face and affirmative reply if you say: “Nice day to-day.” And, again, this summer may be the hottest for years, yet you will still find enthusiastic followers if you point out that this is the worst summer you have ever come across and that it seems a strange thing that the seasons should have changed such a lot.

And this will often be the starting-point for some inference that the world is no longer what it ought to be and that it is probably God's wrath that has caused these changes of weather and, if not God's wrath, that there is something strange going on somewhere; or that the bad weather has been caused through the thunder of the guns on the plains