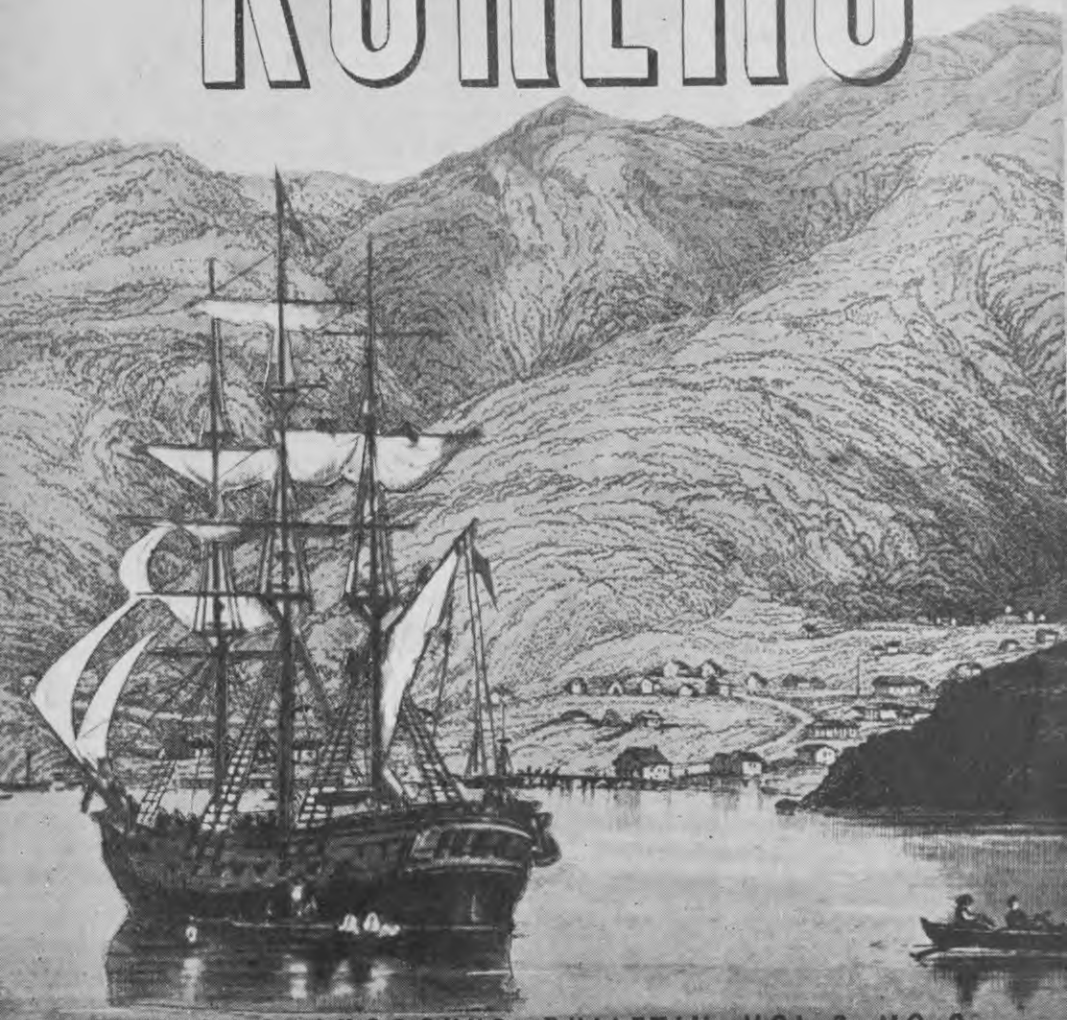
KORERO



AEWS BACKGROUND BULLETIN VOL 3 NO 3
LYTTELTON PAGE 3

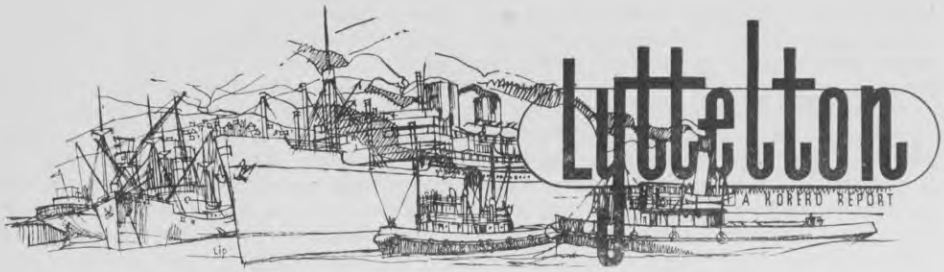
VOL. 3, No. 3 MARCH 12, 1945

KORERO

IN THIS ISSUE

Contributions to Korero

You are reminded that a maximum sum of £3, payable in canteen orders where there are canteens under New Zealand control and in cash where there are not, will be divided among contributors in each issue. It is necessary, therefore, that all contributors should send us number, name, and full address. Remember, too, that articles are not the only contributions we are looking for. We would like to see also short paragraphs, black and white drawings, and verse. There is space, too, for your comments and inquiries, provided you keep them short. The address is: "D.A.E.W.S., Army H.Q., Wellington." Mark your envelopes *Korero* in the corner.



EXCEPT POSSIBLY for its drabness, a mark of its age and nature, Lyttelton, main port of the South Island and third port of New Zealand, presents nothing extraordinary. The port itself is a natural inlet on the north-western side of Banks Peninsula, that hill-fringed knob of land thrusting into the South Pacific from the edge of the 3,000,000 acres of the Canterbury Plains. It has an inner harbour at Erskine Bay, about half-way along the northern side of the inlet; and behind the harbour, where the slopes of the hills are less steep than in the neighbouring bays, is the town, wider east and west across the foot of the hills than deeper from south to north towards the summit.

The port is not a difficult one for mariners. Just inside the mile-wide entrance the depth at low water is seven fathoms, or 42 ft. It gradually lessens to 5 fathoms opposite Gollan's Bay, nearer the heads than Lyttelton, and from there a dredged channel leads to the inner harbour. This channel, 400 ft. wide, is 34 ft. deep at low water and 40 ft. at any high water. Perhaps an idea of what these figures mean in terms of shipping that can use the port may be gained from the dimensions of two British warships which visited Lyttelton before the war. One, drawing 31 ft. was 794 ft. long with a displacement of 32,700 tons, and the other, drawing 29 ft., was 590 ft. long with a displacement of 20,000 tons. The draught of cargo and passenger vessels using the port ranged up to 32 ft. 4 in. Since the war vessels among the twenty largest in the world have visited Lyttelton.

The inner harbour, where the ships tie up, is an area of 106 acres of water enclosed, except for an entrance 500 ft. wide, by two breakwaters. Here, jetties, and breastwork wharves with more than 12,000 ft. of berthage provide space for thirteen overseas vessels with inter-colonial and coastal shipping as well.

Unlike the two larger North Island ports, Auckland and Wellington, Lyttelton has no cargo-sorting sheds on its wharves, and as the port is at present there is no room for them. It has wool and grain stores and a cool store where outward consignments of farm products can await shipment, but there are no sheds where the inward cargo can be sorted and lifted by the consignees. All the main jetties carry railway-lines, and cargo is transferred direct from truck to ship and ship to truck. The discharged cargo is sorted in sheds in Christchurch, seven miles beyond the hills. And that is why it is sometimes said that these yards mark the western extremity of the port. That is partly why, too, the future of the port has for many years been a subject of controversy, why those interested have divided themselves into groups supporting schemes for a new port more accessible from Christchurch and for a road under the hills to Lyttelton. And perhaps this may be partly why the township bears the marks of age so plainly.

The railway-line which connects Lyttelton through the tunnel under the Port Hills with Christchurch—the first line in New Zealand incidentally—is an electric one. But steam-engines shunt the trucks in the Lyttelton yards and push and pull them to and from the wharves. And as the noises in the port, apart from the rumour of working cranes and grabs and the clipped, half-throttled bleat of the gulls, are chiefly the sounds of engines puffing and whistling, the whine of wheels on rails, and the crash of shunted trucks,

so the smell of the port is chiefly the smell of engine smoke, coal smoke combined at times with smoke from ships in the harbour.

An easterly breeze carries the smoke to the western hills, where it sometimes obscures the houses for a time before it is swept upward and dispersed; a light southerly brings it more to the middle of the town. But when the nights are calm the early mornings may show a bank of smoke lying like fog over the port just below the topmost fringe of houses. It disappears, of course, when a breeze gets up. But it is years of smoke which has stained the corrugated iron, the brick, and the wood, and deepened the lines of age in the town. Yet if the women sometimes complain it is hard to keep their curtains clean and to get their washing white, minor disadvantages like these are really to many of them of little account. They have lived in the port all their lives and their affection for it is the kind that grows from intimacy.

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The early settlers began the work of establishing Lyttelton on its present site before there was any development to speak of on the other side of the hills which divide the port from the Canterbury Plains. For many years now the limitations of access to the port and of the methods which have been necessary for handling inward freights have been considered by the people of Christchurch and, indeed, of other parts of the South Island as an obstacle to the Island's development. Lyttelton is not only the port of entry for imports for Christchurch and other parts of the Canterbury Province. It handles the greater proportion of farm produce sent to the North Island. And, in addition, more than £3,600,000 worth of wool, meat, butter, and cheese left there every year before the war for markets overseas.

In the early days of settlement, the South Island got a flying start in agriculture. In the eastern, southern, and northern parts were large fertile plains, rolling downs, and hills without the forests which in a large part of the North Island had to be cleared before the land could be used by the farmer. There have been nearly one hundred years of development since then, and now the land you look down upon from the top of the hills above Lyttelton, the Canterbury Plains extending one hundred and fifty miles north and south and forty miles inland from the sea, is the principal crop-growing area in the country. It produces more than 70 per cent. of New Zealand's wheat, 53 per cent. of the oats threshed, 65 per cent. of the barley yield, 73 per cent. of pulse crops, and the bulk of the commercial potato crop. It grows also some of the finer wools, raises fat lambs for the frozen-meat industry, and produces some butter and cheese.

Before the war, Lyttelton's annual wool exports averaged 93,431 bales, valued at £1,712,178. Her meat exports averaged 581,138 cwt., worth £1,611,427; her butter exports 76,065 boxes, worth £244,234; and her cheese exports 17,160 crates, worth £74,026. In 1939, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,275 ships called at Lyttelton to discharge imported goods and lift these exports. They had a tonnage of 2,198,480, which was 14·4 per cent. of the total tonnage calling at Dominion ports. The manifest tonnage of cargo handled in Lyttelton was 731,189, or 8·8 per cent. of the New Zealand total. Judged by any of these standards, the number and tonnage of the shipping visiting the port and the tonnage of cargo handled over the wharves, Lyttelton was then the third port of New Zealand.

For a long time the people most active in the campaign to improve access to the sea from the plains divided themselves into two main groups—those whose remedy was to build a new port on the Christchurch side of the hills (and there were subdivisions of this group), and those who wanted a road under the hills to Lyttelton. The supporters of this latter plan seem to have won the day, for, though Cabinet has not yet given its approval, the Public Works Department is now preparing preliminary plans for the tunnel and working out the route of the proposed road. What this work will cost is not yet known, but a preliminary estimate is about £750,000.

The future of the port after the tunnel road is through is a subject in which many people show a lively interest.

Perhaps the most commonly expressed opinion is that the inner harbour would have to be extended to the east to make room for additional facilities which improved access would require, a scheme which would probably cost at least £2,000,000. That is probably looking well into the future, but it's a subject on which Lyttelton people, and many other South-Islanders, are always ready to express an opinion.

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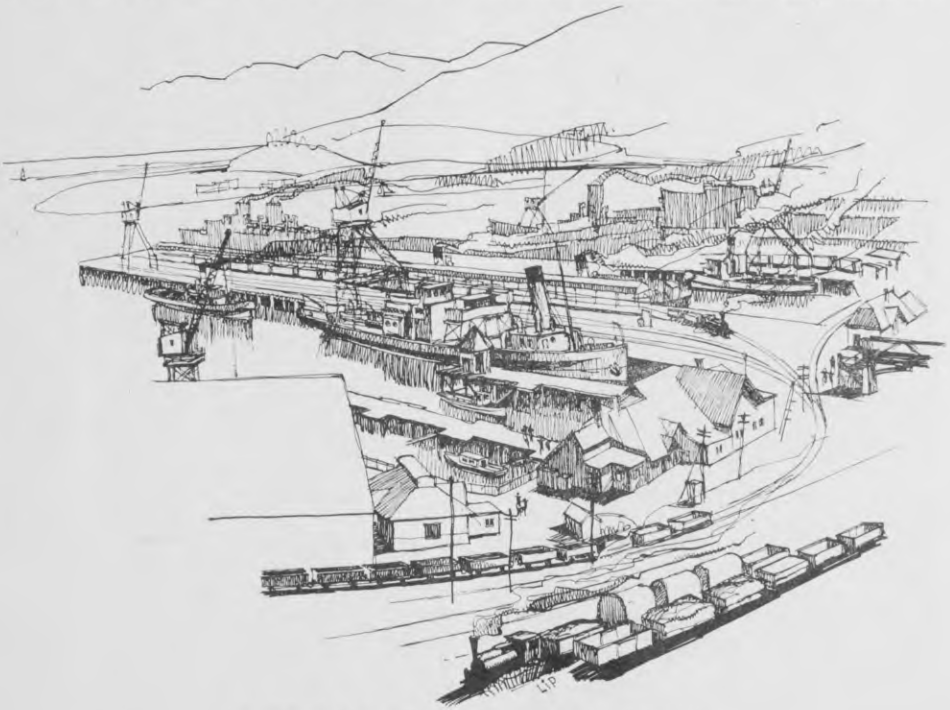
The grain and produce, meat, wool, butter and cheese which pass over the Lyttelton waterfront are the life-blood of the town, as well as of the port. Remove the port and there would be little justification for the town's continued existence. Lyttelton, by any standards, is a small place: the population of the borough is 3,200, of the borough and environs 4,500; and it's probably true that at least one member of most families gets his living directly or indirectly from the waterfront. Not that Lyttelton couldn't absorb all the men of every family. It could, if more of them were manual workers. But, as things are, many of the women and men white-collar workers have to go off to Christchurch, and Lyttelton imports the extra manual workers required to satisfy the demand. About 55 per cent. of the 670 members of the Waterside Workers' Union, the largest single group of workers, live outside the port, 75 per cent. of the 100 permanent railway workers, two-thirds of the 110 men who work in Anderson's foundry, the largest private industry.

This shortage of local work for women has encouraged one Christchurch firm of shoe-manufacturers to set up a new factory in Lyttelton. Labour is short in the cities now, and this firm has found that by taking its factory to the port it can be assured of workers, because they save the amount of their daily train fares to and from the city. Other manufacturers are also adopting a policy of decentralization, though they have not



A section of the waterfront from the eastern hillside.

built their new factories in Lyttelton. Generally they find that, as well as having their supply of labour assured, the extra freight costs incurred are more than balanced by the low cost of land and rates.

The Lyttelton waterfront has been working under the bureau system of engaging labour for nine years now. It was the first port in New Zealand to adopt the system. "And," the bureau manager said, "the men wouldn't like to go back to the old way again." Under the old system, foremen of the various shipping companies stood on a small platform or block with the men awaiting employment before them and nominated those they required to work their own ships. The trouble with this "auction block" system, as it was called, was that each company tended to give preference to a certain group of men. It engaged the same men first all the time and employed others only when the preferred group were all at work. This meant very often the available work on the waterfront was not evenly shared; and that's what the bureau system tries to avoid.

The system was introduced to equalize hours—not wages. To equalize wages would be practically impossible, since there are twenty-four different kinds of work on the waterfront, paid for at varying rates. The members of the union nominate the classes of work they are willing to do. They may nominate only one or two of the twenty-four kinds or most of them; and only on the kinds of work they nominate are they employed.

The shipping companies tell the bureau the number of men required for each of their ships arriving in the port, and the bureau allocates them so that, as far as possible, the hours of work over a four-weekly period are equal. When there is a shortage of labour and there are overseas ships, particularly food ships, waiting, gangs of men may be transferred direct from one ship to another. And it is when this happens that it is hardest to keep the hours of all the men on approximately the same level. But the bureau seems to manage it all right.

"A" Grade union members, physically fit men who can do most kinds of work on the waterfront, are guaranteed a wage of £3 6s. a week. Slack times are perhaps not as frequent as they were before the war, but they still occur, as they did in Lyttelton just after Christmas, when wages had to be made up to the guaranteed minimum.

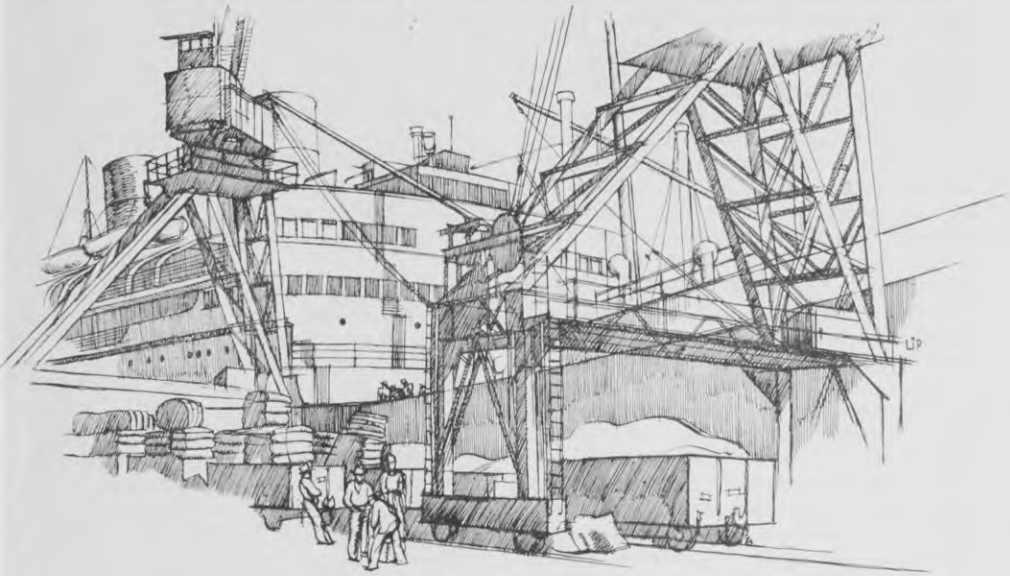
Though managed separately, the bureau is responsible to the Waterfront Controller, who is also the final authority in local waterfront disputes. The watersiders have a disputes committee of their own which first tries to settle any differences which may arise with the employers. If it is not successful, the dispute goes on to the Waterfront Controller. The system seems to work all right, for in the last ten years not more than three disputes on the Lyttelton waterfront have ended in stoppages of work.

The union also has its own disciplinary committee, which beside having power to deal with any members who break union rules and regulations, is doing what it can to put down pillaging of cargo. There is at least one case on record where a man, fined for this offence, was expelled from the union.

Outside the Waterside Workers' Union, the largest groups of workers are with the Railways Department, the Borough Council, the Harbour Board, and Anderson's foundry, down by the tunnel mouth. The foundry employs 110 men, but the manager said he could use 150 if he could get them. He thought, however, his staff was likely to be reduced rather than expanded. Eighteen of his skilled tradesmen were due to enter the Army with the call-up of men from industry for the replacement scheme, and if they went he said he'd have to pay off about 40 men and stop work on certain jobs. He was not complaining about it; only giving an instance of some of the wartime difficulties facing manufacturers.

This factory has been working fifty hours a week for the last eighteen months. In the early days of the war it tried up to one hundred hours, but found it couldn't work more than fifty and at the same time keep the accident and sickness rate at a reasonable level. Fifty hours' work means fifty-five hours' pay, which is 37½ per cent. above the award rate. "And," said the manager, "the lower-paid workers need it these days to live."

However that may be, Lyttelton has not lagged behind in national savings. At the end of November last, when the latest figures were taken out, it had 769 accounts, equal to approximately one-sixth of the population. The total deposits were £20,103 and the value of bonds sold £13,933, a total average per head of population of £9 os. 10d. "This," the postmaster said, "compares favourably with most other places." The figures do not, of course, include ordinary Post Office Savings-bank accounts, which, on the whole, are more popular because money can be withdrawn from them at will.



Loading wool for London.

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The early evening dimness in Lyttelton may catch the visitor unawares. It is not that it descends upon the port suddenly; rather it does come slowly, so slowly that by a stranger in the town its approach may not be noticed. Before half past five on any February day there are shadows on the bluff above the oil-tanks and below all the ridges of the western hills. They move down on the town almost imperceptibly, until the houses and trees have become "the dull drowsy figures of a strange mystery." It is only in Lyttelton that the night has come. The sky is not dark. The sun is still on the tops of the eastern hills and in the bays on the south side of the inlet.

People who live in Diamond Harbour, on the south side opposite Lyttelton, say the port loses two hours of sunshine a day. One of them tells a story about the Diamond Harbour launch sailing out of bright sunshine just outside the breakwaters. "When we landed in the port five minutes later," he says, "the street lights were on." That may be an exaggeration; but it is true that you can leave Lyttelton by train when the night has begun and arrive in Christchurch seventeen minutes later in sunshine. It's like making a curious little journey back in time.

Once, at this hour every day, a man rode round the port on horseback and with a long pole lit the street gas-lamps. He rode round again at daybreak to put them out. That was a long time ago; perhaps twenty-five years or more. And when the Borough Council lit the streets with electricity, and the houses too, it made one of the comparatively few changes which have had any significant

effect on the life of the port. Changes are, of course, occurring all the time: streets are tar-sealed, an occasional new house is built, one or two of the old buildings are reconstructed, electric cranes installed on the wharves. But most of the changes are superficial: they make no deep mark on the face of the town. Neither do they alter the essential sounds and smells of the port nor the way of living of the people.

Some would like to see a large part of Lyttelton reconstructed. Most of the houses are old: one, still occupied, was partly prefabricated in England and brought to the port before the First Four Ships. They have a variety of shapes and sizes. Some are built of corrugated iron. At least one which became vacant recently was found to lack amenities such as bathroom, washhouse, and even kitchen sink. And some betray their age in sagging verandas and lifting iron on the roofs. In a survey of Lyttelton in 1936, 24 per cent. of the houses were found to be unsuitable for the people then living in them.

The Town Clerk says the Council does its best to see that housing is improved, but finds this difficult without the law behind it. "What we need," he says, "is a slum clearance Bill." Others suggest that the Council should undertake a housing scheme of its own with money borrowed from the State, and still others would like to see the number of Government houses in the port increased. But Lyttelton has only seven applicants for State houses on the waiting list, and it is considered unlikely the Government will build any more houses there until the needs of Christchurch have been reduced.

The port's water-supply, which has sometimes been strained, is to be the Council's main concern this year. It is to be improved at a cost of £8,000. The plan is to sink additional wells at Heathcote, at the Christchurch end of the railway tunnel, and lay a new pipe-line through the tunnel to the mouth at Lyttelton. The Council has other suggestions for public works on its list, such as making a recreation-ground on the reclaimed mud-flat area, preparing a residential area at Cass Bay, west of the port, tar-sealing roads and improving the water-supply at Diamond Harbour, and it may be one of these it will use as a rehabilitation scheme when the war is over.

Last year was a good one financially for the Council and it was able to put £2,500 into bonds. It is hoped to use this after the war with a Government subsidy to provide employment for returned servicemen. And Lyttelton will have its fair share of them. Approximately 90 men from the port are overseas on service now. Fifty-one have returned, 18 are prisoners, 27 have been killed, posted missing, believed killed, or died of wounds, and 2 are missing. So about 188 men, or roughly 6 per cent. of the port's population, have been away with one of the three services. The killed include three boys of one family and the only two boys of another.

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It was a grey February morning with the tops of the hills above the port hidden by slowly moving cloud. Lyttelton looked drabber than ever. Heavy rain had been falling through the night. It was still falling; and down near the jetties great pools of water lay between the railway-lines. The only people about seemed to be the shunters, and you couldn't see much of them in their oilskin coats, gum boots, and peaked-and-slouched felt hats. In the Coronation Hall, the watersiders' hall, a couple of men stood by a fire, talking. Except for them, the hall was empty. Work

Lyttelton's Time Ball Station. Once a day the ball used to drop from the masthead to the base to give the port Greenwich time.

was off for the morning, off until 1 o'clock, and would be probably put off then for the rest of the day. Near the door to the secretary's office was a small poster: "The Truth About Greece. Price 3d. Get your copy here."

Inside the office the secretary, alone, was sitting on a high stool at a desk. We asked him if the men were really interested in Greece. Did they ever express their opinions on international affairs? They were interested, he said, and occasionally talked about international affairs at their monthly stop-work meetings. "It's got to be something exceptional, though," he said. "We're interested, but we don't have much time to talk about these things. Industrial business first. We did discuss Greece and we passed a resolution. We didn't pretend we knew all about it—just asked the Government to look into the matter."

On the streets, in the bars, and in the restaurants you naturally don't hear much talk about anything except local affairs and events on the waterfront. Particularly the waterfront. What's coming tomorrow, what has she got, what is she taking? And when you consider the town's complete dependence on the port an inward-turning like this, a concentration on domestic day-to-day affairs, can scarcely be surprising.

But up the hill we found that, if the Public Library is a reliable guide, the people don't read much either. The library, with a subscription rate of 7s. 6d. a year, had 160 members, 5 per cent. of the population, and not all of them were full-year members. But then a good number of its 6,000 books were old—backs coming off and covers torn—and the room which housed them was overcrowded. Changes were being made, though. With the assistance of the Country Library Service, the library was to open in March as a free library, the nearest to the City of Christchurch. "And," said the Town Clerk, "we'll be disappointed if we don't then get a thousand members." Rangiora, with the competition of two book clubs, has a free library with a membership of 50 per cent. of the population. Kaiapoi has one with a membership approaching

Most of the houses are old and they have a variety of shapes and sizes. Some are built of corrugated iron.

50 per cent. Lyttelton, which also has two book clubs, aims to reach about 30 per cent. of the people, and if it succeeds it will have a membership just about the average. Amongst a proportion of its population, however, it will have to compete with the libraries of Christchurch.

Under the new system each resident will be entitled to one ticket which will allow the holder to take out one book, though at present only two tickets will be allowed to each family. Extra books will be available at 3d. each. Not only has the Council agreed to spend more money on books this year, but the Country Library Service, in addition, will supply 470 books every six months and make available its loan collections, request service, and magazine service.

What do the people read? "Current light fiction," the librarian said, "books by war correspondents, anything on the international situation." And she added, "But the men like westerns and crime. Something that will make them forget." An inspection of the shelves showed that, if dilapidation was any criterion, the most popular fiction included that by such writers as Sax Rohmer, Grace Richmond, Margaret Pedler, Gene Stratton Porter, William MacLeod Raine, Joan Sutherland, Peter B. Kyne, Kathleen Norris, Jeffrey Farnol, Warwick Deeping, Jackson Gregory, Ethel M. Dell, Sapper, Taffrail, P. C. Wren, and Francis Brett Young.

As in any small town, Lyttelton's places of entertainment are strictly limited. You can go to the pictures at the Harbour Light Theatre or take

time out at billiards. But unless your interest is in sailing or in local societies and functions, about the only other way to broaden the fields of possibility is to spend an evening in the city. A train leaves Lyttelton just after 7 p.m., and on any week-night a good proportion of its passengers seem to be young folk going to town. For them, their port, marked with the drabness of its age and nature, is probably a dull place in leisure-hours; but while they seek their pleasure in the city, many people from the other side of the hills find theirs in Lyttelton. To those whose acquaintance with it is only a casual one, the waterfront is a fascinating place.

MODERN VERSE

MORE LETTERS TO KORERO

The title, "Modern Verse," under which you publish my letter in Volume 2, No. 24, is ill-chosen.

I have already listened to an indignant wail from a colleague who is "surprised at my sweeping condemnation of modern verse."

I do no such thing.

If you use the word "modern" in a chronological sense only, I recognize it, but to me poetry is poetry, whether it is of the age and vintage of the Venerable Bede or of contributors to *Korero*.

Corporal Gilbert and I are really at one. He says, "For me, anyway, the significance of a poem lies in its content . . . form, imagery, method, and approach . . . present the meaning with the sharpest possible impact and greatest significance and enable the poet to distill into a few terrific words his whole comprehension of the world or that part of it with which he deals . . . result 'beauty.'"

I agree. All I ask him to do is to read his own composition again and measure it by his own standards as expressed above.

To show that I can "take it," I submit for the criticism of any readers who may be interested another effort of my own.

SEAPORT SUNRISE

A promised tinge of orange in the sky
Above it, palest green; below
The purple loom
Of haze-enfolded hills.
Wan light upon the sea
Comes stealing from the East, while in the West,
Still hangs the pallid mirror,
Moon.
But lost is all the glow.
And magic radiance which infused the night
When she rode
Queen.
And now the busy boats,
Glide out to putt-putt-putter-putter,
Putter on their way.
Drawing straight lines upon the lineless sea.
The little waves,
So restless, yet so languid, ceasing not
Their sighing on the shingle and the sand.

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All shattered by a truck upon the road;
The rattling milkman with his morning load;
The bawling syren of the earliest train;
Banished is glamour; it is day again.

Sandy.

I read with interest your correspondent's views on a modern poem, and I should like to know whether his quarrel is with Corporal Gilbert's poem or with the rhymeless form of modern poetry. I assume the latter to be the case, and therefore I must protest.

I am not given to writing poetry, but I read it often, and for indefinable reasons I enjoy much of the rhymeless "rythmless" poetry of to-day. I am not here giving an opinion on the literary merits

of Corporal Gilbert's poem, but in the best examples of the style he seeks to follow there is much to enjoy and much food for thought. There will always be some who prefer the rhyme and measured beat of "Away in a manger, no crib, &c.," to T. S. Eliot's "Journey of the Magi." The latter is stark, the statements are pithy, the feelings of men are tersely recorded, and, oh shame! the lines are broken. T. S. Eliot was moved by something he saw in the nativity, and he wrote things he saw in his own style. He was sincere, and his picture is long lasting in my mind. Those who think poetry should be an evenly flowing song will not like it, but the picture is there, the emotions and intellect of the poet were roused, and he made no attempt in setting it down to force his imagery into a set form.

The generation which followed the Great War, so far as its poets were concerned, was disillusioned, very mistrustful of the ancient landmarks, and when its poets broke into print their work was characterized by the same cynical and rebellious spirit. Bursts of genuine emotion are rarely as evenly voiced as Shakespeare's utterances, and "modern" poets have deliberately avoided the artificialness of the even metre. Their poems were "deliberately and intuitively awry." Nature does not work in straight or even lines. Her work is marked by a series of irregularities and curves, else would our trees and hills be symmetrical and our rivers like canals. It is the abruptness and variety in Nature which is so refreshing—and so it should be with poetry.

I agree that much of modern poetry is worthless, but so are many "ancient" poems honoured by inclusion in the "Oxford Book of English Verse." I admit that many modern poems are mere imitations of the masters' styles, but I have no doubt that the work of the genuine modern poet will last. Some, indeed, complain that these modern poems are hard to be understood, but I do not think that clearness of expression is everything. Some of John Donne's poems, for example, take a little working out, and the same applies to a host of "ancient" writers. Clearness of expression is NOT everything, the understanding of a poem depending on the intelligence of the reader. There are some who are unable to understand even a subtle limerick. Perhaps modern poetry is a trifle incomprehensible, for the following reason:

The modern intellectual poet has in his mind a vast number of associations—associations in the realms of psychology, involved politics, science, and the diversified literature of the day. His thoughts traverse regions not known by the ancient poet, at least as far as the technical phraseology is concerned. In consequence, his allusions often take a little catching up. The ancient poet had *his* mind crammed full of Grecian and Roman mythology, and drew on this store for his metaphors and allusions. This calling-up on the part of the old poets of the dead heroes of the ancient work baffles any person who has not had a classical education, but the poet did not worry about those who differed from him in this respect. What was good enough for them is good enough for the poets of to-day.

I am enclosing a poem by Aaronson entitled "Windy Day in Provence." It would not have gone down in Tennyson's day, but maybe your readers will enjoy it. I wonder what they think of it. Is it sufficiently regular for the likes of the orthodox reader of poetry?

In closing I must recall the remark on the modern poet, T. S. Eliot. It was said that he has many imitators, including himself.

"1 P.W. Camp."

WINDY DAY IN PROVENCE

By L. Aaronson

The cypresses are looped with wind.
The poplars besom the swinging sky.
Squat dark trunks, hands on hips,
Plant their feet in the fleeting grass.

Across his face the sun's hair
In golden wantonness is blown.
The mauve down of mountain-spines,
Ripples like cat's fur backward stroked.

Under the bridge the rods wag.
Over the bridge the wires sing.
The river round the stolid drums
Beats blue to green and green to gold.

Wind at wide hats like captured crows.
Wind at the heart like running surf.
And wind upon the wild sky
Like Van Gogh's paintbrush wild with pain.

From "Modern Poetry, 1922-34."

A PHILOSOPHER LOOKS BACK AT NEW ZEALAND

By J. N. FINDLAY

After ten years in the Chair of Philosophy at Otago University, Professor Findlay lately left New Zealand to take up an appointment in South Africa, his former home. This article was written for the *Otago Daily Times* on the first stage of his journey by air.

PAINLESSLY, IN the soaring élan of mystical modern engines, one is lifted out of New Zealand, painlessly it slips away from one, an inert and powerless picture; the whole process is far too rapid for any valedictory tears. Is it then truly possible for them to melt away so easily, those seemingly solid mountains with their spiky Chinese contour, those undulating pastures that one loved to stroke spiritually, those precipitous vantage points from which one gazed on the blue vacancy of southern seas, those faces and voices, whether kind or unkind, that caressed or oppressed one, those quaint, shabby, agreeable streets and buildings that constituted for a while the whole architecture of one's world? Yes, indeed, for such instantaneous dissolution is the lot and law of all things experienced; they vanish incontinently, leaving behind them only that inner residuum from which one can at best raise wandering vapours in the sad self-indulgence of memory.

What, then, would one cite as most truly memorable in one's ever foreshortening and receding picture of New Zealand? One might perhaps choose, as less personal and more readily communicable, that strange, senseless conflict of classes, that battle of the élite and the masses, which gives an unexpected piquancy and vividness to New Zealand living. Such conflicts would be quite in order in the major social structures, where power and wealth are vast and divided with the grossest inequity, but they are truly surprising in a structure where there is all too little of power and wealth to be battled for, and scarcely anything in the way of disparity to be adjusted. Historically, however, the situation offers nothing extraordinary. The small city States of Greece, poised perilously on their rocky citadels, and with equal peril on the fringes of starvation—whose wealthy pursued simplicity and achieved vulgar ostentation as much from necessitous circumstances as from inward preference—these small city States were after all the classic battleground of rich and poor, the seat of all those unmeasured animosities which could only be satiated by periodical essays in extermination.

Certainly there seems to be something of that classic rancour in the small cities of New Zealand. Outwardly, indeed, the garment is notably seamless. They extend before one, immense, formless aggregations of closely similar wooden houses, some spruced with paint, some weathered like an ancient schooner, some graciously or vulgarly Victorian, while others are as graciously or as vulgarly modern, but none displaying any distinctive marks of aristocratic or plebeian tenancy. Inwardly, also, there are as few observable differences. Everywhere one sees the same autumn-tinted carpets, the same half-drawn blinds, the same tassels and satin. Everywhere one finds the same faltering taste in pictures and decorations: one hears the same conversations and listens to the same

radio programmes. Everywhere one finds the same material comforts, the same fanatical cleanliness and order, the same superb middle-class virtues and regrettable middle-class evils. And yet one gathers with astonishment that half of these wooden houses—situated possibly on some faint slope or eminence—are tenanted by a high nobility of the oldest vintage and the haughtiest pretensions, while the remainder are inhabited by obscure masses who will never "count socially." And both the élite and the masses believe profoundly in these differences, and are passionately concerned either to maintain or to remove them. And though the sectional barrier is totally invisible, it is none the less electrically charged. And woe to any member of the high nobility who strays across the wholly imaginary zodiac which divides the social firmament, or who ventures to speak of "levelling" in a land where State action and other slower social forces have practically levelled every difference to the ground. We may prophesy that neither he nor his seed will be allowed to prosper, and that whatever shreds of reputation or consideration have been left him by the men will be gnawed from his bones by the inveteracy of the women.

Nôr is this queer conflict simplified or mitigated by all the useless, unreasonable voices of those who persist in chanting of direst revolution in a key suitable to other times and circumstances and who turn every fact and problem in New Zealand into dialectical smoke. From these less than any one dare one expect a glimmer of realism and lucidity in social matters, from these less than any one a fragment of constructive help and guidance. For while they may be skilled in using facts to the greater glory of their theory, and in using individuals in the service of their future world order, they are as little interested in a true understanding of the former as they are interested in co-operating with the latter. And since their future world order, though sketched in scientific phrase, achieves at best the poetic clearness of John's heavenly Jerusalem, it would be rash to trust them with the smallest enterprise, let alone with the whole refashioning and direction of society.

And one remembers further, in one's ever-narrowing perspective, how all these strange antagonisms were heightened and embittered by the war. For while the war might have embalmed genuine differences and appeased antagonists who were fighting about something, it only served to deepen the schisms between opponents who were fighting about nothing. The nobility might have seen in it yet another opportunity for that unreasoning self-immolation in the service of a system whose merits they only inadequately appreciated, while their opponents might reasonably have seen in it the least imperialistic of wars waged against the most debased of enemies. And all parties might have rejoiced in such a happy harmony between the paths of patriotism and political progress. Yet both preferred to quarrel over their several reasons for pursuing a common end, and both sought and discovered in each other the comfort of an enemy within the gates. The war made manifest the deep illiberalism always inwardly characteristic of New-Zealanders. They sought scapegoats for the undischarged animosities which were held in leash by their peacetime meekness. Some found such scapegoats in conscientious objectors, in refugees, and in university professors, while others found them in

newspaper editors, in returned soldiers, and in doctors. And all liberalism and liberty fell by storm in one salient incident, the regrettable silencing of Jehovah's Witnesses. For here was a body which had done no more than exercise the traditional Protestant privilege of heaping curses on "the Scarlet Woman"—curses which had never hitherto affected that lady's health or reputation; which had done no more than exercise somewhat rashly a gift of prophecy and interpretation; which had refused, quite canonically, an offering of incense to Imperial Caesar deified; and which now found itself manacled and muzzled when one of its more provocative exponents had fallen a victim to religious violence. And liberalism and liberty seem to pass away utterly in the ensuing silence of the lay and clerical world. The two old ladies of Wairoa, who lay murdered for a fortnight without attracting any neighbourly attentions, were not stricken down in any atmosphere of more absolute indifference.

And looking back over all the strange, strained episodes in this telescoped perspective, one admits with some reluctance that New Zealand, being what it is, could scarcely have been better governed in these latter years than it actually has been governed. And one is also forced, with some hesitation, to discover in its principal governing influence the indubitable lineaments of a statesman. For who else could have held together a nation of which a considerable part faces the world on Kipling, while the rest tries to face it on the Marxian dialectic? And who else could have combined an unsurpassed war effort with so large a measure of progressive legislation? More perhaps from necessity than from choice, more perhaps from circumstance than from principle, he has directed New Zealand wisely and in its best interests. And while we, in the historical foreground, may see unpalatable features of current policies, posterity with its discerning eye for major landmarks will judge differently and more favourably. Posterity, too, will see a steady trend towards well-adjusted, unfanatical solutions of the basic social problems, while we, in the historical foreground, see only too many crippling compromises and arrests.

And now these new Arabian genii have removed it utterly from my view, the country that I liked so well and criticized with such asperity. The whirr of the mystical modern engines continues; I must attune myself to novel and perhaps less-pleasing prospects.

THE WRYBILL PLOVER

By "Caffe" with wood engraving by Mervyn Taylor

In books and articles on the birds of New Zealand, several of our native species are usually singled out for especial mention as being unique in one way or another. The Kiwi, the Moa, our many Penguins, the Kea (the mountain parrot with an acquired habit of eating flesh), and the Huia (in which male and female have different shaped bills), all come in for attention. Usually, too, there is some mention of the Wrybill Plover, the only bird in the world with its bill turned to one side.

Few New-Zealanders know the Wrybill intimately, and probably most would not recognize the bird if they saw it, for the

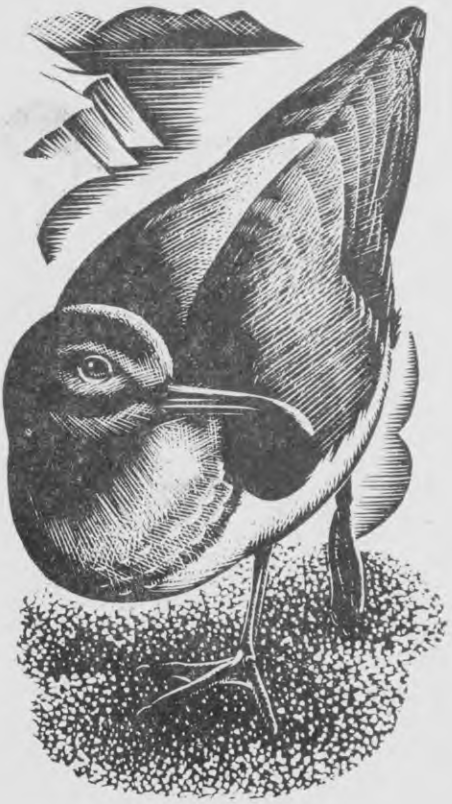
feature which is so unique can only be observed at very close quarters, and the Wrybill is inconspicuous and unobtrusive. Dove-grey above and white below, a single black band across the chest, and only about 6 in. long, there is nothing about the Wrybill to attract the attention as it runs actively across the sand, pausing periodically to pick up a sand-hopper or other morsel. A closer and considered inspection is not difficult, for the Wrybill is the tamest of shore birds, and then can be seen the long and quite solid bill, with a distinct twist to the right about a third the distance from the tip. Many have been the conjectures as to the uses to which this peculiar feature is put. When feeding, it seems that the bird scoops up its food morsels with a sideways sweep of the bill, in which its distinctive shape may be of some use.

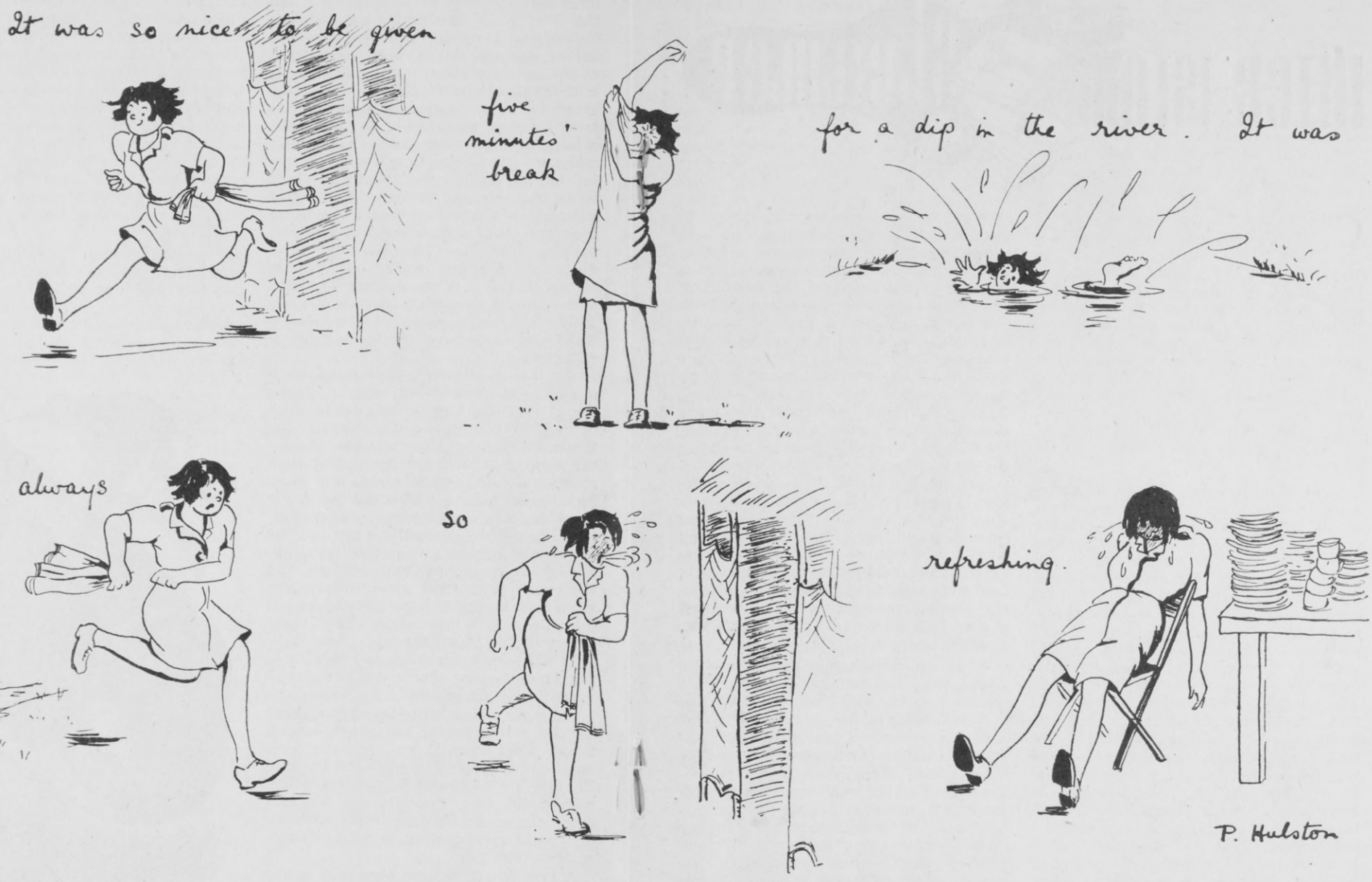
Wrybills breed only in the South Island, on the shingle beds of several of the larger rivers that drain the eastern flank of the Southern Alps. The Rakaia, the Waimakariri, the Hurunui, the Waiau, the Rangitata, and probably other such rivers provide nesting-places on their broad shingle flats, where the two finely speckled grey eggs, themselves wonderfully like pebbles, are laid in a mere hollow among the boulders of high spits. Eggs are laid in September and October, and the young, with their parents, leave the river-beds in mid-summer, when the old birds have lost their black chest bands and resemble their offspring. The Wrybills make for the beaches and lagoons of the east coast of the South Island and immediately make slowly northwards.

The migration route apparently runs up the east coast of the South Island, across Cook Strait, and up the west coast of the North Island to the Firth of Thames, Manukau and Kaipara Harbours, where the vast majority of Wrybills spend the winter, feeding on the mudflats at low tide, and resting on sand or shell-spits at high tide.

A very few birds have been seen on the east coast of the North Island, and some passing further north than Kaipara reach Parengarenga Harbour. Their winter habit is to associate in flocks of from a dozen to several hundred birds, loosely scattered over the mudflats, sometimes in company with Banded Dotterels and other similar birds, feeding on marine life such as hoppers and worms. As the tide rises, the birds are pushed up the flats and usually make their way to a favoured spit of shell or shingle where they roost and rest, often standing on one leg and nestling their heads under one wing. At such times one can approach within a few yards. Before the spring a further moult restores the black band which characterises the breeding plumage, which most birds have regained before they make southward.

The southward migration to the breeding-grounds in Canterbury begins in late July, and must be fairly rapid, as the first eggs are laid in the middle of September. Very small numbers of Wrybills mainly young of the previous year, spend the summer in the North Island.





With the New Zealand W.A.A.C. in the Pacific.

CIRCUMSTANCES THE master of the inter-Island steamer express, "Wahine," was saying, have to be exceptional for our crossing time-table to be altered; we steam to a schedule that is set to the minute and run to routine. In fact, the third officer said (indicating the clock in the wheelhouse) we find this something of a nuisance: it keeps perfect time, of course, but it's electric and the minute hand advances at thirty-second intervals; it means we can keep our position accurate only to the half minute. The ship swung into the stream; we were on our way.

Suddenly, breaking the quiet, somebody came running fast, his shoes smacking against the deck; a someone that was a civilian, hat in hand, and he came puffing up the steel ladder to the navigation bridge. The master unclasped his hands from behind his back, the third officer stepped forward, the helmsman looked and grinned, we wondered; only the ship seemed to notice nothing unusual about a civilian coming running to the navigation bridge with hat in hand. The urgency of the position did not call for introductions. "Captain," he said gasping, looking red, "I'm aboard." He took a breath, and seemed to resent the time it wasted. "But I shouldn't be. There's been a mistake, my wife's at home and I should be too; I came on board to do some business and I've been left behind." He took another breath. In his despair and excitement he dropped his hat, his face was colouring even redder. The ship, with her cargo and mails and six hundred passengers, including the one "left behind," was on the way to Lyttelton, the Wellington wharf was lost far back in the twilight.

There was a pause for the master to say his mind, then to make it up. Away, dimly through the evening, was a racing skiff with crew of four practising, backs bending to the count of the school-boy cox. The light craft was skimming over the harbour water. "Perhaps we can hail 'em; we'll give it a go," said the captain. Orders went to the engine-room, the ship slowly lost speed; a rope ladder dropped over the side swished through the water; to attract the attention of the skiff's crew a seaman flashed, blinked, and winked with an Aldis lamp; the third officer with a megaphone to his mouth began to shout. Unable to understand what had happened, passengers clustered to the rail, wondering and supposing and finally realizing; knowing what had happened, the unwilling passenger stood twisting his hat nervously in his hands with nowhere to look—the dismayed embarrassment on his face showed plainly that if he was a stowaway it was through no wish of his.

"Can you come alongside?" the voice roared from the bridge across the quiet water and through the still summer evening. But to the skiff's crew it was a message easier to hear than to understand: what on earth, you could imagine them asking each other, does a 4,000-tonner with two big funnels want with us, a 12 ft. racing skiff? If the question had been, "Our engines have broken down; can you give us a tow?" it could have perplexed them no more. They lay on their oars. Then thinly across the water came a small voice. "Who said so?" it asked. More shouting from the bridge made the position as clear as distance would allow. Oars dipped and flashed and feathered, the skiff drew

nearer with strong rhythmic strokes. Already our stowaway, his hat now jammed tightly over his ears, had carefully but thankfully lowered himself down the swinging rope steps until he was no more than a foot or two above the water. A false step would land him either in the harbour or through the frail shell of the skiff: he was between the devil and a sea that was salt and wet if not deep blue. He knew it, and so did all the spectators; apart from the instructions from the stroke to his men, there was not a sound to be heard. At last the manœuvring was successful, the passenger stepped as lightly and as carefully as nervousness and haste would allow on the centreboard of the skiff and crouched in such room as there was between the cox's knees.

There was a cheer from the decks. A hat was waved in thanks to the master. Deep down in the bows, the skiff drew away from the ship's side; the stroke gave a last glance to the bridge which seemed to say, "As one skipper to another, I hope you won't allow this sort of thing to happen too often." The master, hands clasped again behind his back, glanced at the wheelhouse clock; it ticked over another half minute. Yes, but how did he get on board without a ticket? the ship's officers asked each other.

We steamed down the harbour into the night. The turbine steamer "Wahine," built in 1913 at Dumbarton, on the Clyde, has spent the most of her thirty-two years' service on the inter-Island run; by now she knows the way as surely as her master. Her speed of about 17 knots would be kept up effortlessly until Lyttelton was reached early next morning.

Partners on the run, the two ships, "Rangatira" (Big Chief) and "Wahine" (wife of Big Chief), sail on alternate nights from either Wellington or Lyttelton, carrying passengers, mail, light cargo, motor-cars, and stock (particularly pedigree animals and racehorses). Sailing schedules allowing for easy steaming generally are run to clockwork, and although delays in departure sometimes are caused (especially at Lyttelton and usually through the late arrival of railway trains carrying passengers and mails), berthing in both Lyttelton and Wellington is usually to the minute. And late arrivals are caused more often by poor visibility and fog than by dirty weather.

More important than strict time-table running is safety of passengers and crew, and the company (the Union Steam Ship Co.) has a record that not often has been marred since the service began in 1879. Through the years there have been mishaps, some, of course, more serious than others, but generally the damage has been not to human life or to cargo, but to the ships. More often than not fog has been the cause. "I suppose you could find your way with your eyes shut after all these years," some one said to the skipper of the "Wahine" while we were on the bridge. "Yes, we have to—when it's foggy," he replied.

In its seventy years of passenger and cargo ship management in New Zealand, the Union Steam Ship Co. has from time to time introduced the latest and most modern improvements in transportation by ocean-going vessels: the first overseas ship of mild steel and bilge keels, the "Rotomahana" (1879); the first triple-expansion steamer to sail the Pacific, the "Mararoa"; the first vessel ever fur-

A "stowaway" is put off.

nished throughout with incandescent lighting, the "Manapouri" (1882); first turbine-driven ship, the "Loongana" (1904); first passenger vessel using oil fuel under Board of Trade certificate, the "Niagara" (1913); at the time of her entry to the Pacific mail-service, the first large ship using motor engines, the "Aorangi" (1924).

The "Rangatira," the first steamer propelled by the turbo-electric system to sail in Australasian waters, was launched in the yards of Vickers, Armstrongs, Ltd., at Barrow in Furness, on the Clyde, on April 16, 1931, by Lady Wilford, the wife of the High Commissioner, Sir Thomas Wilford. Lady Wilford, with the best wishes of the builders, was presented (according to a newspaper report) with "the little memento of a diamond brooch, in the form of a true lover's knot with a big centre diamond, and on behalf of the company, with a bar brooch with three diamonds on platinum." The ceremony was as quiet as possible because of the great depression in the ship-building industry at that time; and with her launching the hope was expressed that she wouldn't last as long as the "Takapuna" (in service round New Zealand from 1883 to 1924) because of the need for further orders.

In all ways the "Rangatira" came through her trials successfully (developing on the Skelmorlie measured mile in the Firth of Clyde more than 22 knots without the full overload capacity of her engines). After an uneventful voyage via the Panama Canal at the easy speed of 13 knots, she arrived at Port Chalmers; she carried no passengers and made no stops except to refuel at Curacao and to navigate the canal.

With the arrival of the "Rangatira" there passed from active service another of New Zealand's pioneer steamers, the "Maori," the first ship to be built specially for the inter-Island run. In her twenty-four years of regular, uneventful service she saw the retirement of the "Rotomahana" and the "Mararoa," and the coming of the "Wahine," for many years her partner on the run, and the "Rangatira." To-day, in spite of her age, she stands by to take over service when necessary. On November 5, 1931, the new steamer berthed to the minute after her first trip. It was the "Maori's" last regular run; and to the new arrival she sent a message of greeting which, when translated from Maori, read:—

> Welcome O Son, the aged must
> give place to the young.
> Quit you like a man, be
> strong, be brave.

The "Rangatira" replied:—

> Farewell O mother of mine. Thy
> son will till the fields you
> have prepared.

And from the "Wahine" to the "Rangatira" came the greeting:—

> Greetings from your brother. We
> join in service for our people. Love.

It's hot enough, we said tugging at our ties, to grow bananas down here; and although we had been down below only a minute or two our hands were clammy and hot when we shook hands with the "Rangatira's" engine-room Chief. We were wearing light summer battledress, and the night on deck had been chilly, the wind keen from the sea; perhaps for that reason we found the heat so noticeable. The Chief said no, it wasn't hot enough to grow bananas to-night, it was only 115 degrees F.; sometimes in the tropics the temperature had risen to more than 140 degrees. After we had been below for thirty minutes or more, we understood more clearly what had caused a fireman on a ship in the Mediterranean to rush from his stoking one noon to the deck where he took a flying jump over the side.

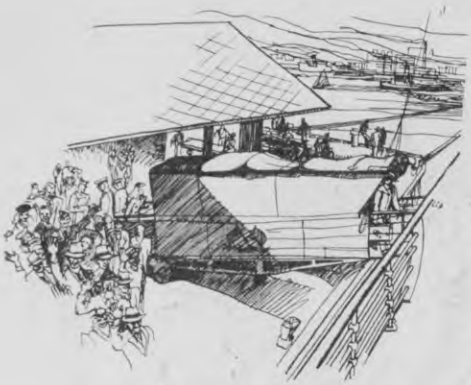
Apart from the heat, the engine-room is more suggestive of a steam-driven power-house than the usual "underworld" of a steamer. And a steam-driven power-house is what it really is: 11,000 kilowatts are generated, enough current to supply all the needs of a small town. In fact, the Chief said, once when Arapuni broke down and Wellington was short of power, a suggestion was made of employing the generating power of the "Rangatira" to relieve the need of the city; the means were there, and it was only technical difficulties that stopped the change-over.

Enough current is generated in the engine-room to supply the needs of a small town.

The first five vessels to be fitted with turbo-electric machinery were built during the Great War to special Admiralty "hush-hush" order; the "Rangatira" was only the nineteenth. Simply stated, her motive power is provided by six boilers heated by oil fuel supplying steam to two separate turbo alternators, each fitted with condensing plant and auxiliaries. The alternators drive two electric generators, which in turn develop the current to drive two double-unit synchronous motors, each of which is coupled direct to one of the two propeller shafts. Isolators, also, are provided to enable each alternator to be connected to its respective motor or either of the alternators to both propeller motors. Provision is also made for one half unit of each motor to be isolated when the ship is running only on one turbo alternator set.

The explanation of the machinery given here is very simple, but it would not be helped, probably, by a visit to the "works": in addition to the heat, there are hundreds of controls, levers, and switches, there are instrument panels, and the whole place bristles with warning devices which sound bells or show red lights as soon as anything is wrong. For instance, take the pumps: there are a ballast pump, bilge pumps, sanitary pumps, an auxiliary bilge pump, fresh-water pumps, oil-transfer pumps, an oil-bilge-well pump, and a distilled-water pump—thirteen of them, all electrically driven. The engineers talk of volts and kilowatts, ratings, phases, and pulses, balancer booster sets and excitation purposes, r.p.m.s, s.h.p.s, and B.T.H.s. The only thing we had no doubt about was that everything went; the only thing we had doubt about was how.

With the propelling and auxiliary machinery the emphasis is on safety; each unit is duplicated, and should there be a breakdown in one section there can be practically instantaneous switch-over to an alternative unit. It is not hard to believe the claim that a turbo-electrically propelled vessel has never been known to have a complete mechanical breakdown.



Going aboard.

After a time in the engine-room we couldn't help coming to the conclusion that the only thing that doesn't register is the heat. And how any person could stay long enough even to start the machinery is more than we could imagine.

On the bridge it was as black as thunder and blowing a gale. It was nearly midnight and the sea was moving and rolling into blackness, tossing in an angry restlessness: the round moon was falling drunkenly through clouds, pulling, shoving, tugging, and bumping its way so violently through the night that we would have felt no surprise to see it give up its stormy efforts and fall into the sea round us. On watch was the third officer, the helmsman, and the lookout who shares the trick at the wheel (it must be a relief for him to shelter from that tearing wind in the comparative quiet of the wheelhouse). At midnight they will be relieved, not to be called again (except in emergency) until the ship is outside the heads at Lyttelton.

We are running at 17 knots into a sou'wester, an easy speed; the "Rangatira" can steam at more than 22 knots (she has touched 24 knots on the run to Picton), but on the 174-mile trip from Wellington to Lyttelton no such effort is necessary. In 1924 the "Wahine" set an inter-Island express record run of 8 hours 21 minutes (averaging 20·9 knots) that was not broken until 1933 when the "Rangatira" covered the distance in 8 hours 16 minutes. As far as is known, the actual record for the trip is still held by H.M.S. "Diomede," which in 1933 took less than seven and a half hours.

But to-night we are attempting to break no records; the two propellers are turning at only 152 revolutions a minute. No light shows on the bridge except for the faint glow from the illuminated instrument dials. In one corner is the fire-detector panel which encloses the mouthpieces of a number of tubes leading from the engine-room, the holds, and other parts of the ship. A draught of air flowing continuously through each of the tubes draws smoke in any section of the ship into the alarm box. In the holds smoke from a cigarette is sufficient to sound the alarm; and one night a stable lad who was attending his race-horses in their stalls was most surprised and mystified when an officer from the bridge popped his head into the hold and said, "Please put out that cigarette." But the fire detector is only one of the "gadgets" to be found on the bridge. Not the least interesting of the others is the latest in depth-finding apparatus and a Marconi direction-finder. Telemotor control from the bridge is used for the electro-hydraulic steering gear and for use in manœuvring is a bow rudder.

If it wasn't for the howl of the wind, the swish of the sea tops, there would be quiet on the bridge with an almost complete absence of vibration, which is one of the advantages of a turbo-electric-driven ship. On we cut through the night and over the miles. It was nearly 1 o'clock, a light was winking from the coast; somewhere there was Kaikoura with its fishing fleet, its collection of shops, buildings, and houses, its farms, and those high grand mountains behind, the snow, and the bush. But to us there was only midnight blackness, with the regular flash of a light about ten miles away over our starboard bow.

At least there was no fog to-night. Soon we would be passing the "Wahine." Few would know about the meeting of those two ships in the night: except on the boat deck, where an accordion had been playing earlier and people had been dancing and singing, where there were still couples quiet in the even deeper

shadows of the lifeboats, all the ship was asleep. But in the wind the lookout was waiting for the colour of the "Wahine's" foremast light, the second officer was glancing at his watch. This nightly meeting is usually to the minute. Cutting their bulk roundly through the shadow, the lifeboats seemed to keep a watch of their own; there are twelve of them, with gravity lowering davits and hand-worked propellers (like railway jiggers) swung ready for action over the railings. Nearly seven hundred of the passengers and crew can be carried in the boats; and, if necessary, there is plenty more room on the floating rafts.

Since 1795, when the sailing ship "Endeavour" (not Captain Cook's vessel, but a whaler) piled up in Dusky Sound, there have been more than one thousand three hundred wrecks on New Zealand coasts and outlying islands—a toll of the sea that is amazingly high considering the comparatively few years of European navigation in these waters. These wrecks, which have been fairly evenly distributed round the coast, include ships burnt, foundered, and pillaged in addition to the commoner disasters caused by rocks and river bars. And more than forty vessels have left New Zealand harbours never to be heard of again. One of the most interesting of these mysteries was the clipper "Glenmark," one of the fastest sailing ships ever to come to New Zealand; in 1872 she left Lyttelton with a full cargo of wool, £80,000 of gold from the West Coast diggings, and fifty people. She vanished forever.

The year 1890 was disastrous: in ten months five vessels left New Zealand never to call at another port. Polar ice, with its translucent bulk just awash and almost impossible to see, was probably the main cause. It was certainly the explanation of what for many years was known as the "Marlborough" mystery. The stately clipper, on what was her last voyage, left New Zealand with twenty-nine people and a valuable cargo. She never arrived at her next port of call. Many years later she was found still afloat in a deep indentation in the precipitous coast of Terra del Fuego. Her timbers were rotted and green, her ghostly yards were creaking, and on the decks were the bleached human skeletons of the passengers and crew, who had died from starvation and cold. Her end gives an indication of what was the fate of many of those ships never heard of again after leaving harbour in New Zealand.

The inter-Island steamer expresses have never got up to things like that. But they have had their mishaps. Compared with the "Wahine" and the "Maori," the "Rangatira" has not been a lucky ship. After she was launched and shortly before she was to sail for New Zealand she caught fire and damage was caused that delayed her departure by several weeks. In 1933 at Lyttelton she gashed several plates in a collision with the floating crane, "Rapaki." In February, 1936, there was nearly a disaster. Off Sinclair Head, Wellington, in a sixty-mile-an-hour gale she struck a submerged rock, holing herself badly in the bow. With her screws out of the water, deep down in the bows, and with a slight list to port, the crippled ship crept stern first down the harbour through wild weather. There was 30 ft. of water in her forward hold.

For three months the "Rangatira" was in dock for repairs. For ships the Wellington heads always have been a death-trap; many sailing ships and steamers have been wrecked there, the

Good-bye from the boatdeck.

loss of life has been more than one hundred and twenty. Years ago it was often days before news of the disasters was brought to Wellington : once the first the authorities knew of a wreck only a few miles from their offices was when the captain rode into the city on a horse with the information and a request for help. Another time homing pigeons were sent with a message for assistance. Worst disaster of all was when the ferry steamer " Penguin " returning from Picton was wrecked ; the vessel was a total loss and seventy-four of her passengers and crew were drowned

It must have been an exciting night for Wellington in April, 1938, with the water of the storm-ridden harbour whipped by gusts of seventy miles an hour, the wave-crests picked out by glaring searchlights, the wink and flutter of Morse lamps between two cruisers, and a collision between the stern of the " Rangatira " and the bow of H.M.N.Z.S. " Achilles." The steamer damaged herself, and " Achilles " more, that night of a north-west gale when an anchor which was dropped to stop her drifting from control fouled the cruiser's anchor cable. Nearly three years later she holed herself again when one morning of dense white fog she slid gently on to the reef at the western headland of Pigeon Bay, twenty miles from Lyttelton. For ten hours she remained hard aground until she was helped off on the afternoon tide by a tug and an intercolonial steamer. The seven hundred and fifty passengers were transferred to a cargo steamer to finish their journey.

The " Wahine " has been luckier. Probably the most serious of what have been minor mishaps was when she crashed in a dense fog into Pipitea Wharf at Wellington in 1936. For 20 ft. she ground and tore a way through massive piles, iron stanchions, and reinforced concrete to stop, shuddering, only a few feet from the wharf buildings. Pushing, pulling, and straining by two tugs for four hours moved her only a foot ; to stop her filling with water from the making tide she had to be cut from the wharf by oxy-acetylene lamps.

More damage was caused than in all her years of service in the Great War. One morning before daylight in 1915 the " Wahine," then a new ship with an uncommon turn of speed, slipped through the heads at Port Chalmers to sail for the other side of the world. It was 1919 before she returned. The bright brass plate in her saloon summarizes her years of war. It reads : " Record of War Service—H.M.S. ' Wahine '—October 13, 1915, to May 28, 1916, Dispatch vessel to Gallipoli Forces ; July 22, 1916, to April 21, 1919, minelayer. Number of mining operations carried out, 76. Total number of mines laid, 11,378. Presented to the officers and ship's company serving in H.M.S. " Wahine " on the conclusion of hostilities." Not the least of her exploits during the war was on a trip from Mudros to Malta when she landed a direct hit on the conning tower of a German submarine which was preparing to launch a torpedo at her. No one, unfortunately, knows the result : the " Wahine " didn't stop to see.

It's early morning and Lyttelton is still grey. To lessen the force of a wash which once swept a most surprised fisherman and his son off the rocks into what had been, a minute before, a flat sea, and which has caused, sometimes, small craft to smash into each other, the " Rangatira " steams down the harbour at half speed. We are on time—at least, to the half minute. " I have a faint recollection of some pitching, Sir," says the master to the first officer ; but at least last night the waves had not been 40 ft. high ; we would take fifteen minutes to berth (stern first), not the two hours the " Wahine " took (stern first) one roaring sou'-west morning. Soon the passengers are on the wharf and away to their trains. The mail is unloaded ; soon after follow the motor-cars and the cargo from the holds. The horse stalls are swung up from down below. Some of these thoroughbreds, yearlings from the Trentham sales, give trouble. One, a colt, has to be led, coaxed, pushed, pulled, and finally carried into his box. " Must be a stayer," grunts one of the wharfies.

2 THE SOUTH

contemporary ITALY

By CARLO MARINI in the *New Statesman and Nation*, September 30, 1944

BEFORE CROSSING into liberated Southern Italy in June of 1944, I had repeatedly assured my Italian friends that I was bound for a land flowing with beer and cigarettes, cheap food, and plenty of it. These assurances made them curse the Germans with renewed vigour, while they cast skyward glances as if in search of the Allied armies. In spite of the effect of German propaganda, which especially amongst the younger people had managed to leave the impression that Italy was being liberated by hordes of Moroccans and American Negroes, there was a steadfast belief amongst Italians that General Alexander was a wholesale cigarette and chocolate merchant. During our advance into Sicily the mayor of a small town had greeted the crew of a Jeep, demanding to know how far behind them were the chocolate and grain lorries. The crew disclaimed any knowledge of these, whereupon the mayor produced a propaganda leaflet promising food to the liberated people, and his meridional blood boiled at the thought that he might have been duped. This is an extreme example of a general attitude. The mass of Italians now feel themselves to be very little concerned in the war, and since Britain and the United States have occupied their country they expect the two richest nations on earth to provide them with a pre-war standard of living. I have eaten excellent meals throughout Southern Italy, but my hosts invariably apologised for the quality and quantity of their food. Enormous dishes of very fine spaghetti were always cried on to the table with *Non si trova piu niente.* Dishes of peaches, plums, oranges, grapes slid down throats which uttered continuously *Povera Italia, quanto siamo ridotti.* The Italians cannot or will not realize that the Allies are concerned in an unpleasant task which directs their energies into channels other than feasting. Despite the natural poverty of Southern Italy as compared with the North, the population there is incomparably better off than its brothers under the Nazis. The farmers have not been forced to sell their grain, eggs, and live-stock at very low prices. Cigarettes and other minor luxuries are easily obtainable, even though these may be American and English brands sold on the black market, and there is a sufficiency of bread and flour, the basic ration recently being almost doubled.

There are, however, friction and unpleasantness, such as attend any military occupation. The most obvious, although not the most important, concerns women. The Germans, with their organization of brothels, have managed to gain a reputation for "correct" behaviour in some parts of Europe. The Allies, relying upon the morals of the individual soldier, have managed to cause a few unpleasant incidents and an impression which is not generally favourable.

It would be wrong and unfair to insinuate that all Allied soldiers are engaged in a constant debauch, but the Italians talk as much as they breathe, and stories run around the beaches and bars which certainly tend to give that impression. In some cities, girls have had their hair snipped while walking in company with coloured and white troops. This type of incident is usually committed by Italian troops, still in uniform and armed with knives and bayonets, in sufficient strength to safeguard them against immediate

reprisals. These youths present a difficult problem. More strongly than other Italians they defend the prevalent notion that the Italian soldier is the most courageous and the most effective infantryman which any army has produced. There are many stories which bear this out. The most stupefying concerns an Italian officer whose brigade had laid down its arms *en masse* in Africa, after a rattle of Bren-gun fire from one of our platoons. Having resided at Oxford for some years and being able to speak flawless English, he was invited to dine in a mess some fifty minutes after his capture. Here he discoursed on the war in this wise. "You English undoubtedly have the best artillery; the Germans are superior to everybody in their tank arm, while we, of course, have infantry second to none." The experiences of the past hour had apparently been forgotten!

Taking into account this extraordinary view of the war, it is quite comprehensible why the Italians tolerate Allied troops rather than welcome their presence. They feel that these are on Italian soil under false pretences, and this applies especially to the French. "We conquered them, you know, in 1940." There is little hostility to Allied Forces; what there is, vents itself upon those women who, for one reason or another, keep company with the soldiers. In Naples there was a boom in the sale and diffusion of a little broadsheet, written by a street-singer. He parodied a well-known song and sang it in dialect to amused crowds. Cynical and slangy, its appeal to the Neapolitans was instant. The key is struck in the first three lines:—

Che mala fine faie tu che mala fine
quando se nne vanno americane
rimane cu na vranca e mosche mmane
What trouble lies ahead of you, what trouble
When all those fine Americans have gone
And you alone remain to hold the baby.

There are many other similar ditties. One day the Italians will realize that they are singing these songs on the stage and selling them on the street without being carted to gaol; when this realization comes they will apply themselves to work of a more constructive nature.

Indeed, the most effective contrast between a town in German-occupied Italy and one in the South is the amount and diversity of the newspapers and other literature. For many months I had read no "free" newspaper at all, other than Allied propaganda leaflets and an occasional issue of *Avanti*, organ of the Communist party on the Adriatic; this was, incidentally, excellently printed and produced, a model effort giving much hard-headed advice. In Naples, however, one may count ten different dailies representing ten different factions on every paper-stall. In March I had a letter from friends in Rome describing how a host of different publishing ventures were in preparation against the day when Rome should be free. Books and pamphlets were being written, edited, and set aside with the printers' contracts tagged to them, ready for a press action on the grand scale. In Naples all bookshops were displaying pamphlets and slim volumes, touching the present and the recent past. The reappearance of a free press and the very full advantage which the Italians are taking of it are the most encouraging aspects of Italy to-day. Although the dailies tend to sycophancy in their references to the Allies, there is the utmost virility in their general tone. The strangest feature of the entire press is the manner in which the war is to all intents ignored. Factionalism, which is not apparent amongst the people, looms monstrously in the political press, and is concerned almost exclusively with the reconstruction of Italy.

The political situation in Italy is different from that in other countries, where the existence of a faction presupposes some kind of popular support. One obtains the impression, especially in the country, that the politics of a nation are being carried on by a group of professionals who are constantly manœuvring and counter-manœuvring for some indefinite purpose of their own. How far the Socialists, Liberals, Monarchists, and weird partisans of the pre-1920 political chaos have the support of those whom they claim to represent is still a matter to be decided.

At this moment the task of Italian politicians is to educate their people to

an acceptance of reality and show them the road out of the misery which their own passivity brought upon them. The only clear statement of present fact and future policy which I have seen is contained in a pamphlet issued by the Communist party in Naples. It was printed in 1943, and in the first paragraphs pointedly reveals the international position of the Italian people, pointing out how they suffered fascism for twenty years and abetted Mussolini in this and previous years. Its platform consists of three planks. First, national unity on the broadest lines, with the Italian working class as the basis of this unity; secondly, a greater and more energetic prosecution of the war against the Nazis on their soil; and thirdly, the most efficient mobilization of all industrial resources left to them. Two months ago Palmiro Togliatti (Ercoli) spoke at Rome and repeated this programme, laying special emphasis on the need for national unity and appealing point blank to the Allies to arm and equip a large Italian Army of Liberation. He rightly considers that the existence of a considerable armed Force composed entirely of Italian units, pursuing a successful war against the German invader and his Fascist satellites, would give a feeling of unity and purpose to the Italian people which is now totally absent, and it would largely remove the clogging apathy from their national affairs.

If the Communist party has not got the largest support of the Italian parties, it has certainly enrolled the most vociferous and propaganda-conscious elements. Walls in working-class districts are smothered with red paint; symbols and slogans hit the eye at every corner urging death for the King and Badoglio, long life for Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin. Working parties of Italians roar through the villages in American lorries, continuously singing the *Bandiera Rossa.* Other parties remain silent and leave the paint in the shops; their future supporters lie on the beach and tell you, "Yes, there are many Communists, but there are even more who are against Communism. Why don't they show it? Well, they are not very interested in politics. I, for instance, prefer to lie here on the beach and get brown rather than paint walls and attend meetings. When the Allies leave Italy we shall settle our affairs; until then we are helpless. No, I do not know who Bonomi is. Croce is certainly a great man, but I have read none of his works; I am reading architecture, you know, at the university, and he is hardly in my line. Incidentally, when you go back to camp, could you possibly get me a bar of soap? Going already? *Popolo di cinque paste* we call you English, 'five-mealers'; you eat so much. When will we see all these supplies you talk about?"

As I go I notice two new posters on the beach wall. One is the work of the apolitical students from the university and calls for a return to Catholic duty and study. The other demands to know who overthrew Mussolini and who was the natural leader of the Italian people. The answer: *il Re, solo il Re.*

Korero's Competitions

Here are the results of *Korero's* competitions for writers and artists. In the section for short story or descriptive sketch on Service life at home or overseas, only a first prize of £7 10s. is awarded. The winner is 24563 Gunner Jim Henderson, Soldiers' Ward, Hutt Hospital, with a story "The Fatherland (from facts known to Ivan Tong, Kiwi p.w. in Germany)." For drawings a second prize of £5 is awarded to 71625 S/Sgt. L. J. Ferguson, N.Z.T.S., Army H.Q., Wellington. The prize-winning entries will be published in an early issue.

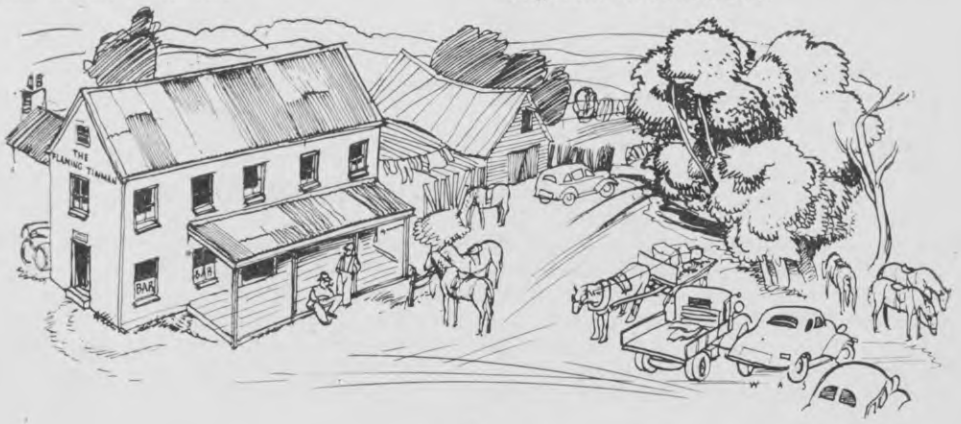
Country Hotel

By DARRY McCARTHY

THE REOPENING of hotels in Invercargill precipitated a far-reaching inquiry into the drinking habits of the people of this country. Eventually the press agreed that standing over counters for a certain limited number of minutes during the day brought to the fore the worst features of the system of consuming liquor away from home. Nobody mentioned that the ideal hotel atmosphere exists in the country—in small places hardly ever recorded on maps, where men ride twenty miles for the nearest available beer.

In these places the pub is set down in paddocks and looks rather like the home of a prosperous farmer, except that it is situated beside the road and has a window labelled "Bar." From the road the dust blows in, and the place has to be cleaned again during the afternoon, but on the whole the hotelkeeper does not mind, because it makes his customers more thirsty. After their long, hot ride they appreciate the liquor, and its consumption becomes something of a social ritual. The harder a man works to get a beer, the better it tastes.

The stock sale in town, which may be thirty miles away, only takes place every week or fortnight. In between times local farmers rendezvous at the hotel, which serves the function of club as well. As they sit on forms in the bar or on sofas in the lounge, the men discuss wool and superphosphates, knowing they have hours of leisure before them. The loneliness of the lives they lead is temporarily mitigated. Drunkenness is rare, because the long ride home over deserted narrow roads will need alertness. Any one in such a state that he cannot be trusted to go away is looked after by the hotelkeeper, who gives him a bed for the night and sends him off in the early morning. The proprietor's responsibility to his guest is a conspicuous feature of country hotelkeeping. He provides meals for those who are in need of such steadying, and counter "lunches" look like feasts. In districts sparsely settled, where every one knows everybody else, good will is essential. The hotelkeeper in town, whose custom is assured, rarely feels such marked obligation to consumers.



Outside the hotel a few cars are parked and an occasional truck. A dozen or so horses are tethered beside the nearest fence. A wife waits patiently for her man to come out and drive on to the store, perhaps two miles away. The proprietoress shows the rest of the women round the garden. Children play in the backyard, and if they leave the gate open cattle or sheep are liable to stray into the property. The atmosphere is one of leisurely well-being. In the tea-rooms, travellers from town gaze open-mouthed at the great piles of food put before them, and with something of the same astonishment at strange country characters, whose weekly visit to the hotel is perhaps the sole relaxation in a busy and solitary existence. Drovers rub shoulders with boundary-riders. In the bar a pleasant hum testifies to the contentment of the men.

It is typical of our paradoxical era that the most civilized drinking takes place farthest from what townsmen are pleased to call civilization.

By 234949

GREAT THINGS, manœuvres. Hours of waiting, hours of driving in convoy, hours in the sun flat on the sweet-smelling grass. Assaulting strongpoints in force, strategic withdrawals, getting captured, going hungry when the travelling kitchen was lost, cutting loose in some one's apple orchard—oh yes, manœuvres were splendid when you look back, but how we detested them then! After the scarcity of leave, the rigidity of discipline, and the inadequacy of pay, manœuvres were the most obnoxious feature of Army life.

For one thing there was all the flapdoodle and solemnity before the jamboree came off. "Manœuvres"—like the name of a disease—was bandied from mouth to mouth in a whisper for weeks beforehand. But none knew when or where—none except the orderly-room wallahs, that is, and they maintained a discreet security silence. Maybe even they didn't know, but wanted to pretend they did. Suspense like this might go on for weeks, months even, and then sometimes the whole scare would peter out with the vague commentary: "The Brigadier's been changed; the new bloke isn't keen on manœuvres."

More often, however, the months of suspense would blow up in a sudden order to pack for a two weeks' stunt. Platoon commanders would get mobile, and read out long catalogues of things to be taken and other things which were on no account to be taken. Specialists, like Sigs., Transport, and Vickers, had to hold a secretive and hasty autopsy on gear. Cooks had to brush the cobwebs from those cumbrous and sooty chariots, the portable kitchens. In something like half an hour after the intimation had been given, every jot of equipment had to be in trim and every man had to be outside his tent loaded down like a travelling bagman. That was organization for you. How we hated organization.

Then followed the idle wait for the trucks. For some reason the transport section and the rest of us never synchronized. It seemed to me that they thought of themselves as the aristocracy of the Army and, as such, complied with aristocratic etiquette by always being late. When they did bump up to the

tents, a nonchalant hour after time, there was usually another dispute to be settled. Were we to carry our own valises or were they to be disposed of in the baggage truck? In the absence of the platoon commander, we *knew* they were supposed to be in the baggage truck. What was a baggage truck for? So hastily converting idea into action, we dumped our gear on the spot. Only when it was all stowed away (rifles underneath) did the platoon commander catch up with our dexterity. "Get that stuff out of there. What do you think this stunt is, a school picnic?" Reluctant, injured, rebellious, we saddled ourselves once more. Total war, that's what it was—total war.

Trucks in those days were civilian vehicles which had been commandeered. You might travel in anything from an ice-cream van to a sheep-wagon. We climbed in and sat humped together, rifles between our knees, circulating our "battle bowlers" on our heads to stop the itch, settling into our web like horses into harness. Then came the first jolt, first of many, as we ground our way in low gear across the camp to the open road.

Unfortunately, manœuvres did not always commence with this sybaritic ease. They were more likely to be ushered in by a protracted route march of some fifteen miles to the setting of the drama. This was the case in the manœuvres at Waiouru. We knew every pebble in the desert road, every stopping place for burning feet, every creek at which to gulp water, because we had kicked them, stopped at them, and gulped at them on the way to or from, a manœuvre.

I remember those stunts at Waiouru well. Who doesn't? Most of us from the North Island were immured for some time among the frigid tussocks which clotted the skirts of Ruapehu. And of the many aspects of Waiouru life which terrorized the embryo soldier, the most detested was the exercise of manœuvres. No place on earth could flash such kaleidoscopic changes over its face as the Desert Plain. From scalding sand to icy waste was a matter of moments. Distance was illimitable. You could march in any direction of the compass for fifty miles. We did.

I remember one manœuvre. I was a runner to an officer who, being an old fox at the game, reckoned that the most comfortable manœuvre was that spent in captivity back at the enemy base (which, oddly enough, was always the officers' mess). To further his ideas, he always displayed great willingness to be captured—often risking his manœuvre life in the process. Bombs, machine guns, hand grenades meant nothing to Mr. X, provided that he saw capture at the end of the ordeal. This day it took half an hour (which must have raised his average), and I was dragged off with him—but not to the officers' mess. Because he tricked me, bamboozled me properly. As we were led back to the rear lines, we passed a running Ariel. Our guards were thinking of their tea, not of us. Quoth Mr. X: "Grab that motor-bike and hop it back to our own lines. Go on—they (the guards) won't notice."

An order's an order. I obeyed—as injured as a man whose beer has been drunk by some one else behind his back. I knew that even if I did convert the bike (and I had ridden only once before), I would have had the devil's own job in

getting back to our own territory. Miles of tussock, miles of road, miles of enemy lay between me and them—and it was starting to sleet like the South Pole.

I walked up to the bike. I lifted one leg over the saddle. I tried the throttle. A deep-seated roar shook me—but it wasn't the bike—merely its owner. He towered over me:

"What's the idea, mate?"

"Just trying it out," I said.

"Damned cheek!" he said. "Get off." I climbed down slowly and walked away. He hadn't noticed that I wasn't wearing the white arm band of his own battalion. I walked away; it was getting dark; the rain was drizzling down; sleet was mixed up in it like sand in sugar; and while Mr. X was going back to beer and a fire in the officers' mess, I vanished in the sodden darkness.

Every one in these days knows about fox-holes—they're as well known as tea-caddies. Every soldier finds his way into a fox-hole almost as soon as he finds his way into the King's uniform. But in those days back in 1941 it was different. We never dug fox-holes on manœuvres, we built bivouacs—primitive wigwams of sticks and manuka scrub, with a ground-sheet stretched over and tied down to make them waterproof. They weren't waterproof, though—rain always trickled in one way or another, and following the ancient method of torture, dripped mole-cule by molecule down your neck or in your eye. If a storm blew up, the whole penthouse was twitched away like the sheet in a magician's trick, or else the elements, failing to take it from above, tried the underhand way, with flood waters sluicing the ground beneath. Whatever happened "bivvies" were seldom a success.

Another thing that was remarkable about those Waiouru manœuvres was the way people disappeared. It was not unusual for a whole section, platoon, even company to disappear for days on end—just disappear into the vast, un-trodden pampas of the Waiouru Desert. A few days would pass while the manœuvre tangled itself up like a child's fishing-line. Then at the height of the confusion, red-hats on every hill-top, rumours ricochetting right and left, imaginary bombs forming an imaginary hail overhead, the missing company would emerge with triumph from the Vast Unknown, claiming innumerable prisoners and a victory of "strategic surprise." Which done, they would sit down and eat their heads off, having fared meagrely on roots and iron rations during their disappearance.

Those were the days when we played at war in New Zealand. The Pacific dozed comfortably in a lull of false security—Japan, although an aggressor in China for years, had not yet turned her guns to the south-east, whither her eyes had long been glancing covetously. So manœuvres were casual affairs, not taken too seriously. Many of us repented of this flippancy later and wished that we had learnt more on the Desert Plain. Some day, perhaps, we will go back and look at the road on which we marched, the streams we drank at, the holes we dug, and the emplacements we con-structed with so much grumbling, and think, "Well, we were lucky that we didn't have to use them." We *were* lucky.

KORERO
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for servicemen and women in New Zealand and the Pacific

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