

Queer Things They Do in New Zealand



SCENE ON HAMARANA RIVER, NEAR NEW ZEALAND GOVERNMENT'S HEALTH RESORT.

(Copyright, 1922, by Frank Stillson.)
NEW ZEALAND can boast of other things as interesting and remarkable as its labor laws that compel shopkeepers to close on every legal holiday and either Wednesday or Saturday afternoon, and fix the lowest wages that can be paid any one at \$1.25 per week. For example, oysters grow on trees in New Zealand.

Tree oysters thrive all along the coast, but the biggest bed is just outside of Auckland. Here the sea coast is low and covered with thousands of squat trees, which are submerged by every tide. At these times the oysters fasten themselves to the branches, where they wax big and fat, and from which they are picked in proper season by the men who ply their trade when the tide is out. The two owners of this bed are being made rich by it.

Then everybody is extremely polite, almost painfully polite, down New Zealand way. Alphonse and Gaston of the comic supplement realms are real characters here. A train steams into the commodious depot at Wellington, the island's capital. "Wellington, please," the conductor gently announces to his passengers. After thanking the conductor for getting them safely to their destination, the travelers disembark. "This way to dinner, please," the depot attendants politely sing. The train makes ready to start. "Seats, please; but don't hurry," is the trainmen's admonition. And the conductor waits five minutes after the gates are closed for everybody to get comfortably seated before whistling to the driver to get his engine in motion!

Even law-breakers are treated with unctuous consideration. The policeman carries neither club nor firearm with which to hurt one's mental or physical feelings. Whenever he finds himself compelled to make an arrest the bluecoat almost begs the prisoner's pardon and invariably takes him to jail in a cab! There is no rough handling; even the prisoner is courteous. It's all very strange to a Yankee who has been brought up on stern commands of "All aboard!" "Step lively, or you'll get left!" and "Here, no monkey business; you're a prisoner," as a rude hand of the law grabs you by the coat collar and unceremoniously hustles you to the nearest patrol box.

The time lost in being ceremonious is made up by the New Zealander by word trimming. No one says, "I'll make a memorandum of it;" it's always, "I'll memo." "One pound sterling" is universally boiled down to "quid," and even Premier Seddon calls a shilling a "bob." The lower classes in England use these terms frequently, but in New Zealand the highest as well as the lowest scorn anything else. This cutting of words is carried to such an extreme that a stranger really needs the service of an interpreter the first week or two he is on the island.

The right and only man for the traveler in trouble over the language or anything else to seek out is the postmaster. New Zealand's postmasters come pretty near being "the whole thing." They are registrars of births and deaths. They collect all taxes, municipal and governmental, and all customs and internal revenues. They insure their fellow citizens in the government's life insurance company and receive their deposits in the Postoffice Savings bank of New Zealand, also a governmental institution. This bank has 212,436 depositors and the money deposited by them aggregates \$32,000,000. Over one-fourth of the island's population keeps its money in this institution.

But it is as a performer of wedding ceremonies that the New Zealand postmaster is most fondly regarded and most famous. There is neither fuss nor flurry in the ceremony that the postmaster performs;

neither does it cost a penny. A month beforehand the love-sick swain fills out a declaration of intention in the presence of a postmaster. At the expiration of thirty days he and his blushing bride seek out the official and in the presence of two witnesses sign their names in a court register and to their own marriage certificate. And that's all there is to it. Custom doesn't even demand that the bride allow the postmaster to kiss her.

The postmaster who holds the record for marriages is "a maiden lady" in an interior town. The lads and lasses of her district will have none of preachers, because 'tis tradition that every marriage at which she officiates is a happy one. New Zealand postmasters hold their jobs plenty long enough for tradition and countryside snags to grow up around and about them. Once a New Zealand postmaster, always a postmaster, for only misconduct on his part can separate him from his life's job.

New Zealand's leading utility man is easily the postmaster; his oldest competitor is the railroad station agent. As the government owns the railroads, it demands of its agents that they attend to all the wants of the people that the postmaster can't conveniently look after. Hence, when a farmer decides to sell poultry, he carts a few hundred squawking barnyard residents to town and turns them over to the station agent. The agent kills 'em, and dresses 'em, packs 'em in refrigerator cars, and sees 'em started on their way to Auckland, Wellington, Australia, or London. The government acts as the farmer's commission man, free gratis, all the way through.

The government tries in every way to encourage the farmer. It will lend him money at a low rate of interest, and sell him rich land for a few paltry dollars an acre. It even forbids the railroads to whistle at country road crossings, so that John Dobbin's easy going mare won't get frightened and try to run away.

One of the most unique of the various governmental undertakings is the sanitarium and hospital at Rotorua, the island's chief health resort. It is for the benefit of all indigents throughout New Zealand. If a man has broken down under the strain of too much work, or has contracted a bad case of gout or rheumatism, and has not the wherewithal to undergo treatment, the government gives him three months of free treatment in the sanitarium, with free access to all the mineral baths. If, at the end of three months, the patient is still in bad shape, he is given another three months' treatment. The sanitarium has the island's foremost physicians at its head, a corps of graduated nurses and splendid clinical and surgical facilities.

The most famed of the baths of Rotorua is the Postmaster's Bath. Its reputation is that of reforming for all time the most confirmed toper who bathes in its all but scalding waters. Every New Zealand community has its character who has been made a teetotaler by this spring. Fact is, there are not many "drunks" seen in the islands, and the patriotic New Zealander



MAORI WOMEN IN NATIVE COSTUMES.

always declares, and hauls out statistics to prove it, that less spirituous and malt liquors are consumed there than in any other section of the world. Perhaps the Postmaster's Bath is to blame. Perhaps the government's edict against bringing snakes into this snakeless land exerts an influence. If the government arrests a circus owner who tries to slip in the creeping things for commercial profit, wouldn't it also nab a private citizen bent on securing wrigglers and colliers for mere amusement's sake?

New Zealand's chief vice is horse race betting. A dyed-in-the-wool New Zealander would rather bet on a horse race than make love to the prettiest girl in sight; and the women with peach-blow complexions are plentiful down that way. Like the men, they are enthusiasts over fast horses and spend their holidays and all their spare time at the race courses, betting and shouting themselves into a state of hysteria. Everybody bets, for everybody, from babies in arms to tottering grandparents, thinks its all right and sees no harm in utilizing the "totalisator."

The "totalisator" is the technical name of the New Zealander's method of betting. Under this plan a sum of money, not less than \$5, can be put up by one individual. A whole family often gets up a pool and enters the bet in the name of a member. A ticket is issued on payment of the money to any one of the several cashiers, who rings up the ticket on the horse selected by the investor. The register automatically adds the total amount bet on that particular horse, and at the same time records the total amount put up on all the horses for the race. This operation is in plain view of the public, all changes being displayed on a large machine-faced tabulated board. When the horses are declared to be "off" the machine automatically stops registering. When the winner is announced by the judge, the bettors on the winning horse present their tickets to the paying-out windows and receive their proportion of the dividend, pro rata, less 10 per cent, of which amount the racing club receives 8 per cent for expenses and stake money, and 2 per cent goes to the Government Charitable Aid Fund.

When there are no horse races scheduled or in prospect, the people seek recreation at outdoor bowling clubs and in yachting parties around the coast.

Another queer thing about New Zealanders is their universal honesty. Nobody tries



MAORI JEWEL CASKET.

to steal from you. Hotel room doors are never locked; many have no locks. Hats, coats and valises are left around indiscriminately, and the owners always find their property where they put it. Neither does the bell boy, nor the chambermaid hold up the traveler. They do everything asked of them, and do it cheerfully, without expecting tips. Fact is, tipping is a lost art there. As there are no indoor robbers, neither are there many highway robbers, and the percentage of murders is very small.

A man with daughters need not feel ashamed in New Zealand. He's a political power, a big man in the district in which he resides. All women over 21 years of age can vote, so the man with many daughters often decides a closely contested election. Then, again, women are much sought after matrimonially, for they are outnumbered by the men two to one. There is no need for a woman becoming an old maid in New Zealand except from choice.

The women are good dressers, and the styles are nearly as up-to-date as those of London and New York. But the men are almost slouchy in their attire and certainly strikingly monotonous. Every fourth man arrays himself in an ill-fitting navy blue suit, and nearly every mother's son of them wears a soft cap. A portly man is rarely seen, and when one does happen along people stare at him and wonder from what museum he has escaped.

This butt end of the earth has many natural wonders, among which is a geyser that started business only a few months ago, but nevertheless, is reputed the largest in the world. Its name, Waimangu (the black water), is appropriate, for its water is certainly the blackest that can be imagined. The geyser's streaming surface is about 200 by 350 feet. When it erupts the entire surface is lifted 1,000 feet into the air, and hot, black, seething mud and rocks are thrown about and great clouds of steam envelop everything. The periods of eruption usually last five hours and are very frequent.

The great geyser is near the heart of Maori land. Soon it will be the land of the Maoris no longer, for they are rapidly dying off. They are now a peaceable people and are proud of the fact that one of their number, James Carroll, is a member of New Zealand's cabinet. The island's premier, the Hon. Richard John Seddon, has called this full-blooded Maori "the most gifted and eloquent orator in New Zealand." Mr. Carroll's tribesmen have generally adopted European dress, but the costumes of their forefathers still obtain.

Just a few more words about this land's oddities. If you're at work on a building and fall off from any cause whatsoever and are picked up a corpse, your widow can surely collect \$500 from the building's owner, and often three times this amount. Her claim becomes a lien against real estate, and title even ahead of bond and mortgages.

If you're an American, publish the fact; you will be royally received and entertained, while a Londoner is left cooling his heels in an ante-room. FRANK STILLSON.

Working Women's Home

Boston's home for working women, known as the Franklin Square house, opened last July, was formally dedicated last Wednesday. There are now 266 boarders in the institution and it is expected the limit, 400, will be reached before the end of October.

The minimum rate at which a woman can live in the new house is \$3.50 a week, which includes board, room, heat, washing, light, use of library, of gymnasium, of reading room, of dance hall, medical attendance and admittance to a course of entertainments which will be given in the hall of the building.

There has been established a uniform rate for board of \$3 a week, and it is possible for a woman to have a room for the very small sum of 50 cents a week, but as much as \$8 or \$9 a week can be paid for a suite, which includes a bedroom, small sitting room and private bath. There are fifteen of these suites, and in many instances friends take one together, so that the cost to each does not go above the average rate, which is from \$4.50 to \$4.75 a week.

It is interesting to note that the women who have availed themselves of this institution are exactly those for whom it was intended, many being workers of a professional or semi-professional grade commanding fair salaries, and others being of a more modest class. Among the occupations represented are stenographers, bookkeepers, dressmakers, milliners, teachers, students, shop girls and a few factory girls.

The Franklin Square house is the new name of the building occupied by the New England Conservatory of Music for nearly a quarter of a century.

The central office, administration hall and the postoffice remain as they were in the days of the conservatory. What was the music store has been fitted up as a waiting room, and prettily decorated with potted palms.

The music hall, with its \$8,000 organ and accommodations for 500 persons, has been renamed Haynes hall, in honor of one of the largest contributors to the house. It is the plan of the management to have an organ recital, a concert, lectures or other form of entertainment at least once a week during the greater part of the year, to which the members of the household will be entitled to two tickets for each event.

The dining room will seat 300. The small theater used by the elocution students of the conservatory will be kept for private theatricals and used for small dancing parties. For larger parties the gymnasium will be used.

The surroundings of this new home for workers are particularly pleasant. The building itself is a fine, solid-appearing structure of red brick, with white stone trimmings, and almost takes one side of Franklin square, one of the prettiest little parks within the limits of the city.

The institution is a self-helping enterprise. The charges at present are as close to the actual running expenses as possible and it is the intention of the management to use, in some manner beneficial to the young women, any surplus which may be on hand at the end of the fiscal year.

The Gentle Home

Brooklyn Life: Once on a time a Gentle Girl came upon a Wicked Snake swallowing a frog.

"How cruel!" she cried indignantly, and got a club and killed the Wicked Snake and set the frog free.

The next day it rained, but the day after that it was lovely for fishing.

And the Gentle Girl sat all day in a boat and held a line with a frog hung on the hook at the end of it and the frog was very much alive and struggled beautifully and attracted no end of bass.