

## GRANDDAD RECALLS

In previous numbers of "Provincial Pride" I have told you something of the different conditions that existed when I was a boy and those that exist today. I have tried to portray the people, their homes, their dress, their pleasures, their schools ; the very different roads and means of transport, and even the changing landscape. I have told you of the first telegraphs and telephones, and have reminded you of many things that you are used to but which at that time did not exist ; so on this occasion I propose to tell you just a few things I have previously omitted, as they come to mind.

You already know that tractors were unknown, their place being taken by horses, bullocks, or by a steam traction engine. It was always a matter of great interest to the boys and girls when they heard a traction engine chug-chugging along the road pulling a threshing mill, a chaff cutter, and perhaps a small shed from one farm to another. As farmers had no headers or harvesters such as are used today, they had to cut their grain-crops, and have them tied into sheaves. These sheaves were then stooked, eight or ten sheaves being stood more or less upright to dry and ripen. They were then placed on a large hay cart and taken to some convenient place to be built into stacks, there to await the arrival of the threshing mill and chaffcutter. Building a stack was quite an art. It had to keep out the rain, and to withstand any sudden gale that might arrive.

When the mill arrived it was placed beside the stack and a wide leather belt enabled the traction engine to drive the mechanism which separated the grain from the straw. The straw was built into a new stack and the grain was directed into sacks. Farmers used to feed oat chaff to their working horses, so the mill would be replaced by the chaff-cutter while the oat straw was cut into chaff and bagged. Meantime the boys had a lively time catching the numerous mice that had taken up residence in the stack.

At my home there was an old machine known as the "fanners" which had been used in still earlier times. The grain was separated from the straw and husks by means of a wooden flail. When this was tipped into the fanners the husks and straw were blown on to the floor leaving the grain ready to be bagged. This machine was driven by means of a bullock or horse travelling in a circle and turning a wheel which in turn drove the "fanners".

The traction engine often provided power for other purposes such as sawing wood or driving a bone mill. Superphosphate and similar manures were not then available and bonedust was the next best thing. I well remember gathering up all the bones I could lay my hands on, for we got one shilling for a sack of bones.

During my holidays I was occasionally permitted to go shooting rabbits. The gun was a muzzle-loader and did not use cartridges as we would today. From a leather powder flask, gunpowder was poured into the barrel and then a wad of felt or paper. This was rammed tight by means of a ramrod attached to the gun. Then the pellets were poured down the muzzle and another wad added. This too was rammed firm and a cap was placed on the nipple. When the trigger was pulled the hammer hit the cap which exploded and fired the gunpowder. You then went through the whole manoeuvre once again before you could fire the next shot.

Today, you jump into a bus or motor car and travel over tar-sealed roads at fifty or sixty miles an hour to any place you propose to visit ; but at the beginning of the century it was rare for the average boy to visit any place more than a few miles from his home. You can understand then how a picnic by train to say Evansdale, Puketeraki, or Stewart Gully was looked forward to. Picnics were often district affairs, almost everybody attending. There were school picnics, miner's picnics, Sunday School picnics, and so on. Usually a portable "copper" formed part of the equipment and boiling water was available to all at any time. In the afternoon games were played and races run. There were races for grandfathers, for grandmothers, for married men, married women, and of course for the younger folks. . Some time in the afternoon there would be a lolly scramble when a biscuit tin of boiled sweets would be thrown on to the grass over a wide area, and you collected as many as you could. Sweets were cheaper in those days—about 20 for a penny. For smaller picnics it was usual to engage a 4-horse or 6-horse drag and go perhaps to Woodside or Whare Flat or Henley.

In the home most boys had their Saturday morning tasks. These might consist in cutting firewood, or cleaning the silver and the knives with a cork and knife polish. Stainless steel was unknown and the knives especially soon became tarnished. Or it might be cleaning all the boots (not shoes) with blacking and water. This was a much slower job than it is today—Day & Martin's "blacking" was the regular polish. Even if you ran barefoot

during the week, as many did, one always wore boots on Sunday. Another job for Saturday morning was black-leading the stove or polishing the knocker on the front door, or the brass door handles, or filling the lamps with kerosene.

In my boyhood days it was a regular thing for "hawkers" to call at each house selling clothing, nick-nacks, fish, vegetables, fruit, summer drinks, etc. Many of these were Assyrians or Chinese, and if you patronized the Chinese you could expect a pot of ginger at Christmas time as a mark of gratitude. There were of course other regular callers such as the baker, the grocer, or the butcher. You took your plate out to the gate, chose your meat from what was in the van, and paid for it on the spot.

Others who used to call were the "swaggers", men who had no regular home but who tramped the roads carrying their blankets on their backs, with a billy slung below and their other few possessions stowed away inside. These men used to wander round the country presumably looking for work, but many dodged every form of it as they would the plague. Many used to call at my grandparents' home knowing they were sure of a meal and a hay-loft in which to sleep at night. Provided they chopped some wood or did some other little job of work they also got their breakfast in the morning. It soon became known that on leaving they often put a mark on your gate which served to notify other swagmen that here was a place they could expect a meal, so of course this was quickly removed. Amongst those who thus tramped the roads were a few titled gentlemen who had fallen on evil days. One such (Sir Aubrey —) would sketch you in a few minutes and give you the sketch in return for a meal. As one man remarked : "Strange blokes them swaggers."

May I conclude by summarizing some of the things you see almost every day but which the Early Settlers never or rarely saw or even dreamed of. Such were electric light, electric trams, electric refrigerators, carpet sweepers, toasters, ranges, or washing machines. They knew nothing of radio or television, of pictures sent by wire, of man-made satellites, or of moon rockets, of atomic and hydrogen bombs. Some died without ever having seen a photograph. None ever saw moving pictures in colour or heard synchronized speech. Typewriters and adding machines such as, are used in every office today were unknown to them. Petrol engines and motor cars were seen by very few. Plastics such as nylon or cellophane they knew nothing of ; nor had they seen bull-dozers, ditch digging machines, the huge cranes now used to assist the building of many storied buildings, aeroplanes, or helicopters or hover-craft.

The early settlers would have thought one mad had he predicted we could travel from New Zealand to England in little more than a day, much less to encircle the earth in little more than an hour. Boys and girls, you live in the most wonderful age the world has ever known, a world such as the earliest settlers could never have anticipated. Man has conquered nature. His next great task is to conquer himself so that all may enjoy peace, plenty, and contentment. You are the people who will have to do it.