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Christmas in Mid-Summer

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DOWNTOWN AMES



Christmas in Mid-Summer

by Isabel Crowe

"CHRISTMAS in mid — what? Did you say, 'Christmas in mid-SUMMER!'"

Yes, I did—and I know that to you, with the first snow flurries already here and mid-winter just round the corner, that sounds topsy-turvey. In my country, Christmas does come in midsummer; and, what is more, it comes on December 25 just as it does with you! And, what is still more, daffodils bloom in August, and log fires burn in June, and ———, but why not come with me and see for yourself?

Lying to the southeast of Australia, down toward the South Pole, New Zealand is comprised of two islands. In area, these are about twice the size of Iowa but the population is only about half that of this state.

As we walk down a city street, you see the Union Jack floating from a flag-pole and hear your own English tongue, though perhaps, to you it will have an accent. New Zealand is a British dominion colonized about 100 years ago by English, Irish and Scottish settlers. Of the population today, 95 percent is of British stock; while the brown-skinned, courteous Maori, and a few people of foreign origin make up the remainder.

As you look around, a familiar scene meets your eyes. You recognize motor cars—or 'automobiles' as you call them—of familiar American makes, and some not-so-familiar English ones, for New Zealand imports her cars from the United States, Canada, and England. That streetcar going down

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the center of the road looks familiar too, only here you will have to call it a 'tram"! And by the way, when we take a drive, presently, don't think that your chaffeur is out of his mind when he drives on the left side of the road! 'Keep to the left' is our rule here, you see.

The shops? Why yes, they look much like your own American stores, But notice that each shop, (and please note that we say 'shop' and not 'store'), has a veranda roof which covers the footpath. (Yes, over here your 'sidewalk' becomes a 'footpath'!) These verandas, obliging things that they are, not only protect the window goods from the sun but also protect you and me from the sun or the rain.

But I see you've spied those unfamiliar price cards in the shop windows. That's because New Zealand uses English money—pounds, shillings and pence—and that suit marked 'two pounds' will cost you about ten of your dollar bills. You would have little trouble on a shopping tour—that is, if you remembered that a 'reel of cotton' means a 'spool of thread,' that a 'cardigan' is our name for your 'sweater'. In the furniture department, a 'chesterfield' is nothing other than your own 'davenport'.

New Zealanders like to have tea seven tea times a day. Like you, most of our

American visitors are surprised, then accept it and like it!

Before breakfast comes "early morning tea". In hotels this is served to the guests before they are up; in private homes, one member of the family, if there is no maid, gets up, makes the tea, and serves it to the other members of the household. At seven or eight comes breakfast, then at 10:30 or 11, "morning tea." Lunch, with more tea is served sometime between 12 and 2, and, 'afternoon tea' comes at 4. Dinner is at 6 or 7 o'clock and 'supper' (that's tea number seven) is served and time before the family retires.

These in-between teas menus are really light affairs consisting of tiny sandwiches, cookies, scones and cake. In New Zealand, your biscuit becomes a 'scone' while your cookie is called a 'biscuit' and they taste just a good! New Zealanders like morning and afternoon tea, not because of the tea or the cookies, but because it gives a "break" in the day and sends them back to work with renewed enthusiasm.

Christmas day in midsummer means Christmas dinner in midsummer too. Some celebrants try to enjoy the traditional roast goose and plum pudding, but more favor cold meats, fruit salad and ice cream served either from festive board or picnic basket. Strange

though it seems, it's still Christmas to all of us.

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