



garage built at one end of the house.

No one was in sight. Not even a dog. Green paddocks stretched for acres around us, and the sun shone brightly. This was our idea of a farm property.

We noted, with surprise, that telephone lines led to the house.

The drive curved in a circle, and we stopped outside the front door. We knocked. No answer. Knocked again.

An elderly, white-haired woman came at last. We'd seen a picture of her somewhere. It was Mrs. Shute. "Is this Mr. Shute's residence?" we asked.

'You've no chance'

"This is Mr. NORWAY'S residence," she corrected us.

"Er, yes, Norway. Sorry. We always seem to think of it as Shute," we stammered. "Is Mr. Norway at home now? We are from Australasian Post magazine. We would like a few words with him."

She gave us a quick smile — of sympathy, we thought. "Mr. Norway does not see the Press. I don't think you have any chance of an interview with him. However, if you wait here a moment I will ask him."

She disappeared inside the house. A minute later, another woman appeared, a slight, middle-aged Englishwoman.

"I am Mr. Norway's secretary. I am sorry, but Mr. Norway cannot see you. He never gives inter-

views to the Press. He feels if he makes an exception this time he will always have to do it."

She seemed quite definite, but POST tried again. "Er . . . we know Mr. Norway must be a very busy man, but the interview we have in mind would not take up much of his time. We want to give our readers — who, no doubt, are also HIS readers — a personal pen picture of Mr. Shute . . . er . . . Norway, as he is today.

"We'd like to answer their curiosity about . . . er . . . the kind of room he works in, the hours he works, his other interests . . . some of his ideas on Australia as a source of stories . . . things like that, that no one seems to know about him."

The secretary gave us the same kind of sympathetic smile. "I am sorry. I really am, but Mr. Norway will not see you, not today. If you like I will tell him what you have told me, and perhaps I could write you a letter giving you his answer." We agreed that that would be an idea, and suggested that we telephone her later in the day, to get the author's answer.

"Make it tomorrow," she said. "We are very busy today."

POST gave Mr. Shute two days to reconsider, then we rang back. The same answer: "Sorry, Mr. Norway will not see you. He prefers to remain in the background. He regrets he cannot alter his decision."

Well, we can say one thing about Nevil Shute. He gives one of the politest brush-offs in the business!

Back at the office, we dug out our file on author Shute, and discovered he first became famous in the late 1920's as one of the designers of the airship R100, first airship to cross the Atlantic.

He founded the famous British aircraft manufacturing firm, Airspeed Limited, and was one of its joint managing directors.

Before the war his novels began to take more and more of his time. Eventually he left the aircraft industry to write. Almost immediately he became a best selling author.

In February, 1939, Shute first revealed his uncanny knack of foretelling the future with accuracy. His novel, "What Happened to the Corbetts?" told in detail, and with unflinching precision, the effects of a sudden air raid on Southampton, and the reactions of the people, crouching in air raid shelters, determined never to be beaten.

Fabulous income

Just over 12 months later, all he had foretold came true, when the Nazis made the first of their heavy air raids on the city.

Shute served as a Commander in the Royal Navy during the war, and continued to write. His "Pied Piper" was scribbled in notebooks during off duty periods.

Between 1938 and 1948 his novels earned him a fabulous income. From America alone, in those years, he netted \$269,000 (about £130,000).

ABOVE: Far removed from traffic noises, well away from neighbors, this is the modern home Nevil Shute has built on his 30-acre property near Melbourne. Here he writes, undisturbed.

He was in the highest income tax bracket in Britain, paying 18/6 tax in the £. That was one of the reasons he decided to come to Australia — not the only reason, for Australian taxes are high enough for those with very big incomes.

Shute decided Australia was the country with the greatest future. He had a yearning to get away from a Britain he considered tired and old. In 1950 he and his wife settled in Melbourne. Their daughter, then in her late teens, followed a little later.

Shute didn't come to Australia to retire, and he started proving it almost straight away. From his typewriter came a stream of new novels — "Requiem For a Wren," "The Far Country," "Beyond the Black Stump" . . .

Reviewing "The Far Country," one well-known Melbourne critic said, "During the war we used to say 'Such-an-such an inventor, or such-and-such a general is worth a division of troops.'

"In peacetime, we can truthfully say that Nevil Shute is worth, to Australia, three trade commissioners, a goodwill mission and half a Government department." ●