

BOOKS

PERHAPS HISTORY

KING OF THE BLUFF: The Life and Times of Tahawaiki ("Bloody Jack"). By F. G. Hall-Jones, B.A., LL.B. (Chairman, Southland Historical Committee). Printed by the "Otago Daily Times."

IT is difficult to take a historian seriously who refuses to take himself seriously—announces himself as B.A., LL.B., surely with his tongue in his cheek, making asides to his wife as he writes, and labels one chapter "wholly imaginary." Nor does it restore confidence to discover that the reason why there were no Maori wars in the South Island—wars between Maoris and Europeans—was that the Southern Maoris stopped Te Rauparaha "at the height of his Hitlerite career," out-fought and out-generalled him, and thus prevented a repetition in the South Island of the "savage conflict that ensued in Te Rauparaha's North Island territory."

"It was not the Canterbury Maoris who stemmed the tide: they took the first pressure, fared the worst, and were sadly decimated. Beyond all cavil the credit must be accorded to the Maoris of Otago and Murihiku. It was the Southerners who established a moral ascendancy by the ambush and near-capture of Te Rauparaha, out-generalled for once. They were armed with musket and ball. Their personal prowess was such that Te Rauparaha eventually advised his men not to come to close quarters with the Ngai-tahu, as they were such desperate fellows in hand-to-hand encounter. For two or three seasons they voyaged north to Marlborough, and trailed their coats for months, but the northern chief was content to avoid battle."

If that is history, the author's predecessors in this field have been surprisingly careless. If it is what it so strangely suggests, Southland thinking, it may comfort the residents of Ruapuke, but it will surely raise a smile farther north. However, the author's real purpose was to bring "Bloody Jack" to life after he had been dead for a hundred years, and in this he has been more or less successful. His book-making methods are peculiar, but when you have gathered up and examined all his "bits and pieces," something remains in your mind that could have been a man. (It should be added on behalf of authors and publishers generally that one word only can describe the work of the printers and binders. That word is incredible.)

SOS FROM MOTHERS

WOMEN ON THE HOME FRONT. By Christina K. Guy. Progressive Publishing Society.

THIS is a book which, it may be hoped, will produce some concrete results. The problem of help in the home for mothers of young families, as well as help in country homes, has become increasingly difficult in recent years. Politicians, the Plunket Society, and various women's organisations have all made suggestions for tackling it: some of them disagree as to method, but all agree that it is a matter of national importance, especially as it touches on the problem of population. As far back as 1918, Dr. A. B. O'Brien, of Christchurch, advocated some sort of State scheme for raising the status of domestic helpers so that mothers with young families who, he said, were chronically overworked, would be able to get some assistance. But apparently the time was not then ripe.

What Mrs. Guy does in this book is to collect in concise and lucid form what all these individuals and groups of individuals think about this pressing

problem. She advances no solution of her own, but contents herself with describing what has already been done by several private groups throughout New Zealand, what is suggested should be done here, what has in fact been done along these lines in other countries, and the difficulties that have been and are likely to be encountered. And she ends with the description of a recent conference of important and representative people—an enthusiastic gathering, but a somewhat inclusive one. This is all very well, and probably necessary, but one gets the impression from Mrs. Guy's book that the field of research has been pretty well covered, and that what is needed now is not more conferences, even of important and representative people, passing resolutions, and referring back to sub-committees, but action. The author herself strikes this note of urgency throughout.

ANIMAL WORSHIP

PAGEANT FROM THE FOOTHILLS. By E. Mary Gurney. Oswald-Sealey (New Zealand) Ltd., Auckland.

THIS is a collection of 14 stories written by a New Zealand woman, but reprinted from the Sydney Bulletin.

They are extravagant, improbable, often quite impossible, but charged with a kind of frantic sincerity that proves contagious.

Mr. Bundle and his hunter lead the parade in the half-humorous, wholly pathetic first story. In the others a company of animal heroes and heroines appear, all ridiculously humanised, but nearly all interesting and even appealing. Little scrubby merinos stream over the hill-crests. Whirlwind, the untamed, meets his thoroughbred mare. A Jersey bull fights a Hereford. Polly, the Heifer, adopts a fawn. A Southdown ram turns outlaw till fire and tempest make him humble. And so on. Mary Gurney (who died in 1938 by a kick from a horse), not merely knew and loved animals: she worshipped and glorified them. Her words are extravagant. Her pictures often fantastic. But in spite of everything, her scenes come alive.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

MIHI AND THE LAST OF THE MOAS. Written and illustrated by Lyndahl Chapple Gee. Oswald-Sealey (New Zealand) Ltd., Auckland.

The printers have done their work well.

"Eighty Years in New Zealand," by G. E. Mannerling. 48/6, or posted 49/2, from your local bookseller or Simpson & Williams Ltd., Christchurch.

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