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BOOK REVIEWS

NEW ZEALAND AND CRETE

BATTLE FOR CRETE: Compiled in the Office of the Official Archivist, Army Board, Wellington.

MOST of us think we know the story of Crete; and a few of us do. We know as much, we mean, as any other civilian knows, and as much as anyone is likely to know until the documents are released after the war. Even soldiers don't know more than that unless they are staff-officers, students, or archivists. Well, this little book is not all the archivists know, but it is all they know and are free to tell. It is the story of the battle as New Zealanders saw it and as New Zealand troops fought it, with as much of the part played by Australian and British units as could be understood from New Zealand Headquarters. It was a losing battle all the way, of course, and in the end a complete rout: a battle that made history because there had never been anything like it before; that was confused and confusing till the last shot was fired; that gave Britain's prestige as severe a blow as anything suffered up to Singapore; and yet something of which the New Zealand Division had no reason at all to be ashamed. History, as General Freyberg says in his foreword, will settle the importance of the battle, but those New Zealanders who died there died in the great tradition.

That is enough for us in the meantime. The battle began on the morning of May 20, and on the night of May 31 our men still "lay with their backs to the sea ready to fight." But it was over. We had been overwhelmed and chased right across the island and these pages show why, if not always how. It is a pity that so much space (relatively) is devoted to what happened before the attack (four chapters out of ten), and that the dust and smoke of battle are once or twice as thick on the printed page as they were over the roads and villages. The illustrations are admirable, but the narrative loses itself at intervals in picturesque writing and forgets the diagrams and maps. On the whole, however, the survey rises to the theme, and associates New Zealand forever with one of the storied islands of history.

A GIFT BOOK

LADY NEWALL'S NEW ZEALAND GIFT BOOK. Published by P.E.N. (New Zealand Centre), Wellington. Ordinary edition, 12/6. Limited edition, signed, one guinea.

ALL gift books have the same purpose, and the same pre-publication story. The editors collect as much material as they can get for nothing, sift it out, but retain enough to make a genuine bargain for any type of purchaser. That is what happened in this case. All the best living writers in New Zealand contributed—Frank Sargeson, M. H. Holcroft, Eileen Duggan, F. Sinclair, Ngaio Marsh, Isobel Andrews, Arnold Wall, and one or two others. A levy was made on the dead—Jessie Mackay, Robin Hyde, James Cowan. Our composer contributed a page of music: Douglas Lilburn. Art printers (Harry Tombs and Coulls, Somerville, Wilkie) added reproductions in colour of good pictures. One of our best landscape men gave a collection of photographs. Low and Minihinnick sent cartoons. Peter

(continued on next page)