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BOOK REVIEWS

OIL FOR THE MACHINES

LABOUR IN NEW ZEALAND, 1944. By A. E. C. Hare. Victoria University College.

HOW many people realise that a labour force of close on half-a-million men (and women) the industries of New Zealand? This labour army gives rise to as many problems as beset a military force of equal size. True there is not the same movement backwards and forwards across a terrain, but there are manifold internal movements; some caused by remobilisation of labour power to meet changes in demand for commodities, some due to the desire of the individual to suit himself better. In this, his Third Annual Report as Research Fellow in Social Relations in Industry, Dr. Hare comments that the latter factor "represents a great economic waste, and is equal to a yearly turnover of 27.6 per cent."

The science and art of industrial relations will perhaps seem to those who have not bothered to think about it a minor agency in our economic life, the more so as it issues no challenge to the fundamental ideologies of modern times; but it is impossible to read Dr. Hare's study without realising that this same science and art has a great and indispensable part to play. How great? As great as that of lubricants in the machine world, as great as that of tact in social relationships. In both cases there are problems of adjustment arising incessantly. In the case of industrial relations a "hot bearing" not attended to is likely to develop into the breakdown called a strike, but there are many and serious evils short of that demoralising form of breakdown.

It is hard to resist Dr. Hare's view that far too little attention has been paid to this matter of industrial relations in New Zealand in the past, and there is definite if not great encouragement in his opinion that the past two years have witnessed a change for the better. Besides treating of this, his main theme, he gives a summarised account of what has been taking place in the industrial sphere during the past year. This account is presented with straightforwardness, admirable clearness and sobriety. With the aid of logic and facts, it centres attention on matters bound sooner or later to demand the consideration of that public opinion which ultimately formulates all of a democracy's major verdicts. The sooner the better, one would think, for the full frictionless functioning of a nation's peace army has to-day become quite as important for weal or woe as that of its military forces. Maybe more so.

—F.L.C.

DIGRESSIONS OF A DOMINIE

HALF-LENGTHS. By F. L. Combs. Progressive Publishing Society, Wellington.

MR. COMBS is a philosopher, but he is also, now and again, a wag. As a philosopher he questions most of the things he learnt at school and many of those he later taught. "My real feelings," he says about a colourless lad who has just gained four firsts, "are compunction and an uneasy desire to get rid of the too convincing evidence of the

process of overstuffed cerebral malnutrition to which I have been accessory." It is not an easy sentence, or (most teachers would think) a permissible one, but there is something wrong with the man who teaches for 40 years without wanting to say something like that. Mr. Combs says it over and over again, sometimes sadly, sometimes with amazing irreverence, but he never leaves us in doubt about his reason for saying it. This is the kind of thing:

"What of the Charlotte who jerked and fidgeted in a dual desk? What of her 'aptitudes'? Well, lessons she did not scorn, for scorn, as psycho-analysis has explained in three volumes and six appendices, is a resentment complex with its roots in repressions, and there were no repressions about Charlotte. Let others wince and cringe and mope and fret under the lash of learning. She solved her academic problems, as, too late, I half wish I had solved mine, by simply not bothering about them. She was one of the few out of thousands I have known who proved stronger than the System."

Or this:

"The school, an amazingly small edifice, half a mile from the store, hardly seemed cast for a speaking part. It was interesting, if at all, because of the amazing diversity of its instructors, one of whom had (or perhaps it was the other way round) been the main cause of the alcoholic relapse of the master blacksmith. I suppose that from this school a thin uncertain trickle of literacy did proceed, but the sedimentary deposits in it of dedicated information rendered it anything but alluring to thirsty minds and parched spirits. McGinnity believed in it and in education, as he believed in everything that was plainly and providentially sent to exacerbate moral uneasiness by mental discomfort."

But Mr. Combs can be a commentator of a different kind. If he is critical of the System—he usually spells it with a capital—he has tolerance to the point of tenderness for the system's most unfortunate victims: the moral misfits and the mentally misled. That will not surprise those who know *Little Ann*, but it is something that you do not expect in this gallery till you come on it. For example:

"Her whole life was a pity. If she was foolish in matters that required a calloused common sense, it was but a greater pity. Was she foolish or was she soft-hearted? Let those learned in the grasping morality of Utilitarianism deliver the harsh verdict. I prefer to remember that in her which could not bear to hurt in the slightest the feelings of another."

DISORDERED THOUGHTS

HERE'S TO LIFE. By Henry J. Hayward. Oswald-Sealy (N.Z.) Ltd.

THIS is an autobiography—or perhaps it would be better to describe it in the words of Mr. Hayward's own subtitle as "The Impressions, Confessions and Garnered Thoughts of a Free-Minded Showman." Since the author has himself put the emphasis there, a reviewer may be excused for suggesting that showmanship, of a kind, is the book's chief feature. Look at some of the chapter-headings: "I Face Life," "I Meet a Siren," "The Stage Kept Calling," "Love and Sex Magnetism," "Dates with Death and Disaster," "The Rise of the All-Conquering Cinema," "A Madcap Prima Donna," "Science Points the Way." And that is not half

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