

FIRE IN THE BELLY

ANGRY PENGUINS, 1945. Reed and Harris, Melbourne.

(Reviewed by David Hall)

IF you have the authentic fire in the belly, you need not wear the polite expression on the face. Some red-hot fragments can be plainly seen to glow inside several of these Angry Penguin bellies, and the grimace is tortured. This should not worry you. Angry Penguins do not write to please. Serious chaps, they are elders of a new church. They prophesy. Hearken unto them!

When I lately had the pleasure of re-visiting Australia, it was difficult to ignore the sense of their Imperial destiny which has overtaken many of the citizens of the Commonwealth. Inspired by his vast, partially-developed, continental hinterland or by the metropolitan spires of Sydney, the Australian is loudly trumpeting his Australian-ness. We in New Zealand still palely look to battered London as our cultural capital. Our brothers across the Tasman gaze robustly inwards; the sun shines out of their own navel. This is in many ways an endearing trait, but it is not one which is shared by Angry Penguins. Angry Penguins belong to the world. Their outlook is as wide as the sky. At least, they can see as far as America.

Angry Penguins, 1945, is a thick wad of serious writing, with an international flavour. The editors cast their net wide. Two letters of Rilke are translated. James T. Farrell writes on Hollywood. There is verse by Australians, New Zealanders, Americans, and Nicholas Moore, of England. There are short stories; and here the New Zealand contributors do us more honour than our poets. There is a fine and typical story by Frank Sargesen,

and those by Greville Texidor and G. R. Gilbert show a development in their art.

Angry Penguins, 1945, may at present be judged more by its criticism than its original work. The editors have made a strenuous attempt to cover the main topics that make up modern Kultur. Their scrutiny extends to the cinema, music, art and jazz (which they place by itself). They reproduce two of the stark, terrible pictures of Arthur Boyd, an Australian wild man. There is a stimulating sociology section whose introduction may serve as the editors' manifesto: "... we subscribe to no known political doctrine, we are making investigations not conclusions. But if we are accused of politics, we certainly acknowledge our allegiance to the principle of a freely functioning intelligence and sensibility. ..." They dislike regimentation, the totalitarian tendencies of the age. They also dislike humbug. Every here and there is a pleasant little jab at the writers who are self-consciously building up the pretentious fabric of "Australian culture."

Travellers have described how penguins anxious to dive into the sea will line up along the brink of the ice floe and wait there jostling each other till one is foolish enough to flop into the water. He is the test penguin, and if he is not eaten by some lurking enemy, all is well; the rest plunge in after him. Angry Penguins also are willing to stick their necks out a bit. Mistakes there may be in this volume, gaucheries, failures of taste or of skill, but it does not lack either courage, seriousness, or integrity. Moreover, in spite of its supra-national character, it does achieve a remarkable sense of unity.

I hope New Zealanders will support Angry Penguins doubly, by buying it and by sending it their best work.

First Prize to Auckland

HENRY SHIRLEY, of Auckland, is the winner for 1945 of the Composer's Contest, conducted annually by Charles Begg and Co., Ltd. There were 25 entries, and the winning composition (written for piano) was titled "Ballad Unsung." The judge was Dr. T. Vernon Griffiths. Second prize went to H. C. Luscombe, also of Auckland, and the third to Barry S. Moss, aged 15, of Wellington. Mr. Shirley was the runner-up in the two previous contests. He receives a prize of £10/10/- in cash, and, under the terms of the contest, his composition will be published in New Zealand.

Dr. Griffiths made the following comments on the entries:

"The winning composition is one of those pieces which, by reason of their clear formal construction, straightforward melodic lines, interesting harmonic idiom, effectiveness in performance, and moderate technical difficulty, are attractive to piano students in their teens and to older amateur players. "Waltzing Puppet," by H. C. Luscombe, is an attractive piece, well written and effective without being too difficult. A Minuet



Alan Blakey photograph
HENRY SHIRLEY
"Unsung, but not unhonoured"

and Trio by a 15-year-old student took third place. It showed a standard of musicianship which promises very well for this composer's future.

"Several of the other works had individual interest. While some showed a competent musicianship, others gave evidence of the need for further study of the foundations of composition."

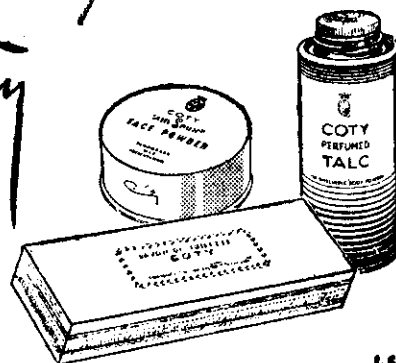
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