

ESCAPED PRISONER

THE WAY OUT: A KIWI ESCAPES IN ITALY. By Malcolm J. Mason. (Printed by the Caxton Press for Paul's Book Arcade, Hamilton).

It is at least three years since it began to be dangerous to print books by prisoners of war. But it is dangerous in another way not to print them, since experiences not recorded soon fade, and young nations can't afford to neglect anything that gives them traditions; especially any printed thing. So Captain Mason did well to write his story, and Paul's Book Arcade to risk printing it. If only enough copies could be sold to pay expenses the venture would be in the public interest. But the publishers did better than that. They saw that those who take one risk must usually take another, so set out to make it the most attractive book in its class yet printed. It was not a case of making a fine bird out of fine feathers, but of taking care that the feathers should be worthy of the bird and in themselves arresting. This end has been handsomely achieved, partly with the printer's aid, partly with the assistance of a very attractive dust cover by Juliet Peter. But even with those aids the publishers would have been walking on very thin ice if the story itself had not been so good. But it is just about as convincing a war story as New Zealand has so far had. Captain Mason is as far from being a writer as a navigator is from being a ship designer, but he knows precisely where he wants to go and what he wants to say, and this quality carries him safely through clichés, repetitions, sentimentalities, and leaves him absolutely high and dry at the end, the story told, the excitement sustained, the adventure rounded off. There are times when he seems almost perversely determined to write as the average man speaks—without distinction, accuracy, or care. It is partly deliberate, partly in fact his style; in other words, himself. But when you close the book you know that you have had one man's story told precisely as it happened and carried through unerringly to the end.

HOMES AND SOCIETY

A HOME OF THEIR OWN. By K. E. Barlow. Faber and Faber, London.

ONE does not need to be a Freudian to be aware that people in the mass don't make the most of their minds. On the other hand, it takes more than a psychologist to investigate the complex of moral, social, and economic forces which condition the development of human talent and, through it, the environment in which we live. Dr. Barlow, besides being a psychologist, is a practising physician, a sociologist, and a philosopher, and therefore better equipped than most to diagnose the social ills which afflict us. That is what he sets out to do in *A Home of Their Own*.

But the strength of the author is to a certain extent the weakness of the book. Dr. Barlow the psychologist may become Dr. Barlow the philosopher, and Dr. Barlow the town-planner, within the space of a paragraph or a page, and the lay reader may find it difficult sometimes to tag along. In a sense, too, this weakness derives from the author's compulsion to say what he feels he must say before it is too late. He has written against time and clarity has suf-

fered a little from both urgency and condensation—the book has only 96 pages.

But despite these blemishes it must be conceded that it is a book which should be read by teachers, social workers, town-planners—those whose work is concerned with communities, but also by anyone interested in the development of a happier and more closely-integrated society than the one we live in to-day. Indeed, if the book is not read and understood by the layman it will have failed in its main purpose, for the author's argument is, in essence, that any improvement in the quality of our society must begin at home—in the home. The home, as he describes it in his opening paragraph, is "the unit out of which the tissues of society are developed," but it is not the sum of human living. Families must turn outwards to the community and not grow in upon themselves if society is to grow healthily.

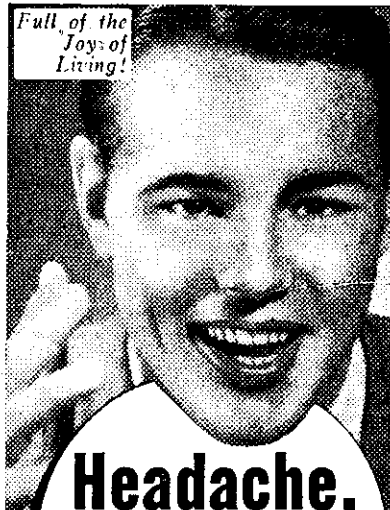
At present, says Dr. Barlow, the classes of society are breaking apart as never before:

In our towns, each class has its own suburb of residence—except for the richest, who live in the splendid isolation of the distant countryside. Each group is exclusive, it shares nothing personal with members of other groups. . . . Nothing binds them but a common baker and a common police force. . . . each man and each family is a foreigner to his neighbour.

This is written, of course, of conditions in Britain, but one would require considerable temerity to suggest that the same situation has not developed in this country. And when the author says,

We are in this paradoxical situation. We are constantly elaborating social machinery to correct the inadequacies of the home. Yet, because of the inadequacies of the home, we cannot find the wit and insight to manage this machinery,

(continued on next page)



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