

(continued from previous page)

again crushing things to say that it is not easy to remember as we read that it is neither history nor politics he is offering us, but just the recapture of a large number of remembered days and hours of a man living for six years in the shadow of a war, four of them in rigorous and perilous captivity. It would be impertinent to say that these days did not pass as he presents them to the author himself. My comment is that while art is selection life is usually such a jumble of things that most of us are like the blurred figures on a twice exposed film, seldom knowing where we are going, and not often having the right answers till afterwards. I feel that Mr. Bertram has used his typewriter as a skilful photographer uses a camera—that he has too many answers at his finger-tips, and too much skill with the light. But I have read no book that brings the long-term problems of the East so clearly into the day, none that starts so many questions for us here in New Zealand, none that throws such revealing flashes on the present occupation of Japan, none that makes our complacent ignorance of Eastern politics more amazing or more alarming.

—O.D.

SECRETS OF A DESERT

CROSSING THE DEAD HEART. By C. T. Madigan. Georgian House, Melbourne.

I WAS half-way through this absorbing book—the story of the first crossing of the Simpson Desert north of Lake Eyre in Central Australia—before I noticed on the dust jacket that the author “did not live to see it published.” After that my interest was as great but my enjoyment was clouded. For it is one of those rare books which are at once science and the revelation of a person. You feel in a chapter or two that you know the author, not merely know him but like him, and find yourself hoping when you write that letter to him that never gets posted that he will like you too. That is what was happening to me when I laid the book down for a moment; and when I took it up again the flap of the dust jacket straightened out and gave me the sudden jar with which we hear of the death of men we have thought full of vitality and interest in life. I have not heard yet why Dr. Madigan died, but *Who's Who* says that he served and was twice wounded in France between 1915 and 1918, and if I had known that he had been with exploration parties to the Antarctic and across African deserts before he started on his Central Australia journeys, I might have been less surprised at his end. But I would not have been less grieved. His conquest of the “Dead Heart” was not one of the sensational victories of exploration, but it was a perfect example of victory on a modest scale, achieved by intelligence and good sense. The key to the problem was the use of camels; and after that wise decision, a small party and unhurried preparations. The desert had long been skirted on both flanks. Drovers and other adventurers had cut across corners of it. But no one had crossed it on the ground from east to west or west to east, surmounted its hundreds of sand ridges, mapped its surface, or brought back the true story, if there was one, of its plant and animal life. Now we know most of it. We know that the outstanding features of the desert are sand, spinifex, and lizards, in that order, and that those who expect to see any of that land

irrigated and settled, or the abandoned stations on its fringe made safe for settlement by anybody who is not a near-millionaire, are just wishful but ignorant thinkers. Dr. Madigan discusses most of the schemes brought forward from time to time for converting the dead heart of Australia into a living paradise, but refuses to take any of them seriously. “Dreams of increasing the rainfall by impounding water or of making the arid Interior a Garden of Eden by irrigation are nothing but castles in the air, with no more substance than Lasseter's Reef, another myth that is kept alive only by the glamour of mystery and inaccessibility.”

—Sundowner

LITERARY AWARDS

Entries for the Jessie Mackay and Hubert Church Memorial Awards should reach the Hon. Secretary of the P.E.N. (N.Z. Centre), Box 965, Wellington, on or before February 28. The judges for the Jessie Mackay Award this year are Mrs. Isobel Andrews and Stuart Perry, and for the Hubert Church Award, Professor G. W. Von Zedlitz, Professor Ian Gordon, and Dr. G. H. Scholefield.

SHORTWAVE HIGHLIGHTS

Switzerland and Ecuador

TWO transmitters of the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation are beamed to Australia and New Zealand on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, carrying programmes giving the independent Swiss point of view on world affairs. At this time of the year, reception of Swiss stations in the daytime is very poor, but they may be received at good strength during the evening.

Stations, frequencies, and wavelengths are: HER 5 (11.865 mc/s., 25.28 metres) and HEI 5 (11.715, 25.61), broadcasting from 7.15 p.m. to 8.5 p.m.

Programmes: Mondays—7.15 p.m., Home News and Views on the News; 7.20, Swiss Spotlight; 7.25, The Swiss Curiosity Shop; 7.40, Towards a Better World—Practical Achievement. Tuesdays—7.15 p.m., Home News and Views on the News; 7.20, Swiss Sports Round-up; 7.25, The Swiss Curiosity Shop; 7.40, Towards a Better World—Social Aspects; 7.45, Music by Swiss Composers; 8.10, Swiss Folk Music; 8.40, Swiss Democracy. Thursdays—7.15 p.m., Home News and Views on the News; 7.20, Economic Bulletin; 7.25, The Swiss Curiosity Shop; 7.40, Towards a Better World—the Geneva Observer; 7.45, Symphony Hour; 8.40, Cultural Review. Saturdays—7.15 p.m., Home News and Views on the News; 7.20, Swiss Spotlight; 7.25, The Swiss Curiosity Shop; 7.40, Towards a Better World—World Observer.

From January 30 to February 8, the BBC will broadcast reports from the Winter Olympic Games in St. Moritz in place of the “Swiss Curiosity Shop” session.

Voice of the Andes

From Quito, Ecuador, the Pioneer Missionary Broadcasting Station may be heard at present on three frequencies, transmitting its English programmes every day (except Monday) from 2.0 p.m. until 5.30 p.m.

Broadcasting to-day in 16 languages this station has also just passed the 16th anniversary since its inception in 1931. A late night transmission may also be heard from 11.30 p.m. until 1.0 a.m. The frequencies and wavelengths are: 15.11 mc/s., 19.85 metres; 12.45, 24.09; 9.96, 30.12.

The following is a typical week-day programme: 2.0 p.m., Ecuadorean Echoes; 3.0, The Friendly Hour; 3.30, Musical Mail-Bag; 4.0, Mountain Top Music; 4.15, Christian Bookshelf; 4.30, Organ Melodies; 4.45, Midnight Meditation; 5.0, Round-up of World News; 5.7, Trend of the Times.

On Sundays a special programme includes a New York City Church broadcast and the Radio Bible Class.

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