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BOOKS

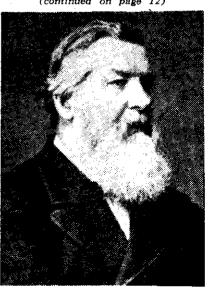
JULIUS VON HAAST

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF SIR JULIUS VON HAAST. By H. F. von Haast. Avery Press, New Plymouth.

about this book is that the purchaser gets his money's worth. I hesitate to call it the biggest and heaviest single volume yet produced in New Zealand that is not a dictionary or a book of reference. It is safer to say that with its index and preliminaries it runs to 1,200 pages, has 25 illustrations and four maps, and is not merely the life of a man but the history, for a considerable period, of much of the South Island. If the buyer's contribution is three guineas, the author's is the labour of 15 years.

It is however necessary to add that its author carries some responsibility for its bulk. When he made it the history of "the times" as well as his father's personal story, he freed himself from many of the restraints of biography, but added enormously to the difficulties of selection. The personal story could have been told adequately in half the space, and sold at half the cost, and there must be many readers who would have preferred to have it so. But I am not one of them. Pruning would have made it a better book technically; but I am not sure that abridgment would have made it easier to read or easier to sell than this shapeless but glittering mass of filial devotion and indiscretion.

In any case nothing would have persuaded the son to reduce his father to those narrow limits. To Heinrich Sir Julius is a giant, big physically, and so much bigger than his contemporaries intellectually that it would have been absurd to draw him on the same scale. With Hector and Hutton you could be critical: they were distinguished men of (continued on page 12)



JULIUS VON HAAST
"Bigness, heat, and much generosity"