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BOOK REVIEWS (Cont'd.)

work; and although he sometimes finds it hard to reconcile the conflicting elements of Ford's character, and to explain the more doubtful phases of his life, he has written an interesting biography. In Ford's case it is necessary to make much allowance for the artistic temperament. He was untidy and eccentric in his private affairs. The failure of his marriage was followed by an unofficial alliance with a woman who later pursued him with gossip and innuendo. He escaped from this entanglement, and lived for about 10 years with a young woman who seemed to find him an attractive companion. When they decided to separate, for somewhat casual reasons, Ford had already found her successor in the United States.

It cannot be surprising if a writer who drifted from one entanglement to another should be unpopular in England, where even artists are expected to take some notice of the social code. Unfortunately, Ford spread himself in other directions. As he grew older he was inclined to tell fairy tales of the kind which come from a harmless egotism. He had what H. G. Wells described as a "system of assumed persona and dramatized selves." In plain words, he had difficulty in telling the truth about himself and his personal affairs. He was a man for whom truth was concerned more with artistic values than with the simple facts of experience. The story-teller overflowed into private and public life; it became easier for unfriendly critics—and he had many of them—to dismiss him as a slightly ridiculous poseur.

These oddities of temperament may seem less important when the man can be seen from a distance in time. Ford was an artist who produced books of unusual quality. *The Good Soldier*, for instance, makes admirable use of a device—the "time shift"—which can be irritating in unskilful hands; and his Tietjens trilogy, although little read in England, gave him a substantial reputation in the United States. Whether Mr. Goldring is justified in claiming greatness for Ford, is another question. Ford was an expansive personality, vulnerable to depreciation. The value of this book, in spite of a somewhat anxious attempt to be comprehensive, is its provision of evidence which should make it easier for later critics to see the man and his work without prejudice.

—M. H. Holcroft

SCHOOL READING

POST-PRIMARY BULLETINS. Vols. I and II. School Publications Branch, Education Department.

WHEN the new syllabus for post-primary schools was introduced in 1946 some of the suggested reforms could not be carried out because there were no suitable text-books. These 30 odd bulletins (supplied free to schools as supplementary readers) partly fill this need. Many of them are of a very high standard—some as high as New Zealand can produce—and the text has been enlivened by black and white illustrations

by Russell Clark, Mervyn Taylor, Juliet Peter, Yvonne Bendall, and others, as well as by numerous photographs and diagrams. If pupils don't leave school to-day far better informed about their own country than their parents ever were, it would be necessary to write another bulletin to explain why.

Seven pamphlets on *New Zealand Writing* deal with Samuel Butler, Lady Barker, and the early novel (Professor Ian A. Gordon), poetry and the later novel (E. H. McCormick), Katherine Mansfield (Antony Alpers), and early diaries and the short story. All contain much sound criticism. Indeed, in one or two cases the children get the benefit of information and critical judgments not yet made available to the general public, which surely is as gratifying as it is surprising.

The title *Social Studies* covers surveys of dairy farming (H. C. D. Somerset), hill sheep farming (John Pascoe), mixed farming (B. J. Garnier), coal-mining (J. D. McDonald and J. Watson), factory work (L. S. Hearnshaw), and office work. They are true social studies, since each takes actual examples (in some cases with real names) and describes simply and comprehensively how the people in these various occupations live, their working conditions and rates of pay, how they spend their leisure hours, what their homes and family life are like, and so on.

There are also bulletins on *Scientific Institutions in New Zealand*, *Music* (Ernest Jenner), *Statistics* (H. Henderson), *Holding a Meeting* (George Fraser), *How History is Written and Something About the Pacific* (J. C. Beaglehole), and the *United Nations* (F. H. Corner). Seven pamphlets on *Our Living Environment* (mainly by A. W. B. Powell) contain some first-class plates of New Zealand birds, insects, and fish, with notes on where they are found and their way of life.

Perhaps the best bulletin of the lot, if any choice could be made, is W. J. Scott's *How Words Work: Hints on Clear Thinking*, which points out in some pungent chapters on "Emotive Language," "Fact, Opinion and Bias," and "Propaganda," the many pitfalls that await the unwary in discussion, argument, or uncritical newspaper reading. *Writing English*, by Professor Gordon, is an admirable study of school essay-writing reduced to its simplest and most sensible terms. "In every piece of writing there are three things that make the writing what it is. These are the writer, the subject, and the reader. A writer writes about something for somebody."

It is good to know that this sort of work is being done, and that it will continue, and although it is difficult with semi-official publications to avoid propaganda, that is seldom noticeable. It is a tribute to the editors of the series that they have shown so much imagination and boldness, and to the Department that they have had so much encouragement.