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BOOKS

CAPTAINS COURAGEOUS

THE DISCOVERY OF TAHITI. By George Robertson. **THE TRAVELS OF THE ABBE CARRE.** Vol. III. Hakluyt Society: our copies supplied by N.Z. Secretary of the Hakluyt Society, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

THE two hundred years' holiday of English navigators from Pacific exploration is an enigma in our naval history. Anson, with a warlike mission, and after him Byron and then Wallis, with instructions to explore, were following in the tracks of their ancestors of nearly two centuries before. Between the Elizabethans and the Georgians other nations, chiefly the Dutch, earned all the glory: theirs was soon to be outshone by Cook.

Wallis in the Dolphin made a tedious circumnavigation in 1766-8, the subject of this book. George Robertson, the ship's master (Wallis was captain), by his office primarily a seaman, left this personal diary of the hazardous voyage; it gives in its matter-of-fact, practical fashion a noble picture of the enterprise itself and of the whole ship's company of "poor unthinking brave fellows." H.M.S. Dolphin—in spite of the discomforts and dangers and the malignant ill-temper of "old growl" the first lieutenant—was a "happy" ship. The higher officers were ill for weeks together, and the chief burden fell on Furneaux, Robertson, and Gore, who dealt admirably with the problems,



navigational and disciplinary, which confronted men in uncharted seas, who needed refreshment at the hands of the Patagonians and the Tahitians.

In 1766 the mythical great southern continent still occupied most of the Pacific, and its "high land" was always being sighted, assiduously recorded, and then left unvisited—always for excellent reasons; the most excellent that it did not exist. The ships which entered the Pacific through the Straits of Magellan encountered westerly winds which obstinately refused to fit in with the preconceptions of their lordships at the Admiralty. Like Byron, Wallis was forced north, eventually into the "milky way" of the scattered atolls or green volcanic islands. Here it is chiefly remarkable that H.M.S. Dolphin found so little: the Tuamotu group, Wallis Island, and the gem which was worth the voyage, Tahiti. She stayed for weeks at this idyllic island, whose noble savages, failing to seize the ship by a crude frontal attack, managed to wheedle out of the Englishmen peacefully the very nails in the bulkheads in exchange for such commodities as fowls, pigs, and love.

The editor, the late Hugh Carrington (for many years resident in New Zealand), supplies excellent notes; I am sorry he did not have space for the adventures of Carteret in the "poor dull Swallow" which, after parting company at the edge of the Pacific, made a voyage of epic quality independently.

The Abbé Carré, an astute, perspicuous Frenchman, who visited the French settlements in India in the 1670's, at the behest of Louis XIV's minister of economic warfare, Colbert, wrote a lively and humane account of his travels. He animadverted on the manners and customs of four European nations trading to India and Persia, explains why it is a bad thing for Frenchmen to marry Portuguese, admires the businesslike English, and deplores the quarrelsome vanities of his fellow-countrymen. This is evidently an important source in the history of European relations with India and is good enough to make me regret I have not read the two previous volumes.

—David Hall

NEW ZEALAND AT SEA

NEW ZEALAND'S NAVAL STORY. By T. D. Taylor. A. H. and A. W. Reed, Wellington. Price, 22/6.

NEW ZEALAND'S Naval Story, as told by T. D. Taylor, is a large and handsome volume of some 300 pages. It contains most of the ingredients that go to the making of a first-class book, but, it must be said, their handling leaves something to be desired. The plan of the book divides it into three sections, with consequent overlapping and repetition and a lack of continuity

and balance. Nevertheless, the book is of considerable interest and importance and fills an important gap in the recording of New Zealand history, with the reservation that obvious inaccuracies in dates, as well as in the notes on some ships mentioned, detract from its value as a work of reference.

In the first section, headed "Naval Policy and Practice," Mr. Taylor gives an interesting, if somewhat sketchy, survey of the important and constantly beneficent part played by the Royal Navy in New Zealand's domestic affairs during the turbulent infancy of the colony from the whaling days of the 1830's to the end of the Maori Wars, and of the evolution and development of the country's naval defence policy from that time down to the present day.

Harking back to the discovery of New Zealand by Abel Tasman, the second section, entitled "Naval Occasions," recounts the visits of Captain Cook, and French, Spanish, Russian, and American explorers. Later chapters tell of the visits of the American Fleet in 1908 and again in 1925, of H.M.S. New Zealand in 1913 and 1919. It is difficult to judge why the visits of ships of the Royal Australian Navy in 1935 and of the special Service Squadron of the Royal Navy in 1924 are included in that order in the chapter headed "The Maori War Era"; or why Mr. Taylor credits the Australian destroyer Stuart with most of the success achieved in the Battle of Cape Matapan (page 118). Much of the material in the interesting chapter, "World War to World War" might well have been included in the first section of the book.

Nearly one-half of the book is devoted to an alphabetically arranged catalogue of notable naval ships that have visited New Zealand since the time of Captain Cook. These include Argentinian, Austrian, Chilean, French, German, Spanish, Dutch, Italian, Russian, American, and other foreign vessels, as well as many British ships. Seven pages devoted to the New Zealand training ship Amokura (as well as six pages of pictures) would appear to be unduly generous when compared with the treatment of many more important ships. Since a number of exploring ships are included, as well as such vessels as the Awatea, there seems to be no excuse for the omission of Captain Scott's Discovery, Morning and Terra Nova, which were largely Navy-manned. The 48 pages of illustrations grouped in the middle of the book include many of great historical interest, but some could have been replaced by others of greater value. —S.D.W.

PLAYS AND GOOD TALK

BRITISH CIRCUS LIFE. By Lady Eleanor Smith and John Hinde. Edited by W. J. Turner. George G. Harrap. English price, 18/.

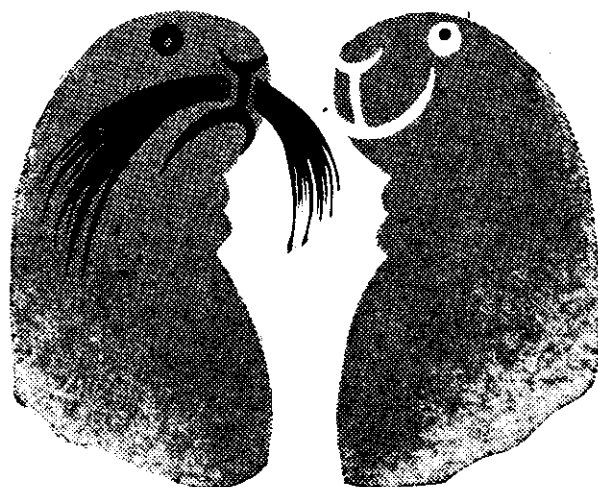
COVENT GARDEN. By Desmond Shaw-Taylor. Chanticleer Press. English price, 6/.

BEST ONE-ACT PLAYS OF 1946-47. Edited by J. W. Marriot. George G. Harrap. English price, 8/6.

FIVE RADIO PLAYS. Introduction by Val Gielgud. Vox Mundi. English price, 3/6.

IMAGINARY CONVERSATIONS. Edited by Rayner Heppenstall. Secker and Warburg. English price, 10/6.

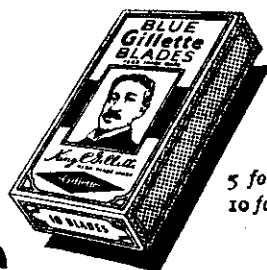
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