

study of the tensions of modern life within the wider frame of history and morality.

The narrative, carefully balancing action and reflection, moves at a fast pace conveying the texture and colour of the deep South. The characters exhibit an often violent dramatization in speech and gesture, which would be unconvincing in any country other than that which has produced Hollywood. —J. R. Cole

THE POLICE

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE BRITISH POLICE. By Charles Reith. Oxford University Press. English price, 3/6.

THE author of this useful little book points out that in the course of her history England has had three distinct police systems—the Tything-man system introduced from the Continent by the Saxons, the Parish-Constable system, and the “New Police” as the force created after the passing of Peel’s Act of 1829 was called. The Saxon system did not long survive the Norman invasion of 1066 and gave way to the Parish-Constable system. The story of the breakdown of this system presents a picture of the appalling conditions prevailing in England in the latter years of the 18th Century and the early years of the 19th. Deputies who acted for the parish-constables, night-watchmen and runners, worked in co-operation with law-breakers of every kind. Law-abiding citizens were at the mercy of thieves and thugs. No one was safe. A Prime Minister was held up and robbed by a highwayman in Piccadilly. Disorder was widespread. The Military was tried as a law-enforcing agent and failed. The State, triumphant over its enemies abroad, seemed unable to protect its people at home. Despite all this, the merchants, wealthy citizens and prominent members of both political parties strenuously opposed the creation of a police designed to restore order and check the wave of crime that had swept over the whole country. A committee, set up by Peel in 1822, reported that curtailment of the advantages of freedom of action and exemption from interference which were the great principles and blessings of society in England was considered too great a sacrifice for improvements in police or facilities in the detection of crime. How, in face of all opposition, the “New Police” established under Peel’s Act finally succeeded and how the new system was introduced into the boroughs and counties and developed into the Force as we know it to-day is told in interesting chapters.

A most interesting book upon a perhaps little known subject. A book that shows the dangers that may arise from an insufficient, inefficient, or corrupt police and emphasises the lesson that to function successfully, a police must have the goodwill and co-operation of the public. The public must look upon the policeman as its friend and protector.

—John Gallagher

SOME NELSON HISTORY

HISTORY OF THE NELSON INSTITUTE. C. B. Brereton. A. H. and A. W. Reed. Price 8/6.

ABOARD the Whitby (350 tons register) the Nelson colonists set up a committee to organise a literary and philosophical institute. It is true they didn’t know how long they would be before they sighted land again nor even in what part of New Zealand they would

eventually settle. This was in 1841. And now we have a history of the outcome—unfortunately rather dull when one considers the extraordinary capacities and careers of the founders of the Institute.

The Nelson Institute appears to have undergone much the same growing pains as have similar libraries and museums elsewhere. We read that, at the first meeting, “there were too many present to decide details,” but in 1941 “the annual meeting was again poorly attended” and “in 1947 there were insufficient nominations for a full committee.” Nevertheless there were original developments also. For example, when the Savings Bank threatened (for the third time) to put in the bailiff the

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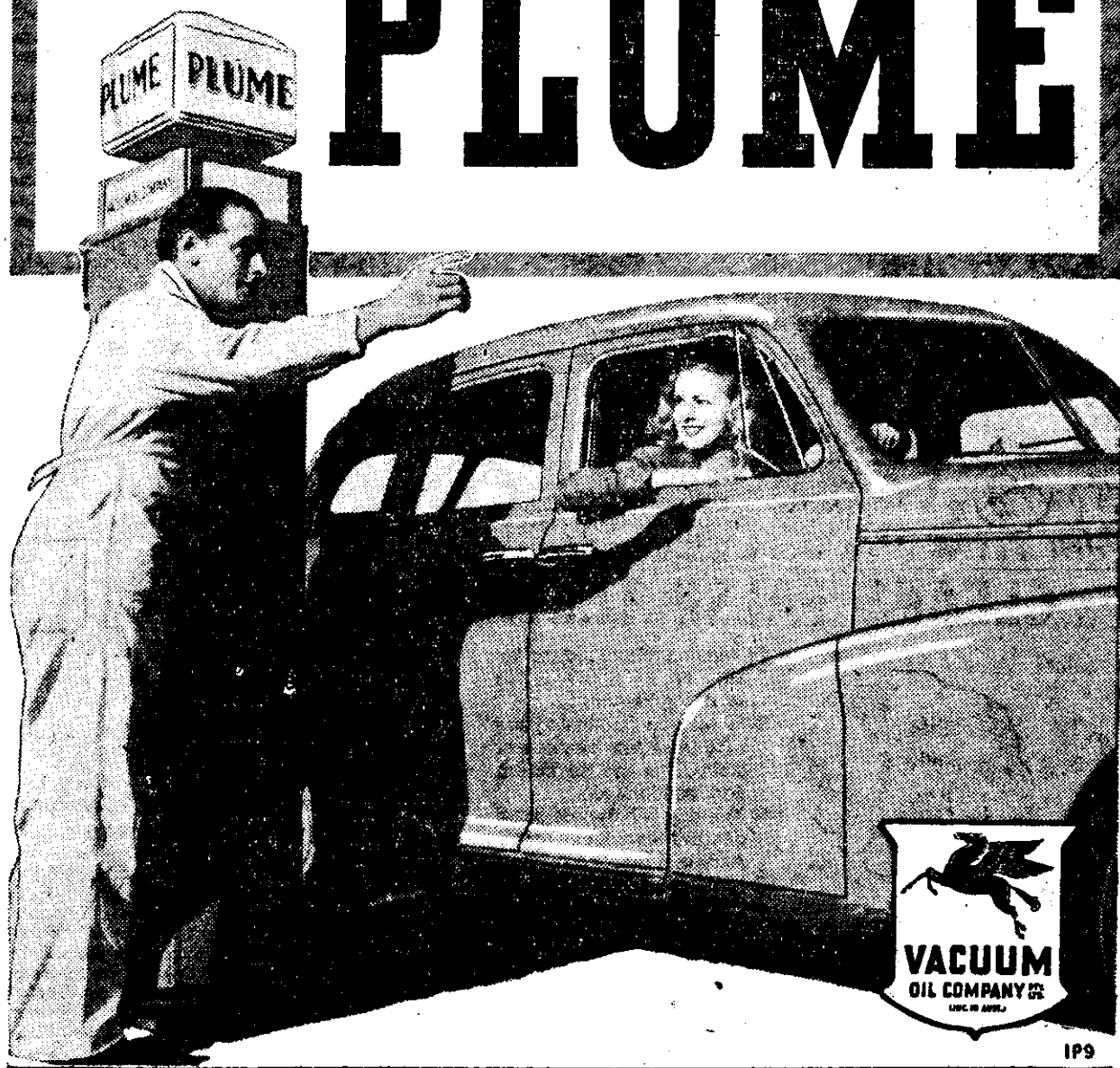
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