

document, valuable in New Zealand as well as in Britain; and no social worker can afford to be without it.

—M.H.H.

## DISTINGUISHED WRITING

THE PIONEERS AND OTHER POEMS. By Arnold Wall. A. H. and A. W. Reed. Price 15/-.

[T was in 1903 for the first time that I came across poems by Arnold Wall. Here, it seemed to me, was a writer of distinction; a minor poet, no doubt, but an original thinker, with a sound knowledge and a deep love of English, and capable of grasping "general ideas"; labouring withal under a sense of frustration and utter spiritual isolation:

He who among his fellow-mortals seems  
An alien to our earth, expatriate. . . .  
Well, here's my sleeve.

Personal contact served to intensify the impression. For those who have known a greatly changed Canterbury College during the last 25 years only, it may be hard to believe; with memories going back a further 25 years, one can understand why he found his new environment cruelly uncongenial:

He dwells with coin grubs and the market  
mind,

Among the putty with his shining blade  
Dulls by disuse and its high glories fade.

To-day he stands recognised in honoured age as the chief authority in New Zealand on the usages and vocabulary of English, subjects often dealt with in his more recent poems; botanists look to him as a leading authority; to the joy of his friends some balm has been poured on the old wounds. Not that the scars have vanished altogether:

How like that ghost, among my fellows I  
Emeritus, alone among the throng,  
Seen yet unseen, an echo and a name,  
Immune from jealousy, or praise, or  
blame. . . .

Facing a large collection of poems, one expects to assimilate them in moderate doses at intervals. It caused me some surprise to find myself absorbed in reading—and often in re-reading—the whole of these 361 poems, Arnold Wall's own choice of what he thinks worth preserving. Not many should I care to see omitted; it seems to me that some gratitude is due to the administration of the State Literary Fund for making it possible to include so large a number.

About half the poems illustrate ingenious or original thoughts of a philosophic cast by means of parable and exegesis, with effect often heightened by a paradoxical *mot de la fin*. At least one of them, "Boy Reading Gulliver," seems to me worthy of a place in any anthology of 20th Century English poetry. There is humorous verse too, and nature lyrics, and satire; "God's Own Country" is unforgettable but maybe too Swiftian for anthologists.

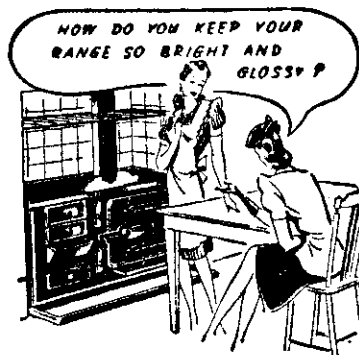
Of course there are flaws one could pick out; occasional clumsinesses in diction and order and rhythm. Personally I put Eileen Duggan and Seaforth Mackenzie on a higher plane. But if Arnold Wall is to be accounted a New Zealander after 50 years, but for these two, I can think of no other New Zealand poet that I would place above him.

—G.W.Z.

## BONES, STONES, AND LIVING MYTH

THE SILVER BOUGH. By Neil M. Gunn. Faber and Faber, London.

GRANT the archaeologist, digging in Scotland, uncovers a grave full of rare finds, including a crock of gold  
(continued on next page)



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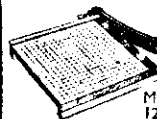


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