

WITH AND WITHOUT MALICE

Books By Two New Zealand Cartoonists

CARTOONS. By "Kennaway," H. W. Bullivant, Christchurch. **AREN'T WE ALL?** By Ken Alexander. Hutcheson, Bowman & Johnson, Wellington.

IN his foreword to "Kennaway," David Low condemns "the absurd misconception that it is the cartoonist's business to be amusing." But Low himself is amusing nine times out of ten. When "Kennaway" is amusing it is by accident. You don't feel that he was himself amused before he grabbed his pencil or his pen. Yes "grabbed" is deliberate. You feel that "Kennaway" rushed into the fray each week—all these cartoons are from the late, and now generally lamented, *Tomorrow*—white with passion and bent on torture first and then murder. Most of his drawings are savage, or sneering, or both, and even the exceptions are seldom intended to arouse laughter. He is in fact so determined that we shall not merely laugh that he adds bitter little sermons in print—often against editors, but in other cases against parsons, rotarians, and politicians. And inevitably in the case of reprints, much of the strongest work now "dates": the Baldwin foxtrot following the abdication, for example, or the two-headed Fascist thug burning his fingers in Spain. It is in fact a striking proof of "Kennaway's" sincerity that he has risked this publication in these times. He knows the world of print too well to suppose that he can make money out of such a venture, admirably though it has been edited and produced, and if it is not money he wants it must be converts. Every cartoon, and almost every line, is a blow for political and economic freedom,



"The press does not always work with its tongue in its cheek" (March 27, 1937)

delivered by an evangelist who can't cajole. You admire the skill, you are humble before the passion of righteousness, but you can't help wondering how long it is since "Kennaway" smiled.

KEN ALEXANDER makes you wonder where all "Kennaway's" thugs come from. There is not a harsh illustration in his whole collection, or a suggestion anywhere that the Beast still rampages through our world. It is a collection of jests, some clever and some just amusing, assembled by a man who takes humour seriously (sometimes). Therefore he refuses to take misfortune seriously, and the reader who can't laugh with him is probably taking himself seriously and perpetrating the worst joke of all.

"THIS FELLOW GANDHI"

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again. But here is Wellington, and you're not listening anyhow."

"I'm thinking."

"Then for God's sake be careful."

* * *

BUT it was Bill who opened the conversation on the way home.

"That fellow Gandhi, Joe? Do you still think he is a saint?"

"To hell with him!"

"What? You were pulling my leg this morning? You don't really believe all that stuff about his piety?"

"I do and I don't. I believe but I don't understand. Neither am I deceived. When a calf bleats for its breakfast I know what it is saying. But I don't know what a morepork is saying when I hear it crying in the night. I know what Gandhi means when he tells us to get out of India. I don't know what he means when he says that *Satyagraha*, non-violent resistance, is the pursuit of truth. I know what a hunger-strike is, and can understand a simple penance. I can even understand penances by a teacher to atone for the sins of his pupils. But I don't understand an intellectual who announces in middle life that henceforth he will swallow only five articles daily, and none at all after sunset, even if he is ill and requires medicine. Gandhi did

that, and has kept his word. Then his celibacy—"

"Celibacy? I thought he was married?"

"So he is, and the father of numerous children. But one day before he was forty he decided that sex and truth were incompatible, and he has kept that vow too—though with difficulty." He was not quite sure when he wrote his autobiography that he had finally won that battle. He was then in his sixties and was still on guard against the assaults of the flesh.

"Certainly a queer fish."

"Yes, a queer fish. But Hitler is a queer fish, and we just laughed at him until he suddenly made us laugh on the other side of our faces. The Japanese are queer fish, and we despised them too until it was too late. Whatever Gandhi is—saint, rogue, lunatic, or clown—he is a political portent of appalling possibilities and I personally find him almost terrifying."

"Thank God they've locked him up then!"

"Well that's where we began, and I would have locked him up too. But it's not the end of the story. . . ."

However I did not hear the end. Halfway home we ran into a school of porpoises, and everybody ran outside to watch. When I resumed my seat Joe and Bill were silent.

—Eavesdropper

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