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BOOKS

TWO NEW COWARDS

(1) *SWEET SORROW*. (2) *THIS HAPPY BREED*. By Noel Coward. William Heinemann Ltd.

(Reviewed by Kingsley Brady)

NOEL COWARD has written two new plays: both good. One is the "mixture as before," technically perfect, superficially brilliant, delightfully funny . . . and utterly impossible. The other is technically perfect, superficially mushy, delightfully melodramatic . . . and amazingly true.

Sweet Sorrow is more like a French farce than a French farce is like a French farce. During its three acts, Garry Essendine, character actor, idol of millions and the loved one of several, conducts his life more or less on the lines of a well-bred racehorse, except that he does not produce anything quite as interesting as a racehorse. At 40 he feels that his life is not his own (whose is?), but he exaggerates this feeling by constantly allowing himself to be led into temptation (which he didn't ought).

The unholy mess he gets into provides a deliciously funny second half of the third act, and that, I believe, is the test of a successful farce.

This Happy Breed is a horse of a different colour, and would make a good novel. Here Mr. Coward attempts to condense the events from 1919 to 1939, as they affected a British working-class family, into nine scenes. It can't be done, and it's a very lazy way of trying to be a Dickens. A story of such length needs space, more space than may be found in the theatre. *This Happy Breed* is a good story, and it is told as well by Mr. Coward within the limits he has set himself as it could be told by anybody: but it is not a well-built play. Consider: 1919, when demobilisation set in; 1926, when the General Strike set in; 1931, when the Great Depression had set in; 1936, when abdication set in; 1938, when peace in our time set in. No, accomplished craftsman and gallant adventurer though Mr. Coward is, even such characters as every-day British Frank and Ethel Gibbons, who grow old during the play (offering temptation to amateurs to show their prowess), cannot make it complete. A play's a play, and it is impossible to make a satisfactory play with the wrong material. The fact is, Mr. Coward is no good with blue serge. He should stick to chiffon and zephyrs and silks: be sophisticated and charming, but keep out of the kitchen.

THE KELLY GANG

NED KELLY: A Play. By Douglas Stewart. Angus and Robertson, Sydney.

"WATCH Douglas Stewart" the knowing ones have been saying for a year or two, "and don't forget that he is a New Zealander." But he will not let us forget it. In the middle of this so completely Australian drama he makes one of the characters say

You make me uneasy, balancing there on the table,

Like an earthquake about to begin:

It is true that earthquakes have been registered in Australia, but to make an Australian girl think of one during an attack of nerves is like making a Laplander think of a log fire after a day on the ice. It sounds like home, too, when we hear the moreporks, but in this case there is a good Australian reason. And in any case those are details. The question is: Do the Kellys come to life again? If they do, it does not matter much what method Stewart uses, or with what men and women and birds they consort while they are here. But it is not an easy question to answer. Somebody comes to life, unless we are as jumpy as "the traps" were when Ned was riding; somebody who holds us while we are listening to him, and who lingers in the imagination afterwards. But is it Ned himself? Or Dan? Or Joe Byrne or Steve Hart? It is a little difficult to think so; and if what Stewart has created are romantic impressions of the gang, it would have been better to stick to simple realism. But his trouble was that there is a Kelly gang legend. They never injured or insulted a woman. They were men with a grievance. The settlers secretly admired them. They never wanted to take life. And so on. All this Stewart had to convey or thought he had, and there was his own poetic imagination besides. So when Norman Lindsay calls this "a truly great

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THE PATRIOTIC FUNDS

and how they are expended

An army is more than camps and guns. An army is *men*. And one of the most urgent problems in New Zealand's all-out War programme is how to provide for our men off duty or if they are incapacitated.

The National Patriotic Fund Board and the eleven Provincial Patriotic Councils have the responsibility of raising the necessary money and providing the services for the welfare and comfort of our fighting men.

Nearly 300 Patriotic huts and marquees have been established in New Zealand and overseas, and these are managed on behalf of the National Patriotic Fund Board by the Y.M.C.A., CHURCH ARMY, SALVATION ARMY and CATHOLIC WAR SERVICES FUND BOARD. Apart from the cost of erecting these, over £200,000 per year is required to service them.

Over 8,000 of our men are prisoners of war, and every week each man receives a substantial food parcel. The cost of extra comforts for these men is considerable. The comforts for sick and wounded require £126,000 for the current year, and is expended by the Joint Council of the Order of St. John and the N.Z. Red Cross Society on behalf of the National Patriotic Fund Board.

Over half a million woollen comforts have been knitted by the women of New Zealand from wool supplied by Patriotic Funds at a cost of £75,000.

Gift parcels, costing £155,000 (including freight) per year, are sent overseas every three months.

Many other services require large sums of money. These include writing material, special comforts for the Navy and Mercantile Marine, Regimental Funds, sports gear, entertainments, allowances to Padres of all denominations, and at times grants to air raid sufferers in the United Kingdom. *The cost of administering this vast expenditure amounts to only 4/5 for every £100 collected.*

What can you do to help? Give to Patriotic Funds. This great comforts organisation, that overrides race and creed, has been entrusted with the responsibility for the service-man's leisure needs.

The men are defending you—do your part—give all you can and help Patriotic organisations to give comforts that you would like if you were on active service.

**HELP THOSE WHO ARE HELPING YOU
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