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BOOKS

(continued from previous page)

could do the same for many other recurrent Shakespearean images. It has been done often in the last few years. Indeed, it has been done on at least four other occasions by Mr. Knight.

—I.A.G.

CHINA MARCHING

DAYBREAK IN CHINA, by Basil Davidson; Jonathan Cape. English price 10 6.

BASIL DAVIDSON, who was decorated both by Great Britain and the U.S.A. for his war services, became the principal leader writer for *The Times* and later the roving international writer for the *New Statesman*. His excellent *Report on Southern Africa* has now been followed by *Daybreak in China*, an account of a recent (unconditional) visit to China with 30 other people from Great Britain. Davidson discusses what he saw and heard, and clearly distinguishes his opinions from his facts.

One-fifth of the world's population—about 500 million people—live in China, and they are now determinedly and surely going in a direction which will profoundly change the history of the world. Whatever one's sympathies, it is folly to ignore the basic facts of what the revolution is about, of the changes in ownership of the land, the effect of the revolution on industrialism, education, social services, religion, health, the arts and the status of women. On this last subject all writers seem agreed with Davidson that the transformation in the lives of 250 million women to "higher levels of self-respect, self-confidence, and self-belief will be to release energies whose explosive power in human terms must be atomic, world-shaking."

Davidson deals in turn with each of the aspects mentioned, and brings together sympathetically what formerly could be found only in the more serious periodical press. If one wants to understand what is happening in China here is a book to begin with.

—W.B.S.

AUSTRALIAN POETS

THE GIFTED SPEAR, by Ernest G. Moll; *THE GATEWAY*, by Judith Wright; *POEMS*, by W. S. Fairbridge; all published by Angus and Robertson at 15/- each. Australian price.

ANGUS AND ROBERTSON are doing for Australia what Caxton has done for New Zealand, and comparison is invited. They must be commended for publishing contemporary verse, in editions that have small chance of making much profit. But, in my insular opinion, the verse is not as good as the local product; and the books are not so well turned out.

At this distance our poetic traditions seem antipodal. Australia began strongly, New Zealand sentimentally. Now the roles are reversed: Curnow's intelligence and sensitivity, Fairburn's glow and buoyancy, Glover's kick and clarity, Johnson's sensuousness, Sinclair's gaiety, Baxter's strength and sense of tradition, find small parallel across the Tasman; and almost none in the volumes under review. The Lawson-Dennis tradition is emasculated, leaving verse so restrained that it fails to move. Interestingly enough, "restrained" is a word appearing on all the jackets, suggesting that the publishers are proud of it; so that I am reminded once more of Roy Campbell's famous lines, beginning, "They praise the firm restraint with which you write . . ."

Another phrase used on every jacket is "technical control," which I suspect

is a literary cliché to switch one's mind from the matter to the manner. The matter is matter-of-fact enough. There are spiders and spears in Moll, forests and clearings in Fairbridge, trees and pools in Judith Wright. But the manner is so sophisticated that it only succeeds when it is meant to be clever. Fairbridge, who died three years ago aged only 31, seems to me quite the best of these poets. Something of a scientist and historian, he has themes to match an ironic technique. Writing on Darwin, he could say:

Little he seemed of rebel stuff;
A gentleman, and sociable enough;
Trailing to Tunbridge for the water-cure.
A dull-born, obstinate, thick-handed man
In cloak and beard, and comical round hat.
Almost a butt to some at Down, save that
Beneath the shag brows' anthropoidal span
Gleaned a crepuscular intelligence . . .

Moll, in the "Fable of a Neurosis," is equally neat:

As spiders go, he was more civilised
Than most, and strung his web a little tighter.
With knot and brace more cunningly devised
To take the strain, because his thread was lighter . . .

It is, perhaps, my New Zealand humour that suggests that these lines all belong to Cambridge dons rather than to any dinkum Aussie. Judith Wright, who has the greatest Australian reputation, is more local and less "clever"; but she seems to me romantically soft. We have writers of her kind here, but they are not our best. She asserts the glory of her countryside, and the passion of love, but she does not transmit them to the reader in the great tradition of English verse. I am interested, but never deeply moved.

—Anton Vogt

SAFE CLIMBING

SAFETY IN THE MOUNTAINS, published by the Federated Mountain Clubs of New Zealand, 2 6.

A NEW and enlarged edition of this valuable booklet tells people all they need to know if they are to get the right sort of experience in high country. It opens with a section on mountain manners, gives advice about equipment, bushcraft and route finding, rock climbing, crossing rivers, snow and ice-craft, glaciers and crevasses, and many other matters of special interest to trampers, skiers, deerstalkers and mountaineers. There are excellent illustrations to drive home the lessons in safety. "Keep this booklet in your pack," says the publishers. Climbers who follow this advice may have good reason to be thankful.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A *GUIDE TO ENGLISH TRADITIONS AND PUBLIC LIFE*, by Egerton Smith; Oxford University Press. English price 18/-. Concise information on a wide range of subjects touching the corporate life of the community. Useful for reference.

RAILWAYMEN'S GALLERY, by Roger Lloyd; Allen and Unwin. English price 12/6. Another of those books which offer information and description to the brotherhood of train-lovers.

FRIENDS FOR 300 YEARS, by Howard Brinton; Allen and Unwin. English price 15/-. A study of the beliefs and practice of the Quaker movement, beginning with the appearance of George Fox, and ending with a statement of the Quaker position in the contemporary world.

LAUGHTER AND APPLAUSE, by Allan M. Laing; Allen and Unwin. English price 8/6. A book of anecdotes, selected and arranged for the use of speakers who want their speeches to be lively.

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