

WAR IN THE AIR

NEW ZEALANDERS WITH THE ROYAL AIR FORCE (Vol. I), by Wing Commander H. L. Thompson; Official History of New Zealand in the Second World War: War History Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, Wellington.

(Reviewed by B.C.)

THIS is the first of three volumes to be published under the one title, and covers the European Theatre from 1939 to 1942. The dust jacket tells in simple figures the magnitude of the war effort when it says that just under 11,000 New Zealanders served with the Royal Air Force alone and that, of these, 3290 lost their lives. I well remember, on coming to this country, how surprised I was to find that so many of the men I met casually had served in the air during the war. It seemed as though almost every other young man had been a pilot, navigator or engineer. On reading the figures, and bearing in mind the population of the country, I am no longer surprised; but I remain deeply impressed.

I met quite a few New Zealanders in England and many of the names in this first volume make familiar reading. There are also names which will be

found in any account of New Zealand aviation—Air Commodore Buckley, Air Commodore Kay and Sir Leonard Isitt. Brilliant war careers are described, and one reads again of such men as Flying Officer E. J. (Cobber) Kain, one of the first of the aces of World War II. Activities covered in the book include the Battle of Britain, the Battle of the Atlantic, the work of No. 75 Squadron, and some of the early attempts at defeating the night raider.

The collection and verification of the vast amount of material necessary in writing such a history is an enormous task, but even so, I cannot help a feeling of disappointment that the interval between incident and chronicle is as long as 11 years. Further, the author, bearing in mind that he was writing a reference work, has assembled his material by class of operation, rather than chronologically, so that the reader tends to lose the feeling of continuity and progress.

Probably the most human and stirring part of the book is one of the appendices, which gives a pilot's account of an early raid on Turin. His graphic description of the difficulties and discomforts, to say nothing of the dangers

of the flight, fill one with admiration for these men who nightly matched their skill against such odds.

Other appendices give a chronological diary of the major events in that theatre during the period under review, and a comparative list of principal British and German operational aircraft. There are maps indicating the spheres of operation referred to in the text, and groups of illustrations. The maps are beautifully produced, but unfortunately the same cannot be said of the photographs.

ONE FOR HOLLYWOOD

BATTLE CRY, by Leon M. Uris; Allan Wingate, New Zealand price 12/6.

THIS is another of those great American novels about the American War in the Pacific; interminably long, interminably dull, printed on cheap paper with off-centre layouts in heavy type; full of platitude and sentiment, the same adolescent wisecracks, the bad language, the incomprehensible service slang, flashbacks, italics, and the Marine's Hymn. Needless to say, Hollywood is already making it a film.

The cast is ready-made: the All-American boy, the tough Marine sergeant with a heart of gold, the funny fat boy, the big Swede lumberjack, the Red Indian with the corny comic-book lines, the Jew who makes good, the reform-school Polack who gives his life to save the patrol, the cowardly lieutenant,

ant, the drunks, the tough major who fights for a place for his battalion at the head of the assault, the general who is the "meanest sonofabitch in the Corps," the usual women and a singing cowboy.

The unit in the story is a battalion of the 6th Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, which was camped near McKay's Crossing, north of Paekakariki, before leaving for Guadalcanal in December, 1942, and again for some months in 1943 while recovering from battle and malaria after that campaign. It fought also on Tarawa, in a mopping-up role, and headed the assault on Saipan. The author's chief (and often inaccurate) memories of New Zealand are of the beauty of the scenery, of hospitable towns and too hospitable women, "the funny way of talking and the funny money," "the strange smell of foreign cooking." It is perhaps unkind of a foreigner to draw attention to the author's English, but his writing is juvenile and unfeeling, and surely he knows that an epitaph is not a curse.

—W.A.G.

SHAKESPEARE'S IMAGERY

THE SHAKESPEAREAN TEMPEST, by G. Wilson Knight; Methuen, English price 21/-.

THIS is a re-issue of a book published as far back as 1943, when one of the controversies worrying the scholars was Who Wrote Shakespeare? We have fortunately settled down into a period when we all believe that the man who

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