

workaday material. One of the sailors makes a comment that supports Oliver Duff's view of New Zealand's lack of wit. "What we want is a Cockney or two, something to liven up the outfit. They're damn good workers, but slow as a wet week in thinking up something to say."

—A.M.

THE FAR-OFF HILLS

STATION AMUSEMENTS IN NEW ZEALAND. by Lady Barker: 12/6. **MUSTERER ON MOLESWORTH.** by Bruce Stronach: 10/6. Both Whitcombe and Tombs.

MY distinguished colleague "Sundowner" has, with his usual discrimination, got ahead of me in praising Bruce Stronach's little book. It deserves praise. It recreates the dust and drought of hinterland Marlborough graphically and urgently, giving us the events of a mustering season on the toughest of back country with humour and human feeling. It is hard to realise that this is an epoch that has gone. It is over 20 years since Bruce Stronach was on Molesworth, nearly 15 since he wrote the articles now collected in this permanent form. (The photographs add something to the book, but very queer things have happened to the screen of the over-ambitious dust-jacket.)

Cattle ranching on Molesworth and St. Helen's is almost as radical a change as the cutting up of the Canterbury Plains, where tussock once reigned in the world of Lady Barker, whose pleasantly garrulous second volume on her New Zealand life (published in 1873) is now given a modern second edition. Behind the amusements, the picnic rides in summer, the skating or tobogganing in winter, is always the demanding nature of the life, its work, its isolation, its comradeship (almost overturning social barriers), its precarious refinements. Both these books have their own authenticity and success.

—David Hall

ENGLISHMAN IN BURMA

TRIALS IN BURMA. 12/6 English price, and **INTO HIDDEN BURMA.** 18/-, by Maurice Collis; both published by Faber and Faber.

A POET by inclination, employed in Burma as a member of the Indian Civil Service, Mr. Collis spent many years torn between the love of a country and people he found fascinating and the longing to return to Europe and become an author. His position was further complicated and his conscience made uneasy by a suspicion that, "In spite of declarations to the contrary we had placed English interests first, and we had treated the Burmans not as fellow creatures, but as inferior beings." His refusal to accept his countrymen's assumption of racial superiority and his denial of their claims to any special

privilege in courts of law over which he presided marked him out, or at least so he believed, as a man who, being considered unreliable, would never attain a position of the highest responsibility. In 1934, after long hesitation, he resigned from the ICS and began to write, producing a number of books, among which are the two autobiographical works under review.

Of these I much prefer *Trials in Burma*, a reprint first published in 1938, which describes Mr. Collis's experiences as District Magistrate of Rangoon. In three important and for him embarrassing cases, he felt bound to give decisions that were unpopular not only in the British clubs but also in the highest official circles. *Into Hidden Burma* covers a greater period of time in the author's life, but much of what might have been its best subject matter has been used up in the previous work. Touching briefly upon incidents already recorded in *Trials in Burma*, it also tells of an astrologer whose predictions invariably came true, of ghosts and apparitions, of a hill inexplicably scented. More prosaic but no less enthralling is an account of various searchings after rare Chinese porcelain, of which the author was a keen and enterprising collector.

Mr. Collis is undoubtedly an expert at presenting each personal experience as a well-balanced short story. This is a literary accomplishment which may or may not render strange tales more easily credible; at least it makes them eminently readable.

—R. M. Burdon

KING AND COURTIER

LOUIS XIV AT VERSAILLES. by Saint Simon: Folio Society, English price 21/-.

THE best memoirs have always been by Frenchmen and those of Saint Simon are among the most famous. These few selections from his voluminous writings relate to the Court of Louis XIV, the greatest monarch in the world of his day. Extracts are from the latter years when the King was failing and weighed down by family misfortunes and by the dissipation of his dreams of conquest abroad. So vividly does Saint Simon portray the King and his courtiers that his views have coloured them for posterity. No other adequate portraits exist. Here they are: the King, selfish and competent, talkative and depraved, Vendôme, the great captain who held such extraordinary levée in the field, James II of England, brave, dignified in adversity, but ever unfortunate—and, not least, Saint Simon himself, at once witty, malicious and vindictive. A splendidly turned out volume for those who are content with a brief selection.

—F. J. Foot

MAN ON A RAFT

THE BOMBARD STORY. by Dr. Alain Bombard; Andre Deutsch, 12/6.

THERE is a similarity between this and the famous "Kon Tiki" story, since both are concerned with crossing an ocean on a raft to test a theory. There the similarity ends, unless one wishes to equate the courage and fortitude of those taking part.

Dr. Bombard's theory was that many of the deaths after shipwreck are avoidable and that, given proper knowledge, a castaway has sufficient food and water available from the sea around him to maintain life until he reaches land. He gives some disquieting figures for the numbers of people shipwrecked in a year, and tells of his growing conviction that they could be effectively reduced. Dr. Bombard then describes his

(continued on next page)

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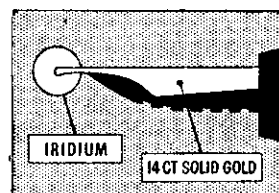
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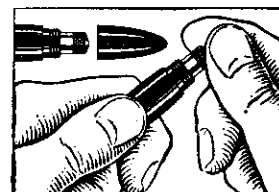
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MADE BY THE SWAN PEOPLE

IN the ZB Book Review session for May 9, "Archangel, 1918-1919," by Edmund Ironside, is to be reviewed by R. M. Burdon. Three other reviews will complete the session: "The Year of the Lion," by Gerald Hanley (reviewer, Alison Atkinson); "The Shame of New York," by Ed Reid (Stuart Perry); and "Return Ticket," by Anthony Deane Drummond (R. H. Thomson).



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