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BOOKS

(continued from previous page)

of the value of that House. A Conservative justification might be more eloquent, but not more persuasive.

He closes with an understanding and warmly appreciative chapter on the Civil Service in its relations with Ministers. In general he has a high opinion of the civil servant's "energy, ability, resourcefulness and integrity," and he sets out what each party should expect of the other.

The book is written with an extraordinary degree of objectivity. From a man who has been in the forefront of party strife for years, there is not a harsh word. It should be in every political science library and read by every M.P. in the Commonwealth. The indoctrinated Russian would read it with complete bewilderment, but the Briton would be an idoliser of Bernard Shaw if he did not see that it makes Shaw's contempt for Parliament look sillier than ever.

—A.M.

CRASHED ON THE ICE

RESCUE BELOW ZERO, by Ian Mackersey;
Robert Hale, Ltd., English price 15/-.

THE central drama of this thrilling story occurred in September, 1952, when a Royal Air Force Hastings aircraft crashed on the ice in Greenland. In 1950 Commander C. J. W. Simpson, D.S.C., R.N., had finally persuaded the British Government to sponsor an expedition to explore part of North Greenland for two years. It was planned that the expedition should be set up by means of an airlift and that provisions and other stores should be dropped later on. To avoid the use of parachutes it was decided to drop the crates into the snow, and this technique required flying at an extremely low altitude. After a period of training and practice, the R.A.F. crews took off for Greenland, and during one of the actual dropping runs one of the Hastings pilots, blinded by snow glare, misjudged the height and the aircraft flew on to the ice.

Fortunately, there were no really serious injuries, and the fuselage of the aircraft was intact. This enabled members of the crew to exist until rescued, despite being ill-equipped for the Arctic climate.

This story and the details of the gallant and skilful rescue flights by the Americans are well told by Ian Mackersey, who was born in Wellington. Now an aviation journalist in Britain, the author has used his experience as a pilot and as an official observer in R.A.F. aircraft, including a flight over Greenland, in writing this account of human endurance, bravery and skill.

—B.C.

RESTLESS DANE

THE VIKING OF VAN DIEMEN'S LAND,
by Frank Clune and P. R. Stephenson;
Angus and Robertson, Australian price 25/-.

THIS life of Jorgen Jorgensen is a catalogue of strange and stormy adventures. A Dane by birth (1780), Jorgensen became an officer in the British Navy and voyaged far and wide in Australian and South Pacific waters. He won the respect of W. J. Hooker, the botanist, later to be repudiated in his degradation by J. D. Hooker, the son. During the Napoleonic wars he was for a brief period the self-appointed Protector of Iceland, and later, travelling in Europe as a sort of unofficial Government agent, was a spectator at the Battle of Waterloo.

Becoming a victim to gambling he was imprisoned for debt, sent to New-

gate for theft, condemned to death, reprieved, and transported to Tasmania, where, under conditional pardon, he was variously clerk, policeman, explorer, journalist, and husband of an incorrigible Irish slut. He published books on religion, the national debt, history, travel, the aboriginal language of Tasmania, and finally, *A Shred of Autobiography*, which in later years was often plagiarised. He died in Hobart, an outcast, in 1840. Concerning Jorgensen, W. J. Hooker wrote in 1833: "That man's life would form a perfect Romance, if written with the strictest attention to truth." It did, in fact, become the inspiration for Marcus Clarke's *For the Term of His Natural Life*. The volume now under review is a painstaking study "written with the strictest attention to truth." Its chief defect is its tedious length resulting from the inclusion of much irrelevant detail and imaginary reconstruction of scenes.

—L.J.W.

GRIEVANCES GALORE

COURT MARTIAL, by Alistair Mars; Shakespeare Head, N.Z. price 15/6.

A MAN obsessed with his own grievances is not often good company, and Lieutenant-Commander Mars in this book is no exception. One cannot help but feel sorry for him, but many of his difficulties were his own making. He is a forceful writer and a forthright critic; but he complains too loudly and too long. He constantly emphasises his arguments with exclamation marks and italics, sometimes with both together: the result in print is almost as tiresome as if he were at one's elbow grumbling into one's good ear.

Though he writes only of events of which he has first-hand knowledge, his criticisms leave behind some disturbing thoughts. His chief targets are the Admiralty and the civil servants who run it; a parsimonious Treasury; an inept British Navy "toadying" to inefficient Americans; the shortage of accommodation at overseas stations which results in the wives and families of naval officers living in squalor and penury; the Navy's low rates of pay and its system of promotion; the default of an earlier New Zealand Government in the matter of allowances while he was First Lieutenant ("a sort of cockaded charwoman") in the Bellona on loan to the Royal New Zealand Navy. The last experience was not happy. "The appointment was the last thing I wanted . . . but . . . some confounded snob wanted a Dartmouth man."

—W.A.G.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

BLUE TROUT AND BLACK TRUFFLES, by Joseph Wechsberg; Victor Gollancz, English price 16/-.

A book, written with proper gusto, about the foods and wines discovered by an epicure in the best eating places of Europe.

SCHEHEREZADE, Tales from the Thousand and One Nights, translated by A. J. Arberry; Allen and Unwin, English price 15/-.

Four of the famous stories, newly translated in a modern idiom. There is promise of more to come.

A BIRD BOOK FOR THE POCKET, by Edmund Sandars; Geoffrey Cumberlege, Oxford University Press, English price 15/-.

The fourth edition of a book which, since its first appearance in 1927, must have been a joy to many thousands of bird-watchers. Contents are confined to the regular British species. The coloured plates and concise descriptions should make identification easy.

N.Z. LISTENER, JULY 30, 1954.