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BOOKS

(continued from previous page)

the major phases of all campaigns in which New Zealanders were involved; and fully documents such little-known chapters as the last months in Germany, when the European fortress was crumbling and long columns of prisoners were driven westwards into the snow, away from the Russian guns. Illustrations, maps and production generally are quite first-rate. The War History Branch deserves congratulation on the completion of what cannot have been its easiest volume to compile: my private thanks go to Mr. Wynne Mason for leaving our withers unwrung by fine writing, and for the patient search of records that made possible what is certainly, in his own modest claim, an "accurate, objective and impartial account of captivity as it affected New Zealanders in the Second World War."

RHYMED TRANSLATION

ION, Euripides translated into English rhyming verse by Gilbert Murray; George Allen and Unwin, English price 7 6.

THE appearance of a lesser Euripidean play by Sir Gilbert Murray prompts the questioning of rhymed translation from the classics. Sir Gilbert, though born in Australia, became Regius Professor of Greek at Oxford. His services to scholarship are wider than the translations alone suggest, though these (over a score) have often run into their fortieth and fiftieth thousand. So that, for the many, Greek tragedy is Gilbert Murray.

Greek is fluid but never flabby. In literal translation, yet forced to rhyme, iambs lose the flexibility that is their glory. Stichomuthia (where the characters play deck tennis in single-line dialogue) is too rapid for homoioteleutics.

The *Ion* is typical Euripides, playing a quiet game with Greek religious contradictions. In the Dionysiac tradition the hero is god-begotten, and there is as much comedy of situation as near-tragedy before mother and new foster-father sort things out. Apollo is a rather shabby offstage character, finally justified (in absentia) by Athene (ex machina)—a stage effect dear to Athenians on patriotic rather than religious grounds.

—D.G.

LOVE IS THE THEME

TOWER OF IVORY, by Rodolfo L. Fonseca; *WHITE NIGHT*, by Forrest Rosaire; *THE CITY CALLED HOLY*, by Maurice Callard; Jonathan Cape, English price 12 6 each.

LOVE is the theme of these three novels, but in only one case is it "love" as understood by best-seller writers.

By far the best, *Tower of Ivory*, winner of the José Janés International Prize, breaks the rule that prize novels shall be drably mediocre. Its premise, one likely to be distasteful to many, requires, and receives, delicate handling. A group of nuns are violated by Chinese rebels. Sister Praxedes bears a daughter, rears her in the community, then relinquishes her to foster-parents. The conflict in her soul between her religious vocation and mother-love is at the centre of a remarkable book, passionately real and psychologically subtle, despite a touch of melodrama towards the end, and searching in its appraisal of the religious life. The austere dignity of Walter Starkie's translation suits the subject perfectly, and seems to capture

the formal quality of the Spanish original.

In *White Night*, one of those "crazy mixed-up kids" American novelists are so fond of plans a not implausible revenge on his aunt, who, he believes, has caused his mother's death. How his actions enable him to find emotional stability and bring peace of soul to his aunt is a sound enough subject, but it is worked out a little factitiously. Lack of depth in character and motivation makes the book thinnish, yet it is not a bad effort; at least, it has an idea.

More run-of-the-mill is the love-interest in *The City Called Holy*, in which a British policeman in strife-torn Palestine comes to suspect his Jewish mistress of being allied with the Irgun terrorists. The conventional sexuality is less interesting than the details of the birth-pangs of Israel, clearly based on first-hand knowledge. Mr. Callard, whose first novel this is, holds his pen rather stiffly.

—J.C.R.

LIFE IN THE VILLAGE

THE SILENT PEOPLE, by E. W. Martin; Phoenix House Ltd., through A. H. and A. W. Reed, N.Z. price 26 3.

THE "silent people"—Chesterton's phrase—are the people of English villages, and this book is about them and their problems over the last 200 years. The author has chosen to take various aspects of the subject separately and to follow them through continuously. Thus we have chapters on the squire, the parson, the farmer, the labourer, the gamekeeper, and so on; but a main theme is the effect of enclosures and the agricultural revolution on villagers and village life. Mr. Martin recognises the tragedy of the disappearance of the peasant farmer—"the metamorphosis of peasant into labourer"—and also how the yeoman and the small proprietor have suffered as farming for subsistence became farming for private profit. He insists that a peasantry could bring new life to the village, and influence the English character again with wisdom derived from a knowledge of the earth and its bounty; but as he realises that for agricultural progress the large farm is a necessity he remains on the horns of the dilemma on which so many others have found themselves impaled. Another recurring theme is the need for country planning, the object of which he sees as the need to give, in Lord Ernle's words, "a reality, a purpose, a meaning" to village life, and to provide "an apparatus and a philosophy" for the recovery of pristine virtues.

Mr. Martin has made a long and sympathetic study of his subject, and fills out his story with apt quotations from or references to a host of other writers and committee reports. There is a useful bibliography and a score of good plates.

—L.J.W.

ONE FOR THE YAHOO'S

TAKE MY TIP, by Terence Journe; Pegasus Press, 10/-.

THIS agreeable trifle exploits the disparity between aim and achievement among bettors and racegoers and wrings the last drop of wry humour out of this situation in a comic (if at times heretical) guide to the mysteries of the national religion. John Magurk's drawings of moronic humans and intelligent horses ably support the text and indeed make an impact of their own. Messrs. Journe and Magurk remind us how seldom we risk trying to be funny: there is Carl V. Smith's *From N to Z*—and what else? Anyway, this welcome little book caters successfully for two distinct classes: those who can laugh at race-going and those who wish they could.

—David Hall

N.Z. LISTENER, OCTOBER 15, 1954.