



ULSTER FARM

A progressive dairy farmer in Ulster who wanted to improve his grassland asked I.C.I. how modern methods of grassland management could best be applied to his farm. Accordingly the local representative of I.C.I.'s agricultural technical service visited the farm and a grassland development programme was planned and put into operation. Its object was to grow more grass—grass for grazing, and grass to make hay and silage for winter feeding. Over a period of 4 years the use of fertilisers was stepped up progressively from 5 cwt. per acre to 9 cwt. per acre, and from April to October grazing was carefully rationed by means of electrically charged fences moved twice a day. The effects of these methods were far reaching. The amount of silage made on the farm increased from 85 tons in 1947 to 450 tons in 1950; consumption of bought feeding stuffs was halved, and the farmer was able to add to the numbers of his dairy herd every year. As a result, milk production rose steadily from 223 gallons per acre in 1946 to 344 gallons per acre in 1951. Dairy farms in many parts of the United Kingdom are now successfully applying similar methods.



IMPERIAL CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES (N.Z.) LTD.

BOOKS

Women Away from Home

WHILE HISTORY PASSED, by Jessie Elizabeth Simons; Heinemann, Australian price 15/-. *THE BROADER WAY: A Woman's Life in the New Japan*, by Sumie Seo Mishima; Victor Gollancz, English price 13/6. *PERSIA IS MY HEART*, by Najmeh Najafi; Victor Gollancz, English price 13/6. *HOME IN THE BEAR'S DOMAIN*, by Martha Martin; Victor Gollancz, English price 13/6. *MRS. BETSEY, or Widowed and Wed*, by Francesca Marton; Hamish Hamilton, English price 12/6. *DANCE TO MY TUNE*, by Linda Boscawen; Hodder and Stoughton, English price 10/6.

(Reviewed by C.)

SIX books by women: four autobiographical, two fiction. A tea-party for the authors would produce some curious talk, with a strong current of feminism. Jessie Elizabeth Simons and Sumie Seo Mishima could meet with profit. Sister Simons, in *While History Passed*, describes the experiences of members of the Australian Army Nursing Service as prisoners of the Japanese. Mrs. Mishima, in *The Broader Way*, describes the experiences—and changing attitudes—of some of the Japanese during and after the war.

Sister Simons's book is a tight-lipped account of terrifying treatment and almost inconceivable endurance. Of the 65 nurses evacuated from Singapore in 1942, only 24 managed to survive their ship's sinking and their subsequent capture and imprisonment. The prisoners gave up trying to understand the Japanese. Sister Simons says, and in their struggle for survival there was no place for the luxury of reflection.

Some of the causes of this brutality are explained indirectly by Mrs. Mishima's well-informed account of the breakdown of the old Japanese society. From the ruins of total war Japanese women have salvaged independence and responsibility, with, says Mrs. Mishima, the pre-eminent hope of a peaceful place in the world. To her personal story she brings perspective and insight, and the result is an absorbing account of the forces working to make present-day Japan, not the least of which is the power of emancipated women.

Somewhat similar in outlook is Najmeh Majafi's *Persia Is My Heart*. A young woman brought up in the tradition of a great Persian family, the author has seen her country virtually forced to jump from ancient to modern times. To help in the difficult transition she conceived the radical plan of establishing small factories in the villages, to give her desperately poor countrywomen some chance of employment. Her story is unusual, and told with grace and charm.

Home in the Bear's Domain, by Martha Martin, is a best-selling mixture of piety, adventure and shrewd comment. The scene is Alaska, and gold-mining, hunting and rearing a family in remote and rugged country are the themes.

Mrs. Betsey is a surprisingly rich novel, rich in incident, character and Victorian atmosphere. Francesca Marton's Betsey gives us a delightful maid's-eye view of goings-on above and below stairs. A fine sense of period and a distinctive style make this an uncommonly good novel of the not too distant past.

There is nothing memorable in *Dance to My Tune*, by Linda Boscawen. It is the lightest of fiction, about not very convincing people in Cornwall.

BREAKING NEW GROUND

SHORT STORIES, by O. E. Middleton; the Handcraft Press, Wellington, 4/6.

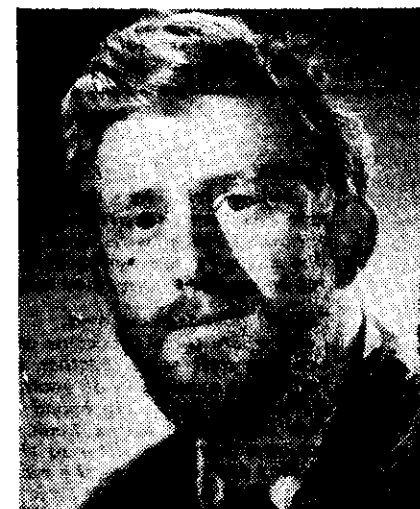
ONE day a New Zealand writer—Mr. Roderick Finlayson has sometimes seemed about to qualify—may give us a book which will fill for us the place of *Huckleberry Finn* in American literature: it is easier to write variations when a major theme has been fully stated. Meantime, we get hints and sidelights and growing pains. There is a glimpse of the boy Huck in some of Mr. Middleton's absorbed or companionable fishing sketches; elsewhere, he rebels against suburbia, and is looking for a raft to go on a longer voyage.

Inevitably, this little book invites comparison with the early work of Frank Sargeson: the point of view is not so different, though the execution is generally less sure. But the two best stories here, "Saving the Breed" and "A Day by Itself," are Mr. Middleton's own achievement: the workmanship matches the conception, symbolic values are nicely adjusted, there is a flash of real illumination. On this level, Mr. Middleton is a writer of genuine talent who is breaking new ground. And in shorter sketches (some of which have appeared in these pages) he is often entertaining and never trivial. It is only when he embarks on fantasy of a strained and slightly lurid sort—"Mark of the Rimu," "The First Dreamer"—that he fails; but this is an honourable failure. It seems a pity that work of such promise should have to appear in so modest a form. But who knows? This may yet be a New Zealand collector's item. —J.B.

VALIANT GLOUCESTERS

THE EDGE OF THE SWORD, by Captain Anthony Farrar-Hockley, D.S.O., M.C.; Frederick Muller, N.Z. price 12/6.

THE quibblings of Panmunjom and the stories of Communist and Allied "brainwashing" made the war in Korea from this distance seem rather unreal. Its idiom was strange, too: the wadis and escarpments and Wogs of North Africa were too well cherished to be replaced by the bunds, rice paddies and



Spencer Digby photograph

O. E. MIDDLETON
"A writer of genuine talent"

N.Z. LISTENER, OCTOBER 29, 1954.

Every fill
a pleasure

IT'S TOASTED !

