

## Becoming Engaged?

Choose your Diamond Engagement ring direct from the manufacturers and save pounds. Clements and Holmes Ltd., provide a 5 Year Written Guarantee and insure your ring free for 12 months. You can choose at leisure from an extremely wide variety of styles featured in the Clements and Holmes Ltd., free ring catalogue. Each catalogue is sent to you by return mail, post free in a plain envelope to ensure confidential service. You will be placed under no obligation. To help you in your final choice there is a "Guide to Choosing Your Engagement Ring" enclosed free with every catalogue. When your order is received it will be supervised by a Director and mailed within a week.

*Write now for free catalogue in full colour with its enclosed "Guide to choosing Your Engagement Ring"*

# Clements & Holmes Ltd.

MANUFACTURING JEWELLERS

62 Willis Street, Wellington, C.I.

CH.3.12

**Your Bank, with  
more than  
300 Branches  
and Agencies**

WHEREVER YOU ARE, the Bank of New Zealand—"Your" Bank—has a Branch or Agency ready to serve you. In city or country town, it offers you the facilities of the Dominion's largest banking institution, together with the requisite local knowledge to help with your particular problems. Make the acquaintance of your BNZ Manager. You will find him a helpful person to know.



# Bank of New Zealand

ESTABLISHED 1861

3.3A

## Hunting the Pithy Phrase

by ALAN MULGAN

MORE than the general anthology, the personal reflects the mind of its editor, and if he is a man of rare quality, the result for the reader will be a very pleasant intimacy. In covering a literature, or a section of it, the wise anthologist seeks other opinions, and in any case he has to consider reputation and wide representation. He may not greatly admire all that he includes. The man who prints just what he likes, because he likes it, offers himself to the reader as combined critic and lover. "Come with me," he seems to say, "and I'll tell you what I love." That is why the late Lord Wavell's collection of poetry, *Other Men's Flowers*, is so fascinating. That great soldier and acute thinker makes his purely personal choice, and actually recalls the effect of some of his favourites on his decisions in war.

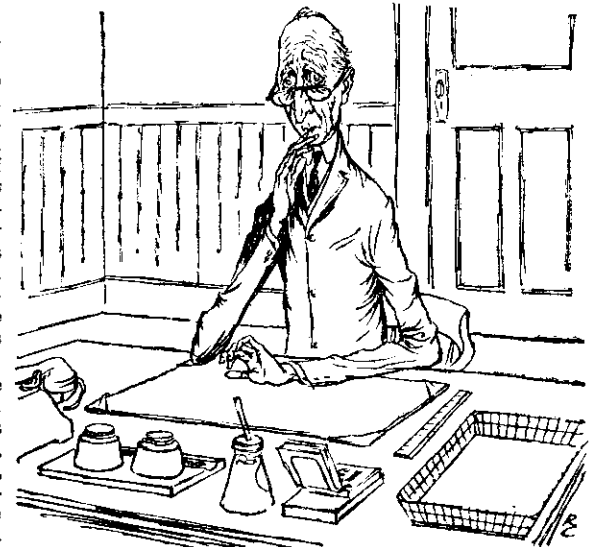
Viscount Samuel, the collector of this volume, is not a soldier, and his test of entry is interest, not necessarily approval, but the book has this intimate quality. These are the jottings, spread over 64 years, of one who has held several high offices, led a party, and written books, and is held in the highest esteem by friend and foe. Many of us obscure folk try to keep such notebooks, but, alas! My own resemble a set of scarecrows. Most of us who write, however, appreciate a good quotation, and agree with Emerson's saying, which Lord Samuel quotes, that next to the originator of a good sentence is the first quoter of it.

Quotation is an art. Its justification lies in the infinite number of good things said in verse and prose. Why not sharpen our own sentences on others' whetstones, or adorn them with flowers from distant gardens? But gently, gently. Quotations can be the cushion of the lazy, or the miscalculation of the over-zealous. Lord Samuel's advice to public speakers on any occasion, from platforms to weddings, is to limit quotation to one item, or at most two. (I am not sure there is much need for this advice in New Zealand.) There is apt comparison with cooking. In speech and writing, too much (quotation) spoils the flavour.

Naturally, Lord Samuel avoids the well-known, and what he has netted illustrates my point about the infinity of the field. If I may compare myself humbly with his lordship, I have been keenly interested, over a long life of journalism and authorship, in this kind of thing. I have read, memorised and noted, and spent many hours hunting for dimly recollected passages. Yes, I have used dictionaries of quotations, but not always for discovery. The best quotations are those that come to the memory as you write and think; verification may have to follow. I have quoted hundreds of times, sometimes too freely. Yet, of

the two thousand passages in this book, I had come upon fewer than forty before.

As this collection indicates, prose is more prolific of quotations than verse. There is more of it, and, broadly speaking, a poet below a certain level sinks into obscurity, whereas the rank and file of prose writers produce many usable sayings. Who was the American who wrote, of an actor's Lear, that he played the King as if he thought someone was



*"Like the typical civil servant who has a difficulty for every solution"*

going to play the ace? I have noted the expression "hell-for-leisure," a perfect three-word picture of a social condition; who originated it? A friend enriched me with an amendment to Marvell's magnificent lines: "But at my back I always hear, Time's winged chariot *changing gear*." I don't know if she was the coiner. Any observant man with a gift of words is bound to say something worth noting.

The relatively obscure, the unknown, and the great, keep company in a collection that ranges from the Greeks to P. G. Wodehouse and *The Times*, and draws on America, France, Germany, China and Russia. "That little girl was in the right," said *The Times* in 1944, "who tearfully declared that she knew there was no Father Christmas, but did not want anyone to say so." Divided into scores of sections, from "Action" and "Amusements" to "Work," "Wrong" and "Youth," the book is for dipping and savouring and the pleasure of it is enhanced by an agreeable format and admirable indexes.

So, by fireside or in bed, you may wander where you please. You may confirm your opinion of Napoleon, or be shocked (for there is a curious cult of Napoleon among British peoples) by reading what certain illustrious Frenchmen have said of him. The legend of Napoleon, said Anatole France, was "the triumph of vulgarity." Your critical eye for bureaucracy may catch this from 1950: "Like the typical civil servant who has a difficulty for every solution." You may pass from the astringency of Dean Inge: "It is a peculiarity of theological architecture that the foundations are ingeniously supported by the superstructure," to the enthusiasm of Lowes Dickenson: "An unspoilt youth of twenty with his mind just waking up

(continued on next page)

\*Viscount Samuel's *Book of Quotations*, second edition; James Barrie, English price 15/-.