

"In A Sturdy English Tradition"

CANTERBURY COLLEGE is not as rich in tradition as it would like to suppose. That will come, because it has been so rich in personalities. Professor Frederick Sinclair, whose death occurred on December 6, was one of them. He succeeded two notable men, Professors Macmillan Brown and Arnold Wall, in the chair of English.

Professor Sinclair arrived from Melbourne (though Auckland-born) with the reputation of an iconoclast. It was in the troubled days of the depression, and he quickly made it clear to us bewildered neophytes that literature was not something that could be academically filed and docketed. It was the very stuff of life. In literature, and in life he took sides passionately, often to the dismay of his more tussocky colleagues. He spoke his mind, and stirred Canterbury as no one had done since Professor Shelley.

You were for or against Sinclair. The "fors" found him generous in wit and wisdom, full of sturdy rightness (even righteousness), and somehow as strangely English as Bunyan. The "againsts" would say he was a cantankerous ranter, no great scholar, a pacifist and not quite a gentleman. But he was the lustiest pacifist I ever met, and he must have been a gentleman from the quickness of his temper.

He had a passionate admiration for those opposites, Shaw and Chesterton. He had a contempt for Anglo-Saxon and the barbaric northern tongues; he loved Homer and Virgil and Dante, and he sang Handel at the least opportunity. He had reverence for Milton and detestation for Pope. In one lecture when several students were chattering he said, "Ladies and gentlemen, to interrupt when I am talking is understandable, to interrupt when I am reading from Milton is inexcusable. That will be all for today." And he stormed out. His lecture on Pope once began, "I know only one good thing about Pope—he was kind to his mother." And went on to thwack Pope so hard that I for one was im-



PROFESSOR F. SINCLAIRE
He spoke his mind

pelled to find out more about Pope (in his favour, if possible) than was necessary for the curriculum. He was accused, of course, of giving a "biased" instead of an "impartial" view of literature.

In New Zealand letters he will take his place among our few great essayists. To that difficult form he brought a style of nice distinction, a wit that could be pungent or slyly paradoxical. You can see Chesterton there, and Swift, and the plain beauty of the Authorised Version. He enlivened the pages of the flamboyantly bitter *Tomorrow* and the solid columns of the *Press*. He published two collections, *Lend Me Your Ears* and *A Time to Laugh*, which are his anathemata to good writing.

The years mellowed him. He came to admire many old enemies, and, remarkably, they came to admire him. But nothing could temper his hatred of humbug. As a preacher and a man of fire he was in a sturdy English tradition. He professed life as well as literature.

—D.G.

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all the implications. This is one of the truly great stories of Himalayan struggle.

The French ascent of the Nun, in the Nun-Kun massif, was another stirring triumph. The German conquest of Nanga Parbat is given a somewhat expurgated account, compared to that of the book recently reviewed in these pages. This is the only disquieting tendency of *The Mountain World*. The other famous attempts are Manaslu by the Japanese, and Dhaulagiri by the Swiss, whose accounts give the first ones available in English to the general reader.

The African peaks of Ruwenzori, Baffin Island, and Arctic ranges, with a stiffener of scientific work on glaciers and botany, make a readable 50 pages. Finally Kurz gives a masterly summary of Himalayan work for the seasons 1951-1952. New Zealanders will glow to read his description of Riddiford's 1951 party as "real explorers, not simply climbers on holiday."

The illustrations supporting the papers are numerous and varied, well produced, and with full captions. The book is of great value whether as reference or as arm-chair entertainment. It should

quicken the pulses of mountain-lovers throughout the world, and thus fulfil its purpose and its title.

—John Pascoe

ONE THAT GOT AWAY

FLIGHT FROM DAKAR, by Eiliv Hange and Vera Haiman: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., English price 15s.

DAKAR was briefly and intermittently in the news between 1939 and 1945. For the unfortunate Allied and neutral merchantmen interned in that Port, however, very little at all seemed to happen. It is astonishing that there should have been so many ships held in this small West African port. The French Vichyites having repelled a Free French attack supported by British warships, determined to obey the direction of their German masters and keep this merchant fleet immobilised. This in the case of the "Lidvard" was frustrated by the contrivance of the engineers, and finally the crew took their ship out of Dakar harbour under the nose of the Richelieu's powerful guns. How this was done makes a good story which is simply and modestly told.

—F. J. Foot

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