

left the sea and found fortune in New Zealand farming and trading. He had a lot of trouble with his crew, rising to mutiny, due to the crew's mistrust of his ability to make good hauls. To many readers the principal highlights in this daily record, when so often nothing happens, will be calls at ports. Kororareka, for example, was visited in those lurid days before Waitangi, and a hot spot it proved. Capably filling in the story in his introduction, Mr. Straubel explains the main points in the industry and the drawing power of New Zealand waters at that time. This is a valuable relic from a past distant as our history goes.

—A.M.

GENERAL GORDON

HIS COUNTRY WAS THE WORLD. by Charles Beatty: Chatto & Windus, English, price 21/-.

GENERAL GORDON would doubtless have felt more at home in Cromwell's new model army than he did as an officer in the forces of Queen Victoria's Government. His character, too, one imagines, would have been regarded as less anomalous in the days of the Lord Protector than it was by his contemporaries. For writers of this century, who dismiss the possibility that religious fanaticism may still be the dominating influence in the life of a civilised human being, Gordon has presented a problem soluble only on the supposition that his strange behaviour had its origin in drunkenness or homosexuality.

Mr. Beatty has not taken this view. His estimate of Gordon's character and interpretation of Gordon's actions are based not upon the vices but upon the exaggerated virtues of a zealot whose conscience spoke with the voice of a prophet of the Old Testament. "Gordon tried hard to love his brother and could not, because he despised himself" is the final sentence in a book which unfortunately contains very few conclusions so plainly stated. Extravagant, obscure, and even ungrammatical phrases are as common a feature of these pages as words which grate harshly on the ear without necessarily contributing towards lucidity. One is no less startled to read of the annexation of a native chief's "dominations" than at being told that Gordon "resonated to the misery of the innocent." Even if lingual peculiarities give no cause for objection it is unquestionably exasperating to find letters quoted

frequently without any intimation being given, either by footnote or bibliography, of whom they were written to.

Yet in spite of its defects this book merits attention as a painstaking attempt to rationalise the apparently irrational. As opposed to his faults Mr. Beatty has a fine sense of perception which he employs to advantage in analysing the character of a man whose impulses were those of a saint rather than of a soldier, and who showed signs of insubordination whenever it seemed to him that the will of the Government he served failed to coincide with the will of God.

—R. M. Burdon

THE CAT AND THE BAG

THE YOUNG HAVE SECRETS. by James Courage: Jonathan Cape, English price 12/6.

EMOTIONAL currents are often deepened by being narrowed. But I must confess to some uneasiness at being confined, as we are in James Courage's new novel, to the mind of a ten-year-old. Fortunately James Courage breaks out of the restricting bonds of his own rules, and the youngster has an adult sensitivity at least to the exact temperature of the lovelornness of the Garnett sisters. Actually, of course, young Walter Blakiston is a peg on which to hang events which could not otherwise be collected within the observation of any one person—a rather outmoded approach to the writing of fiction. However, he is more than that. He is himself a character, not simply a device—the sounding board echoing back the strange discords of the adult relationships. This in some degree compensates us for our disbelief that this small boy could ever have been in fact the confidant of so many grown-up hopes and fears.

The Young Have Secrets is triumphantly well-constructed. From the opening scene, when the dog is run over by the tram and its body summarily disposed of, a grotesque and horrible incident which recurs as a sort of symbol of the nastiness of the external world, every event is precisely dovetailed into the whole, everything is consistent and harmonised, and we have the pleasure of seeing a novelist in full control of his material pursuing a deliberate course which achieves nothing by accident. The gawkiness and the decorous but niggling manners of Christchurch in 1914 are described without gusto but without flagging. We have the sense that his

(continued on next page)



(C) Punch

N.Z. LISTENER, MARCH 25, 1955.



Dusting...



...dancing



playing...



...working



S.B.7

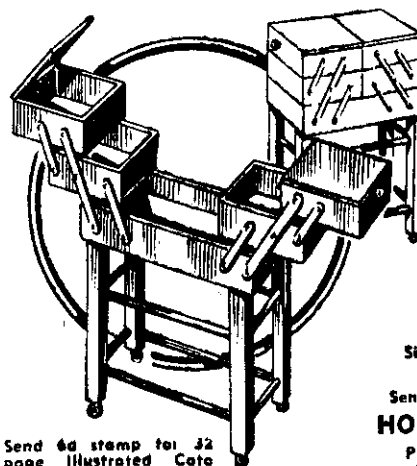
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