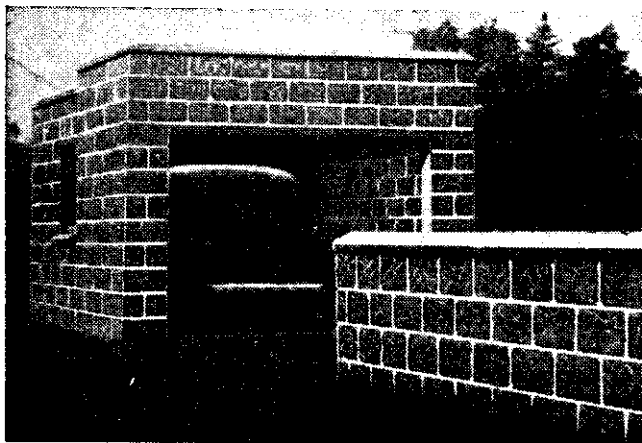


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BOOKS

(continued from previous page)

his theme completely. Elizabeth Riddel, Rosemary Dobson, Nan McDonald—each one moves out of lotus-land toward intellectual honesty. Australian poets seem to be returning also to a conservative use of form. But the strongest and loveliest poem, the war-boomerang tall as a man, is A. D. Hope's "Chorale," a love-lyric which knocks the high nut from the tree. It is very pleasant to be proved wrong.

Douglas Stewart, represented in the year's anthology by two of his softer poems, does not quite come clean in the first twenty-six pages of his new book. Do birds, frogs, crabs, cicadas, foxes, orchids, wombats, magpies, gum-trees, moths, grasshoppers, really mean as much to him as the poems would like to say? The large pale statements of *Elegy for an Airman* have long ago hardened to exact rhetoric. His nursery rhyme technique explodes ideas into images. But the second half of the book, a sequence of poems about the Lake Eyre basin in Central Australia, takes us from nature study to the more difficult study of man. The best Australian poems are generally poems of spiritual extremity—in David Campbell, this side of despair, in John Manifold, entering the eroded badlands beyond—and now Douglas Stewart also finds the gold that will not buy water, under the man-eating sun of Central Australia. Thus, as a Lutheran missionary—

Old man, old man
Convert the sun,
He is stealing the lakes
And the sheep and the wool
And the roof and the wall:
Strike down the sun
At Koperamanna
And Kilalpaninna.

It could not have been written here. Douglas Stewart's maturity is Australian in method and origin.

—James K. Baxter

ITALIAN ACHIEVEMENT

ASCENT OF K2, by Ardito Desio; Elek Books Ltd., N.Z. price 21/-.

AT 28,250 feet, K2 is the second highest peak in the world. It shares with Everest and Kanchenjunga full honours for savage mountain beauty, remoteness and difficulty. It has also cost lives. In the main, the essential pioneer work had been accomplished by magnificent parties from Italy and America.

The first ascent of K2 by Professor Desio's team was applauded by mountaineers, whatever their nationality. His persistence had triumphed over discouragements in Italy, such as the fall of a Government which had promised help. Other setbacks flourished: heavy snowfalls, mass desertions by porters, the death from pneumonia of one of the best climbers, gales, and storms on the steep Abruzzi ridge. Another difficulty was that the complexity of the expedition involved a full-scale scientific group as well as men best described as the summit-for-the-sake-of-Italy types. Professor Desio was a remarkable organiser to gain success in both fields, at a monetary cost that has made other Himalayan parties goggle.

Unfortunately, Professor Desio's book is not as good as his expedition. He has failed in an attempt at a cross between "a popular story . . . a serious documentary." He veers between overtones of patriotism and an enigmatic undertone when most personal accounts are crowded out of a summary. And greater attention to personal details would have infused some vigour into a mountain

narrative so concise that it is dull. In a book of some 240 pages, only a fifth of that number describe the mountain story. The rest of the pages pay deserved tribute to earlier parties on the mountain, and other sidelines. As a factual outline, the book is good value for reference, and the human story could well be written by men who carried the camps high to success. Mountaineers will be interested in technical advances, such as the use of aerial ropeways and windlasses to transport the loads up dangerous cliffs.

—John Pascoe

INSIDE SPAIN

THE MASKS OF SPAIN, by Henry Gibbs; Frederick Muller, English price 15/-.

SHOULD a Spaniard say to a visitor, in the courteous phrase of the country, "Senor, my house is yours," and leave him to enjoy himself in a pleasant and fragrant garden, the visitor may if he wishes to be perverse go to a corner of it, ensconce himself before the dung heap and watch it and smell it all afternoon. If there is no dung heap he can imagine one. When he comes to narrate his experiences they will of course be coloured dark brown. This is what has happened to Henry Gibbs. Fortunately, this sort of book, rather cheap, dogmatic, prejudiced, does create interest in Spain and its people, and causes others to go and see for themselves.

The author, once a correspondent in the Civil War, devotes much attention to the history of Spain over the last 100 years from the left-wing angle; brought up to date and into fashion by dealing a back-hander at the Russians occasionally. He also examines the Gibraltar question. It is difficult for a New Zealander to see what all the fuss is about since the Americans are now pouring millions of dollars into Spanish naval and air bases and are firmly installed in them with full Spanish consent.

There are some observations on the stupidity, the ignorance, the covetousness, the sloth, the incontinence and the hypocrisy of the Spanish clergy, their oppression of the poor, and I forget what else. One rather feels that some of the instances selected, say the Borgia Pope Alex. VI, and some Fourth Century protests against the celibacy of the clergy, might have been selected more to influence Anglo-Saxon readers than to present a considered judgment. My own opinion, for what it is worth, is that the Spanish clergy compare quite well with those of Mr. Gibbs's native country, and as to their luxurious living one feels that if Mr. Gibbs himself had to exist on their stipends and work as hard, he would soon be screaming with pain and veering even more sharply to the left.

There is a commentary on the New Testament references to celibacy of the clergy and it affords an interesting example of a private untutored judgment on some much discussed Biblical texts.

—F. J. Foot

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

INVASION! The D-Day Story in Pictures, written and compiled by John St. John Cooper; Beaverbrook Newspapers Ltd. Great events are unraveled by a series of first-class photographs.

HOLIDAY IN DENMARK, by Børn Viveur; Frederick Muller, English price 5/-. An addition to a series which has already taken readers, in good company, to Holland, Sweden, the Austrian Tyrol and parts of Spain.

N.Z. LISTENER, APRIL 13, 1956.