

the parents—in that small masterpiece, "Towards the Mountains," which is a perfect synthesis of the commonplace, shifty New Zealand ethos—are the real victims of the society they have created. This is the clear-sighted artist's truth about our way of life; how many of us will relish it?

Ten short stories, and a brilliantly written travel-diary of a voyage to Italy and Spain. It does not seem much to get excited about. Yet to those who care for creative writing in this country, this first book is as much of a portent as Alistair Campbell's first book of poems. It announces a talent just as striking, and confirms a more difficult achievement, for the prose-writer has a much harder task here than the poet. If New Zealanders have any appreciation of an original vision directed at themselves and of a quite exquisite craftsmanship with words, they will insist on a second edition of this handsomely-produced volume before Christmas. If booksellers have any conscience, they will display *Immanuel's Land* in their windows at least as willingly as the latest (probably spurious) adventure from Poland or Arabia.

And I cannot think of a better Christmas gift for New Zealand puritans of all creeds and sexes.

HOSTESS OF THE LEFT

BEATRICE WEBB'S DIARIES, 1924-1932, edited and with an introduction by Margaret Cole; Longmans, English price 25/-.

SO far there have been four autobiographical works of Beatrice Webb. *My Apprenticeship* covered the period up to her marriage in 1892, *Our Partnership* took us to 1912, the third volume consisted of *Diaries* from 1912 to 1924—this volume begins when Beatrice was 65 and covers the eight years from 1924 to 1932. The period until her death in 1943 will not be published—for various good reasons—for some years yet.

The Webbs had an incalculable and imponderable effect on several generations of public men and women—politicians, political scientists, economists, sociologists, historians and public administrators—in Great Britain and indeed in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and even India. Their painstaking research, their consistent and persistent advocacy of administrative methods of solving social problems had important results. The breaking down of the Poor Law, the establishment of minimum payments in social security, the national health service, nationalisation of railways and mines, secondary education by the State, economic planning, the

London School of Economics, the *New Statesman*, are all in some major way connected with the Webbs.

That is one of the interesting aspects of this volume. It includes the first Labour Government, the General Strike of 1926, the subsequent depression and the Labour defeat of 1931. It covers disillusionment with the Labour Party, gathering doubts about the "inevitability of gradualism," a recognition that they were seriously wrong when they suggested "we know how to prevent unemployment," an acceptance of the fact that administration is not enough and the final conversion of two bourgeois social democrats to *Soviet Communism: A New Civilisation*.

But social theory is only a small part of the *Diaries*. Here is the intimate social and political history of Britain seen through the eyes of a trained observer who was also a participant—the official hostess of the left. Her brief descriptions will be long remembered. "Ramsay MacDonald is a magnificent substitute for a leader." J. M. Keynes is "brilliant, supercilious." Philip Snowden is "the upholder of the banker, the landed aristocrat and the Crown." Kingsley Martin has a "certain religious fervour for social reconstruction." What rich personalities were in the Britain of the twenties. There are Amery, Beveridge, Bevin, Citrine, Clynes, Cole, Cripps, Dalton, Dutt, Haldane, Henderson, Lansbury, Laski, Maxton, Mosley, Parmoor, Pollitt, Pritt, Queen Mary, Russell, Sankey, Shaw, Smuts, Strachey, Tawney, Toynbee, Wallas, Wells, the Woolfs. And hostess to them all was Beatrice Webb, who refused to be called Lady Passfield when her husband was knighted and who did not become Joseph Chamberlain's wife because he demanded the "intellectual subordination of women." —W. B. Sutch

COURAGEOUS FRENCHMAN

THE PURSUIT OF FREEDOM, by Pierre Mendès-France; Longmans, English price 18/-.

THIS book is a real-life thriller by a man who was to become known as one of the most sensible and courageous of post-war statesmen. Its background is formed by the judicial iniquities of Vichy France, and the story is of the valiant struggle by an individual to vindicate his personal honour and finally to win the opportunity of fighting for France. The writing is personal, indignant and moving. In political terms the book gives a vivid reminder of the monstrous perversions into which an honourable political system can be twisted in times of intense strain and calamity. It is tempting to forget and wise not to dwell on these disasters, but most foolish to ignore the warning they convey. It is only too easy to gloss over the evils of the Hitlerite period, or to feel self-righteous about those who cracked under the strain. This war-time pamphlet is accordingly a valuable historical document to confront those who evade unpleasant facts. It is the more likely to be read because it embodies a fascinating account of prison-breaking by a lawyer-politician, a radical intellectual who normally shunned athletic activity. This was a (continued on next page)

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TO A PROSPECTIVE HOST

OLD man, I simply phoned to say,
Since we are long and time is flitting,
We are as good as on our way—
D.V. and Mrs. V. permitting.
Perhaps you also stand and wait
With patience of a Casanova,
Or maybe not—at any rate,
It's good of you to ask us over.
The speech of welcome you have planned
By now no doubt is adjectival.
I'd like you, though, to understand
This habit of delayed arrival
Is not acquired. Believe me, pal,
Others in that have well outshone me.
Nor was I born unpunctual—
I've just had lateness thrust upon me.

—R.G.P.

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