

and she overwrites her agony. Better to be silent. But no doubt there are mouths to feed, in spite of writers' appeals: young Thomases, who must learn to forgive parents more turbulent than our times allow.

These two, Dylan and Caitlin Thomas, will go down in gossip, scandal and literature, like Lawrence and Freida, larger and louder than life. In the long run the fighting won't affect the writing, for both men were geniuses. But the fighting and all the other excesses remain interesting, as part of genius. Even when we are carrion, feeding on some tormented carcass, we get a subtly sadistic satisfaction from our self-consuming betters, who are more vigorously alive than we are even when they are dead.

It is this kind of satisfaction *Leftover Life to Kill* gives, Caitlin Thomas writes about herself, rather than about him. She spares us nothing. She humiliates herself cruelly, repeatedly, publicly. She is clearly as undisciplined as her husband was in everything except his poetry; and the lack of discipline spills over in sex, drink, and mottled prose. Describing a long visit to an island in the Mediterranean after Dylan's death, *Leftover Life to Kill* is a shapeless diary, which might have been dictated from a psychiatrist's couch, were it not for the fact that her courage makes her impervious to help of that kind. Anyway, I hope it will help her financially. Otherwise, there wouldn't be much point to it.

—Anton Vogt

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A HISTORY OF NEW ZEALAND LIFE, by W. P. Morrell and D. O. W. Hall; Whitcombe and Tombs, 16/6.

PROFESSOR MORRELL and Mr Hall have written a book which is composed of post-primary school bulletins published originally under the title *A Short History of New Zealand Life*. Drawing them together under the present title does not mean that the claims or scope of the book are enlarged: the authors expressly state that the change has been made in order to avoid confusion with another book in the publisher's list. Publication as a book is intended still to meet the needs of the schools, but the work is also deemed suitable for the general reader. This equation of post-primary pupil and general reader is odd, but one can hardly blame the authors for a publisher's enterprise; although one might reasonably expect that each kind of reader requires a different literary technique and style. The general reader may be as irritated as the reviewer by the air of condescension, of making a complicated affair simple for less mature intelligences, which the writers seem to think appropriate for school texts.

The great merit of the book is Dr Morrell's use of the recent and unpublished research in New Zealand history which is contained in university theses. Dr Morrell is, of course, a scholar of

international reputation, of great experience and learning, and he has fulfilled an often neglected duty of the great scholar to re-write history for a wider circle than his fellow professionals. He does it with his usual care and precision, but in doing so he runs a risk which is perhaps unavoidable: letting his wealth of detail obscure the general outline. Still, the popularity of the "quiz" programme and of the *Reader's Digest* kind of literature suggest that encyclopaedic knowledge may be cherished and admired by the general reader for its own sake. Mr Hall's sections of the book, which deal with "social life"—in itself a tautology—do not show the same grasp as Dr Morrell's, nor the same command of the English language. The scholarship is less sure, and the writing at times distinctly flabby; not so useful for facing the question-master.

The Foreword to the book proclaims that this is a new kind of history of New Zealand, which originated in the idea of a former editor of School Publications that the history should centre on economic and social life rather than on politics; scarcely an original idea, nor, surely, one overlooked by previous New Zealand histories. Indeed, the worst thing about the Webbs—the Coles—has influenced New Zealand writing too much. Must we be afflicted with the long and complicated annals of the poor? Happily this book does not leave politics out, and the distortion usually implied in social or economic history is avoided. Dr Morrell's survey of political development is one of the better pieces of writing in the book.

On a factual level this is a good book: a useful little work of reference. Its major failing is the absence of any clear or consistent interpretation of New Zealand history. Perhaps such an interpretation was thought unsuitable for post-primary school children? Perhaps the time has not yet come when it can be written, although H. G. Miller has offered an attractive one? Neither consideration, so it seems to me, is valid; and certainly neither ought to prevent one from trying.

—Francis West

FROM PINKS TO REDS

THE PINK AND THE BROWN, by Hugh Atkinson; Victor Gollancz, English price 12/6. STOPOVER: TOKYO, by John P. Marquand; Collins, English price 12/6. THE HIDDEN ENEMY, by V. H. Lloyd; Angus and Robertson, Australian price 17/-. TEN SECONDS FROM NOW, by Kay Cicellis; Harvill, English price 13/6.

FOR a backdrop, Mr Atkinson takes the politically independent, but emotionally unstable, India of the 1950's, at the time of the Satyagrahis' march into Portuguese Goa. The characters and theme are handled with remarkable sympathy, insight and candour. Mr Atkinson uses the love affair between Peter Boyd—a forthright and individualistic European artist—and Sohini, an Indian girl, as an emotional

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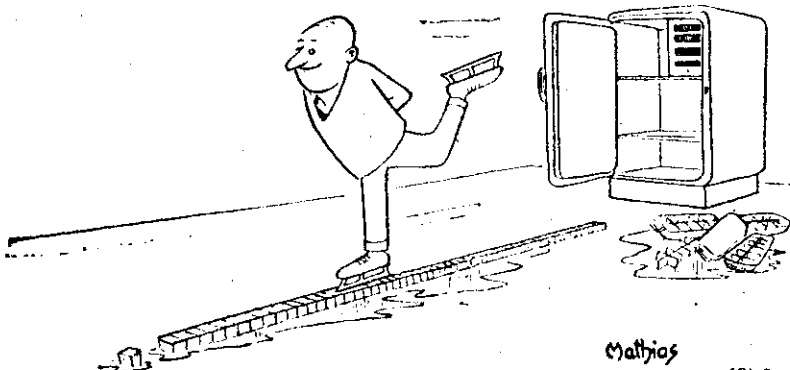
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