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BOOKS

(continued from previous page)

with description what *Wild Beauty* does in photographs. The author, Charles Masfield, has already produced a similar book on native birds. His drawings of clematis, celmisia and manuka and a few more are recognisable and clear enough; and his descriptions are not inaccurate. But his drawings are not all beautiful, and in some cases show simply *tree*—I defy anyone to look at his miro, and go out into the hills and find a miro, never having seen a miro before; the same goes for his totara, his matai, almost all his big trees except rimu—which is, of course, defiantly recognisable even when, as in my edition of Cockayne and Turner, the plate is printed upside down. Mr. Masfield is welcome to spend his time drawing trees if he enjoys doing this; but it seems unjust, at a time when book-publishing is a badly-jammed industry, that craftsmen should have to spend their time producing a book which does the job it sets out to do so inadequately.

—J.

HISTORY AGAIN

DOUBLE MUSCADINE, by Frances Gaither; Michael Joseph. English price, 10.6.

THE GOD-SEEKER, by Sinclair Lewis; Heinemann. English price, 12.6.

THESE two American novels both have historical settings, both about a hundred years old. In both the history is important; in Sinclair Lewis's book it might well be called all-important.

Aaron Gadd sets out first to seek God in the West as a missionary to the Indians, finds the Sioux almost as likely to convert him, marries, and settles down to worshipping a different sort of god, Progress (with occasional backslidings). What promises at one moment to be a tragic theme becomes instead a somewhat pedestrian but usually pleasant Saga of the infancy of the state of Minnesota, a slighter work than one would expect of Sinclair Lewis.

Frances Gaither's account of a trial in the deep South (Mississippi) of a Negro woman, a slave, for murder, is a work of deeper scope, a human drama handled with force and assurance, history playing second fiddle to the heart beats; a good deal of narrative skill is shown in postponing the denouement and in developing the real moral status of the chief characters. But then it is an advantage in writing a novel to have a plot; this has a good one.

—David Hall

STAGE EXCITEMENT

COCK-A-DOODLE DANDY, by Sean O'Casey; Macmillan and Co. Through the British Council. English price, 6/-.

THIS play has a cast of about twenty, with the minor characters saying little, some merely entering and exiting. There are three scenes and one set. It is a producer's nightmare in places with wild winds affecting some people on the stage and leaving others alone, with collapsing chairs which must give way at the exact moment, with ornaments on the women's headgear rising up every now and again to become the horns of the devil, and with lightnings and blackouts by the dozen.

It is a welter of fantasy and symbolism, superstition and argument, satire and mad humour, with a spot of cynicism thrown in for good measure. The symbolism is rather difficult to interpret at times, but in the long run the pattern is fairly clear cut. The message is that the natural joys and warmth of living



"HISKY GALORE" by Compton

Mackenzie (above) will be reviewed by Norman Berrow in the ZB Book Review session this Sunday, February 12. Ian Harvey's "Talk of Propaganda" will be reviewed by Kenneth Melvin. Ralph Parker's "Moscow Correspondent" by Ruth Lake, and R. M. Burdon will review Elizabeth Wiske-mann's "The Rome-Berlin Axis." Roy Parsons will be in the chair.

should never be regarded with shame or fear, and that those who do so regard them become in the end grey, lonely and hopeless. The theme, simplified, is the battle of the sexes, with the women coming out of it all much better than the men. The language is what we have come to expect from O'Casey—half realism, half poetry.

After almost continuous movement and excitement, verbal and visual, the play ends on a quiet subdued note which, on first reading, I thought might be anticlimax. On thinking it over I can see that it would be very effective. This is a lovely, crazy play which, well done, would be a joy to watch.

—Isobel Andrews

A NEW HERODOTUS

HERODOTUS, translated by J. Enoch Powell; Geoffrey Cumberlege, Oxford University Press, 2 vols. English price, 21/-.

HERODOTUS has long been accepted as an innovating genius, the father of history, and a writer so brilliant that his legends, chronicles and geographical descriptions—brought together in a narrative which marches with masculine stride towards the crisis of the Persian War—may still be read with excitement. Moreover, the excitement survives in translation; and, indeed, it is only through interpreting minds that most of us can feel the original power. J. Enoch Powell, who has produced a new version, the work of many years, deals rather trenchantly with some of his predecessors. He is severe with Rawlinson, whose translation is perhaps the one most used by present-day readers. "In translating Herodotus," he writes, "it is inappropriate and misleading completely to modernise language or thought; to modernise them partially is fatal, and this Rawlinson has done."

Powell has found his own model in the English of the Authorized Version of the Bible. "I believe that the simple and flowing language of Herodotus needs least remoulding for modern English ears if presented in the style and cadences rendered familiar by the Bible, and that a certain quaintness and