

STRANGERS AND PILGRIMS

by "SUNDOWNER"

AFTER receiving yesterday another anonymous gift, this time a bundle of *Economists*, I am beginning to question the value of signatures. If I am invited to see a man about a dog it is necessary to know who and where he is; but it is not necessary, though it is sometimes helpful, to know who is pulling my leg. I can't send (or cash) anonymous cheques, and if I want to shake hands with a Minister of the Crown or a shearer I have usually, but not always, to say whose common hand they will be touching. But I can confess my sins anonymously, whistle, laugh, shout, or sing without saying who I am and who has copyright in the noise I am making. I can do most of the things any reasonable person requires or wishes to do without proclaiming my identity, and if friends or acquaintances wish to annoy me, all they have to do is to greet me by name in a loud voice in a public place.

MARCH 1 I have often wondered why it is so disturbing to see one's name in print, honourably or dishonourably, and suspect that part of the explanation is ancestry—forefathers who had to keep an eye open for enemies—and another part the uncertainty in which we all live and move and have our being. We are not afraid or ashamed of our names in our own homes. There we feel safe; almost secure. But we are all strangers when we venture abroad, picking our way cautiously in an insecure world, trusting nobody and nothing without reservations. It is Whitman's "terrible doubt of appearances." Even if we had not heard it at Sunday School, we would know that this world is not our dwelling-place and our home till we tire of it. So we sleep with our eyes open, and

soon learn how embarrassing it is to be always identified and labelled.

So far my anonymous correspondents have all been generous and kind. They have once or twice warned me of the error of my ways, and in those cases it is a relief not to know whose earnest advice I seem to be spurning. I can suspect, when I am sent the *Economist*, that I have a reader who dislikes ill-informed and careless talking; but if I don't know his name I don't have to blush when I see him in the street or jostle him in a crowded tram-car. It is a worry not to be able to thank him, or show my appreciation by sending him one of three pamphlets I have received this week (*An Animal Charter*, *The Rock*, and *Vegetarianism*); but he probably learnt long ago, as I did myself, that if we let the left hand know what the right is doing the left will soon make trouble.

MARCH 2 A VISITOR asked me today if it was possible that he had seen a rifleman in our pine trees. It was possible, but not, I think, probable. We have warblers here nearly every week, but I have not in two years of watching seen a rifleman. It could happen, I suppose, that a rifleman would get lost, leave the bush and get blown over the open hills. When I lived in Day's Bay I

MARCH 3 saw rifleman more often than I saw thrushes and starlings, which do not go far into bush. A pair had a nest in a dead tree not 40 yards from our door, and I never went deep into the bush without seeing others. But I am miles from the kind of bush rifleman like, and it would be astonishing if one found his way to pine trees inhabited by hundreds of sparrows and patrolled by at least a dozen magpies.

I don't know what to do about the magpies. Their chortlings at day-break,

though they don't always wake me, give me great delight when they do; but they also remind me of other birds now silent. Though I have only once seen magpies attacking small birds—a sparrow, which they ruthlessly tore to pieces, running along the ground with it and pulling in opposite directions—I can't doubt their destructiveness to eggs and fledglings. This year, too, because of the long stretch of dry weather, they are probably short of grubs and worms. They are certainly living nearer to us than they have ever done before, and it is not affection that brings them so often to the fowlhouse and the back door. But I have not seen them taking walnuts, fruit, peas or beans, and with the exception of that unfortunate sparrow, their enmity has always seemed to be against birds bigger than themselves—especially hawks and (more rarely) gulls.

MARCH 4 MY three rams—Harry, Hori and Huri—are, like most males, gallant only in periodic patches. When I bought my ewes a month ago I put the three rams with them in the hope that they would lead the way to the watering trough and help the ewes to settle down. But they did nothing so hospitable as that. They remained with the ewes till sunset because they were fat, hot, and tired with the chasing I had given them; but they deserted before dawn. When I looked for them next day they were back in their own paddock where the ewes (unless they were fencers, too) could not follow or find them, and they stayed in seclusion for fourteen days. This, in fact, suited me very well, since I had already decided not to mix them by the calendar, but by the season and their own inclination. Stags have neither shepherds nor calendars to tell them when to mate, and they are often, when the call comes, many miles away from the restless hinds. But no hind ever seems to be left lamenting, and no stag and no hind to be in need of flushing. There are no doubt barren hinds and infertile stags, but I have never seen a mature hind in summer without a fawn. If deer know what's what, who's who, and when's when, sheep will show the same cleverness if we give them a chance.

In any case, since mine is not an economic flock, I decided to leave the rams on one side of the fence and the ewes on the other side, having no doubt that when the day came the slack wires would prove negotiable. They did. On the fifteenth day Harry, who is a four-tooth, developed enough curiosity to make a social call, but not enough interest to stay. Next day, however, he was back again, and did stay, but without any special enthusiasm. Then full-mouthed Hori and Huri got curious, but not before Harry had been surveying the field for four days; and like Harry they went home again the first night. However, they, too, returned again in the morning, and then suddenly found it a nuisance to go back on their tracks a second time. It will be interesting in a few weeks to see which prodigal repents first.

(To be continued)

A Good Book Every Month for 5/6

How many times have you wanted to find out good books and to own them? Cost and the difficulty of choice sometimes stand in the way, specially if you are in the country. Paul's Book Arcade, Hamilton, have recently taken the agency for

READERS' UNION

and recommend it to your attention. The choice of books is discriminating. In particular R.U. has chosen excellent and well-written non-fiction for those who like fact rather than fiction. Here is the programme for the next five months:

March—The Kon-Tiki Expedition, Thor Heyerdahl. Ordinary price, 15/9. Needs no comment.

April—Here They Dug the Gold, G. F. Willison. An authentic story of the Colorado Gold Rush. Ordinary price, 16/-.

May—The Isles of Unwisdom, Robert Graves. An historical novel by the author of *I Claudius*, dealing with the Spanish conquest of the Solomons. Ordinary price, 10/6.

June—I Walked Alone, the Earl of Cardigan. One of the best, though not a well-known escape story. Ordinary price, 12/6.

July—Naga Path, Ursula Bower. An account of travel among the Naga people of Northern India. Ordinary price, 16/-.

Later 1952 books include **The Great Escape**, by Paul Brickhill.

All these for 5/6 per volume, including postage, to you.

All you need to do is to subscribe for a minimum period of 6 months. Those who join now may obtain the Kon-Tiki Expedition for 5/6 as their first book.

Write to

PAUL'S BOOK ARCADE, Hamilton

- (1) Please send fuller particulars of Readers' Union, Or
- (2) Please enrol me for 6 months at £1/13/- 12 months at £3/6/- and thereafter till I resign on giving two months' notice. I enclose remittance.
- (3) Any other book you require (we will be glad to obtain any book in print).

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

AMATEUR THEATRE GROUPS

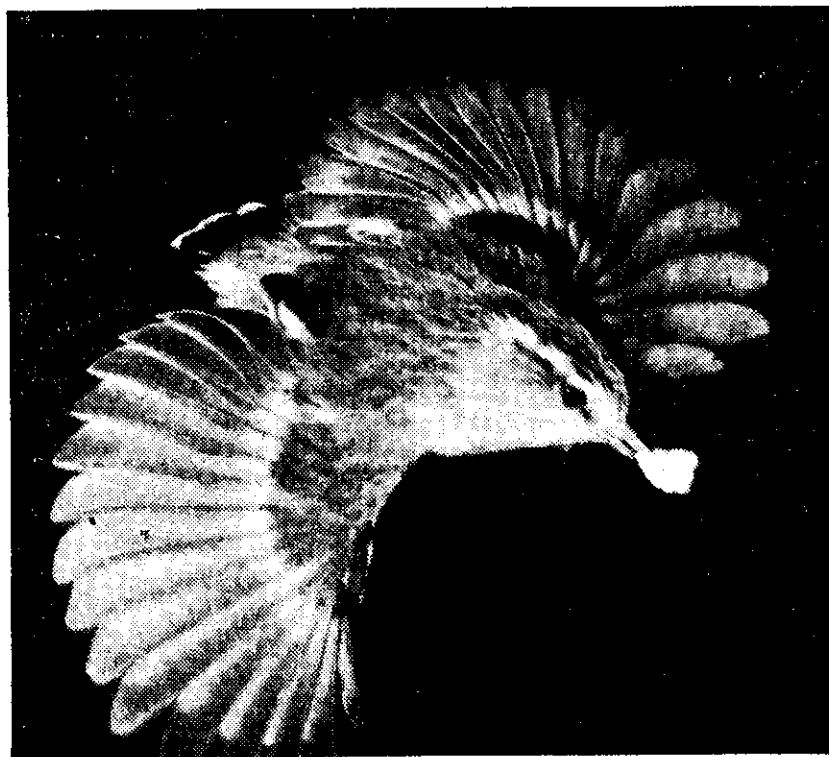
We have taken over the well-known MODERN PLAYREADERS' LIBRARY, which we are extensively and rapidly enlarging. 1500 Plays for hire in sets or single copies. (Send 8d in stamps for catalogue.)

Theatre Books Theatre Magazines
Equipment Materials
Set Designs Costume Designs

Technical Service
WRITE OR CALL

JOAN & RUSSELL REID Ltd.

6 Boulcott Street, Wellington, C.I.
P.O. Box 1435. Telephone 45-808.
Telegrams: "Nivram," Wellington.



AIRBORNE RIFLEMAN

N.P.S. photograph