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BOOKS

FIERY ADMIRALS

PORTRAIT OF AN ADMIRAL, the Life and Papers of Sir Herbert Richmond, by Arthur J. Marder; Jonathan Cape. English price, 30/-.

FEAR GOD AND DREAD NOUGHT, the Correspondence of Admiral of the Fleet Lord Fisher of Kilverstone, Vol. 1 (The Making of an Admiral, 1854-1904); selected and edited by Arthur J. Marder; Jonathan Cape. English price, 30/-.

(Reviewed by S.D.W.)

STUDENTS of naval history familiar with his numerous published works will find it hard to recognise the "portrait" of Admiral Richmond presented by the major part of Professor Marder's book. The life of Richmond is covered in a "biographical essay" of some 30 pages—a sort of extended obituary notice. The admiral's private diaries cover the period 1909-1920, and there are a few letters. Professor Marder (an American) describes them as a "veritable El Dorado" of primary source material of "immense historical importance." That is, perhaps, an overstatement, but one can agree with him that Admiral Richmond had "never considered publishing his diaries; in fact, nothing was further from his mind." The professor tells us that "except for a scattering of epithets that might have

given needless offence to a few persons, there have been no 'judicious omissions.' Those epithets must have been offensive indeed if they were worse than many that remain.

From first to last no Board of Admiralty measures up to Richmond's approval. They are the "fat-heads at Whitehall" and "ignorant pretenders." Admiral Sturdee, Chief of the Naval Staff in 1914, is a "stupid doctrinaire," the Secretary of the Admiralty is "pip-squeak Murray," and, says Richmond, "I really believe Churchill is insane." In 1919 he confesses: "I hate the Admiralty more and more." He has never a good word for Admiral Jellicoe, who is "as ignorant as a pig, a weak-minded man with all the obstinacy of small natures." In December, 1917, he gloats: "Jellicoe has fallen. One obstacle to a successful war is now out of the way." And so on. Even his hero Beatty does not escape the lash of his criticism. Spleen and intolerance mar many of Richmond's judgments, which too often are based on hearsay evidence and spiteful service gossip. This is a cruel book.

On June 12, 1854, a 12-year-old boy named John Arbuthnot Fisher joined H.M.S. Victory at Portsmouth. Half a century later—on Trafalgar Day, 1904—the flag of Admiral Sir John Fisher as Commander-in-Chief, Portsmouth, was struck in the Victory on his going to the Admiralty as First Sea Lord. Professor Marder's book tells the vivid story of that 50 years of this extraordinary man's career, mainly by means of his letters. His output of correspondence was prodigious and the editor has made a "ruthless, relentless and remorseless" selection from collections numbering well over 1000 letters, claiming "complete objectivity" as his criterion.

However that may be, Professor Marder has given us a valuable and intensely interesting character-study of a remarkable man who has been described as "95 per cent genius with 5 per cent devil," yet who was withal a deeply religious man whose courage was as theatrical as it was fearless, and whose ideas were as ruthless as they were clear-sighted and so often right. The second volume will be awaited with pleasurable interest.

TRIAL OF STRENGTH

151 DAYS, "official history of the great waterfront lock-out and supporting strikes, February 15-July 15, 1951," by Dick Scott; New Zealand Waterside Workers' Union (de-registered). Price, cloth 16/-, cheap edition 10/6.

MR. SCOTT is a propagandist of 19th Century notions of class warfare. He sees the wharf dispute in a

FOUR reviews and a short recorded talk will be heard in ZB Book Review on April 26. Mrs. Barbara Wilson (below) is to review "Giant," by



N.P.S. photo

Edna Ferber; "The Bedside Guardian," selected by Ivor Brown, will be discussed by Oliver Duff; and "The Antarctic Today," edited by Frank Simpson, will be reviewed by Bryan O'Brien. The recorded talk will be by James Ramsay Ullman, whose book "Windom's Way" will be discussed by Ronald Walker.



ADMIRAL BEATTY

"Even his hero does not escape the lash of his criticism"

context of high emotionalism, and conceives this book in the tradition of New Zealand labour literature of 30 to 40 years ago. But this is an unreal atmosphere in which to treat a comparatively cool-blooded affair. Mr. Scott in his association with the watersiders' journal, the *Transport Worker*, was close to his subject, and will have known that by 1951 there remained on the waterfront few of those crusading Socialists of an earlier generation; there was simply a body of working men who had compromised with capitalism and were selling their labour for as much as direct action could command. The contest of 1951 had none of the ideological flavour he gives it.

As a propagandist out to build a legend Mr. Scott is entitled to colour his facts. But it is a pity he has this approach. Everyone's interests would be better served if the truth could be told plainly and if unionism in its modern environment were more closely examined.

Nonetheless, it is possible to discern here some of the essentials, of which these may be the more important: (1) Here was New Zealand's first-hand experience of a modern State's trial of strength with a union, on chosen ground. (2) It demonstrated how far the administrators of the State will go to ensure the survival of authority. (3) Here was a reminder to unionists that the theory of complete "unity of the working class" in industrial action is but a dream; put into practice it would produce revolution or anarchy, for neither of which the New Zealand worker is at present inclined.

Looking at the detail we find in 151 Days some material, notably photographs and reproductions of pamphlets and cartoons, which belongs now as much to history as to propaganda. Mr. Scott deserves thanks for preserving this.

—Philip Hewland

TWO CONTRASTING PLAYS

QUADRILLE, by Noel Coward; William Heinemann. Australian price, 10/9. THAT MAN HARTINGTON, by Claude Evans; The Pegasus Press, Christchurch.

MR. COWARD does it again. And how adroitly, wittily and entertainingly he writes, and with what ease and polish! But how nearly impossible to play without the Lunts for whom it was devised. *Quadrille* is Coward at his best. It is set in the eighteen-seventies, so that infidelities are in period and character. The tenuous plot is dexterously

N.Z. LISTENER, APRIL 17, 1953.

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