

THE PENAL SETTLEMENT

RALPH RASHLEIGH, by James Tucker; Angus and Robertson. Australian price, 18 9.

(Reviewed by P.J.W.)

TO the two great Australian pioneer novels, *Robbery Under Arms* and *For the Term of His Natural Life*, it would not be inappropriate to add as a third this story about life in the convict colony, among the bush-rangers and aborigines. It was written in 1845, some 30 or 40 years earlier than its better-known successors, and has only now been published in full, although a mutilated form of it appeared in 1929. The author was transported for life in 1827, and after a miserable existence in and out of the penal settlements, as a ticket-of-leave man and an old lag, finally died in 1866 at Liverpool Asylum. His masterpiece, along with two plays, was written while he was in the Port Macquarie gaol.

The story of Ralph Rashleigh is in the picaresque or rogue novel tradition of Smollett's *Roderick Random* or Fielding's *Jonathan Wild*, and with its 18th Century flavour it is an interesting example of a transplanted culture continuing to produce works in a mode which had become obsolete in the old world. The action moves at a fast pace

through incident after incident, without the moralising of Marcus Clarke's Tasmanian tale; and the gruesome, repulsive, or cruel episodes which are related with such convincing authenticity, the murders, robberies, battles, mutinies, fights, fires, shootings and debauches, are relieved only on occasions—by Rashleigh's idyllic account of work with the Australian-Irish farmers, of his years as an adopted son of a tribe of aborigines, or of his comic experiences with a prison theatrical company.

Ralph Rashleigh is slighter in construction than its successors in the field of Australian pioneer fiction, yet it gains in narrative excitement and intensity what it loses in the weight of a more solid social background. The important fact about its author is that unlike Clarke or Boldrewood he knew the convict system from the inside. He is occasionally naive in his comments, and his hero, portrayed as a sensitive, educated man, vacillates curiously between compassion and contempt for the "wretches" with whom he has to associate. But the heavy gloom of atrocity forms a cloud which the author is never able to shake off, and despite Rashleigh's eventual release, to become manager of a sheep farm owned by a girl he had rescued from shipwreck in Torres Strait, the book's concluding

pages are a sad reminder that from such sufferings as these the human spirit rarely recovers.

FRUSTRATED REBELS

PRESCRIPTION FOR REBELLION, by Robert Lindner; Victor Gollancz. English price, 16 ..

IT seems inevitable that all societies, institutions and leaders must to some extent force the individual to toe the line. This restriction on what Dr. Lindner chooses to call the "instinct to rebel," he regards as a crime, and he is particularly upset by the manner in which his professional colleagues aid and abet the guilty. He asserts that all psychologists, psychiatrists, psychotherapists, like priests and teachers, reiterate "Adjust to society," "You must conform." They all want the ordinary man to have "the resignation of a barnyard fowl."

The attack on professional colleagues is enlivened by some grim case histories and succeeds admirably in ridiculing the mass of psychological bunkum now re-tailed widely in the States, bolstered by some irresponsible brain surgery and electric shock therapy. But the author, himself a psychologist, is very uncompromising—"Parenthood has come to amount to little more than a campaign against individuality," and he uses horrid words—"Propagandization," "Proletarianization," "Utilizable," "Acculturated."

There will be much support for his main thesis, for the pressure now

ZB Book Review for August 2 is concerned with books of a biographical or autobiographical character, Dr. T. J. MacCormac



will review "Brain Surgeon," by William Sharpe; Russell Burdham's "Forrest Reid" is to be discussed by A. R. D. Fairburn (at left); Desmond McCarthy's "Memories" by Pat Lavior; and Fred Bickerton's "Fred of Oxford" by Eric Blow.

The chairman of the session for August will be Professor L. G. Pocock.

brought to bear upon the ordinary citizen to behave exactly like his neighbour is very heavy, and if successful must result in stagnation. However, the bashing that the non-conformer often receives will damage health sometimes, and if he just cannot take it he is surely well-advised to accept the world more as he finds it. The recipes for rearing happy rebels do not sound very convincing, especially as it is suggested that mating and reproduction be subjected to controls.

This is a useful book to hand to those fainthearts who want to protest but can never deviate from the mass, however miserable it may make them to conform. It could well be studied, too,

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