

# Books and Men

## 1934 Was an Important Year in the N.Z. Literary World

A year or two ago we were deploring the fact that New Zealand had contributed very little of worth to the world of letters. Katherine Mansfield had won posthumous recognition with her short stories; Pember Reeves had written of New Zealand in verse and prose; Jane Mander and Hector Bolitho had mentioned the Dominion in their stories. But, in the main, New Zealand was not a serious contestant in the battle for literary fame.

But in the past 12 months all that has been changed. New authors have come into view. New Zealanders have written books that have provoked the widest discussion. In looking over the 1934 list of publications I give first place to the anonymous story, "Children of the Poor," a story of the Dunedin slums of 30 years ago. It isn't a pleasant story—it is grim and fierce and, in places, beastly. But it is a definite contribution to New Zealand literature, and it is good news that the author, who is a well-known figure in our Parliament, is at work on a second book. George Bernard Shaw read the manuscript of "Children of the

Minister is obviously "Dick Seddon"—with some of the old fighter's harder qualities erased.

A newcomer to the New Zealand literary world is J. Wilson Hogg, whose story, "Snow Man," has excited some attention. Mr. Hogg, who is now a master at Scots College, Wellington, spent some time at Oxford and his book is intended to throw light on the evils of the drug traffic in Europe. His book has been warmly received overseas, and it is understood that he is at work on a new story.

Bright and interesting, if a little shaky in its facts, is Robin Hyde's Auckland-published book, "Journal-ese." Miss Hyde whose real name by the way, is Iris Wilkinson, has worked on numerous papers in both the South and North Islands, and her observations on newspapers and journalists, interviewers and interviewed, have been rounded into a neat story. Even if one or two of her anecdotes have made the victims writhe with their inaccuracies, they at least have the virtue of being well-written. Nelle Scanlan, who left the Dominion a year or two ago, has been working hard since her arrival in London, her latest book (and the last of the Pencarrow trilogy) being a best-seller, "Winds of Heaven" it is called and its atmosphere is essentially colonial.

Other New Zealanders have produced biographies and historical books during the year—Dr. Guy Scholefield wrote a remarkably interesting story on the life of Captain William Hobson, our first governor, whose grave is today a neglected plot beneath the Grafton Bridge in Auckland. Johannes Andersen, of the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, has compiled a useful work on New Zealand place names; Dr. J. C. Beaglehole has published a work on the exploration of the Pacific, while Messrs. Cowan and Pomare have published their second volume on "Legends of the Maori."

Mary Wigley, well known in Canterbury, has published a small book of verse, and there is a distinct possibility that it will be awarded the King's Medal in London this year. Professor Arnold Wall came to light with a new book of verse, "The Order of Release," while C. Stuart Perry, acting-chief Librarian at the Central Library, Wellington, had his "Litany of Beauty" published. This young man has also recently completed a life of Alfred Domett, a figure well known in New Zealand politics in the earlier days.

## For Scotland

### The Story of Montrose's Life of Sacrifice

THERE have been stories before of the Earl of Montrose—but there has never before been a story of Montrose's life which gives such colour and fire to this period of Scottish history as does Margaret Irwin's latest book, "The Proud Servant." It has become fashionable to drag figures of history from their pedestals, probe them very thoroughly and leave them looking rather like oddments at a bargain sale. But Miss Irwin, in her story, does nothing to rob the earl of the fine qualities with which time has vested him. She gives him dignity, valour and a certain boyish charm that carry him as a dominant and lovable figure to the last page of the book.

"The Proud Servant" traces the story of Montrose's life—his private life, his career and his devotion to Charles the First. The reader is given the picture of his boyhood in Scotland, his prowess at games, his courtship of and early marriage to Madalen Carnegie, the shy daughter of one of Scotland's great figures. It also tells of the strange influence exerted over him by his youngest sister, Kat, who elopes to Italy when little more



MARGARET IRWIN.

than a child with her brother-in-law. Montrose follows and, by so doing, misses the King's coronation in Edinburgh. When he goes to court on his way home again he is given a Royal cold shoulder.

Back in Scotland once more, he finds himself plunged into the discontent that is being caused by the religious differences between England and Scotland. Revolution is in the air, and

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N.Z. WRITERS.—On the left is J. Wilson Hogg, an old Oxonian and now a master at Scots College, Wellington. Mr. Hogg has achieved fame as the writer of the book, "Snow Man." The other picture is of Alan Mulgan, the well-known Auckland writer, and author of the best-seller, "Spur of Morning," a story dealing with New Zealand 30 years ago.

Poor" and classed it with Lionel Britton's tremendous story, "Hunger and Love." The M.S. finally reached the publishers, Messrs. T. Werner Laurie, with a personal note of recommendation from Upton Sinclair, and it has the distinction of being the only New Zealand-written book to receive simultaneous publication in London and New York.

Almost as important, but an entirely different story, is Alan Mulgan's "Spur of Morning," a tale of the New Zealand of 30 years ago. Mr. Mulgan, who is literary editor of the "Auckland Star," writes with an easy pen, and his work bears the stamp of far-sightedness and good humour. "Spur of Morning," which was published by J. M. Dent, brings some well-known figures, to light—thinly disguised. His Prime