

Books and Men

Leaving Decisions and Labour to the Other Fellow

"Land Under England" More Than a Novel: South Sea Islands in the 'Eighties.

"LAND UNDER ENGLAND" might have come from the pen of that famous writer of awe and mystery, Edgar Allan Poe. In a literal sense it is a thriller, but Joseph O'Neill had another purpose in painting such a weird, vivid and satirical picture. In a manner peculiarly Irish, he conveys to the thinking reader what may be expected if the Hitlers and Mussolinis develop and hold sway for a few generations—a novel and effective warning that we are throwing away with both hands the liberty gained by our forefathers at a cost of much blood and agony.

Cleverly using one of the lowest forms of life as his vehicle of presentation—a slug—he awakens his reader to the serious danger of the luxury of leaving to the other fellow the decisions and labour which hitherto have been borne by the individual himself. Some readers may recoil at the rude jolt to their self-complacency, others will take it as a call to arms, to take stock of the position to-day and respond to the responsibilities of life instead of side-stepping them.

Hardly the novel for a train journey, or for the cursory reader, it is bound

to set up in the receptive mind serious thought of what might be.

"Land Under England." Joseph O'Neill. Victor Gollancz. Our copy from the publishers.

"JOCK OF THE ISLANDS" is a story of the early life of "Jock" or John Cromar up to the year 1889, when he was engaged in obtaining native labour from the South Sea Islands for work on the Queensland sugar plantations. The islands were at the time in a savage state and under no Government jurisdiction. "Jock" Cromar's early voyages were full of surprises, and his success in many adventures which cost other white men their lives, was due to his constant observation and interpretation of the savage mind. Although rather disjointedly written some of the early adventures of the old sailor are both instructive and interesting, while the details of the savage customs are fascinating yet reliable. The book is well illustrated and is equipped with a map which enables the reader to place the multitude of islands mentioned.

In "Jock of the Islands" there is a mixture of accurate observation and light-hearted adventure which provides quite sound entertainment.

"Jock of the Islands." John Cromar. Faber and Faber, London. Our copy from the publishers.

Fine Photographs Of Polar Regions

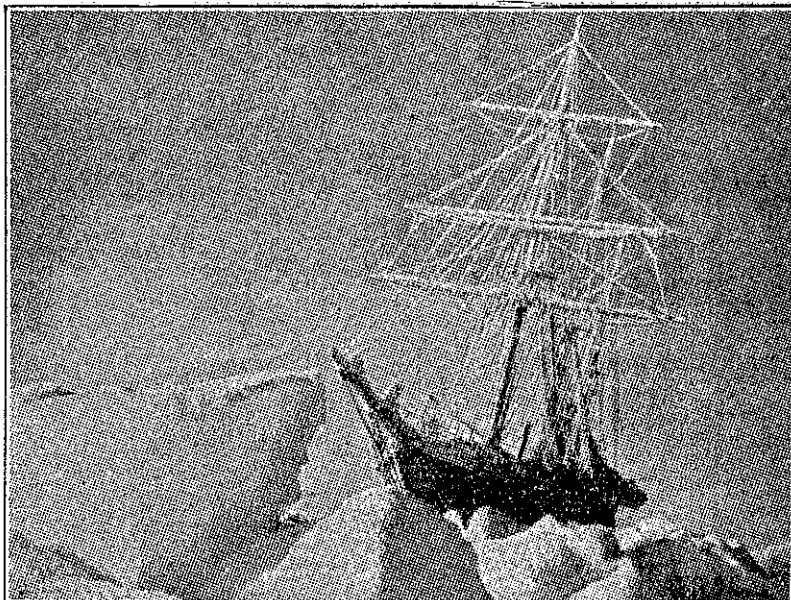
AS fine a comprehensive set of photographs of the Arctic and Antarctic regions as I could think possible has been produced by Chatto and Windus, entitled "The Polar Regions." There are both life and art aplenty in this volume. Of the hundred pages of perfectly reproduced half-tone blocks most of them contain only one photograph, enabling the brilliant detail of scenery on such a gigantic scale to be conveyed easily to the reader. There is not a poorly taken photograph in the whole collection, and whatever subject is being treated, whether it be dogs, Eskimos or out-and-out landscapes or seascapes, the chill brilliance of the north and south of the globe has been printed on these realistic pages.

An introduction by J. M. Scott covering only three pages and a half is the finest piece of condensed description of these places far below and far above our temperate existence I have read. In about three thousand words the editor has provided a simple but vivid panorama of polar parts which is just the thing for a book of this sort. Of course, when one picks the volume up it is certain that each of the fascinating pictures will be examined in turn. But for later reference Mr. Scott has divided the anthology into nine headings, so that one may turn in a moment to the section dealing with the Outward Voyage, Arctic Scenery, Arctic or Antarctic Animals, Spring and Summer, Polar Transport, Industries or Incidents.

Although I have always been rather interested in polar pictures, there are some photographs in "The Polar Regions" which present beauty and thrills quite new to me, and there are several unique records of some of the "big moments" of polar exploration. This volume is a record and a thing of beauty, of value to many and interest to all.

"The Polar Regions." The second of the "Life and Art in Photograph" series. Chatto and Windus, London. Our copy from the publishers.

WE cannot take "Trooper to the Southern Cross" seriously, and feel that a reputable publishing house has been rather let down by its reader. It is either a pot boiler from an ignorant pen imitating Australiese in a very crude and unsuccessful manner, or a practical joke in bad taste. No medical man—not even an Australian impregnated with his native jargon—could write the incredibly cheap trash of which this is composed. As it stands, the volume is a substantial insult to our Australian cousins. Some of them may be fairly rough, we know, but we decline to believe the picture in this volume. As the negro said when he first saw a giraffe, "There ain't no such animile." The author is Leslie Parker.



CAUGHT IN THE ICE.—Sir Ernest Shackleton's ship, Endurance, in heavy ice. One of the illustrations in "The Polar Regions," a book published by Chatto and Windus and reviewed on this page.