

Books and Men

"The Furies"—A Story of the World's Working Classes

THERE is nothing of the gay insouciance of Michael Arlen's Mayfair about "The Furies." In fact, the people who come to life between the covers of James Hanley's splendid book might be creatures of another planet. Life for them is a grim and earnest business, and almost their only pleasure—if pleasure you could call it—is a weekly seat in the pit of the Lyric Theatre.

The plot and the book are the family of Fury. The principal characters are Mrs. Fury, who is a woman built on an heroic scale; Denny Fury, her husband—once a seaman and now a railwayman—an old grandfather, and children—three boys and a girl—of widely differing fortune. The background is the city, large, impersonal, but as vital as those who have their being in it. Mrs. Fury dominates the story. She is the woman who would raise her family above their surroundings. Not a mere vulgar climber—she is too big and too earnest for that—but a woman who craves to see her children's feet set on the ladder that leads to respect and wisdom. She is the driving force behind her husband, and yet at times she leans with a child-like weariness upon her aged and decrepit father who is scarcely tolerated in the house by the rest of the family. When she learns that her son Peter—the son who is her pride and who has kept her near to poverty during his

years at school in Ireland—is coming home again, she turns to her father

Mrs. Fury felt a lump come into her throat as she looked at him now. He would never know the boy. How he had changed. He seemed to have grown smaller. His skin was the colour of old parchment, it was dry and leathery like that of a bird. The eyes set beneath the shaggy white brows appear like two tiny beads. His huge hands wandered about the chair, as though the little life left in him had swum into these hands. They rose and fell, dragged themselves to one arm of the chair, then the other. "No," thought the woman, "he will never recognise him, nor will Peter his granddad." She tried to conjure up in her imagination the figure of her son as she had last seen him, with his small, neat figure dressed in a stiff navy blue suit, his round red face, his large eyes, brown as her own. . . . Perhaps now he would be tall and erect, like her own mother had been.

"The Furies" has been painted on a bold canvas—there are strike scenes, magnificent in their realism, and a police charge which recalled the horrors of Peterloo. At one moment the author reminds one of Lionel Brittan, the writer of "Hunger and Love"; in another place he has the fine detail and pitiless minuteness of John Cowper Powys. In fact, the latter, in a long letter to the author, said: I do congratulate from my heart. . . . It's a great book; the realism convincing, the

characters convincing, and the subject tragic in the noblest sense.

Here is a book that should lift its author into the ranks of the great writers of to-day. It is a major work and one which embraces the entire world of the working class.

"The Furies." James Hanley. Chatto and Windus. Our copy from the publishers.

N.Z. POETS

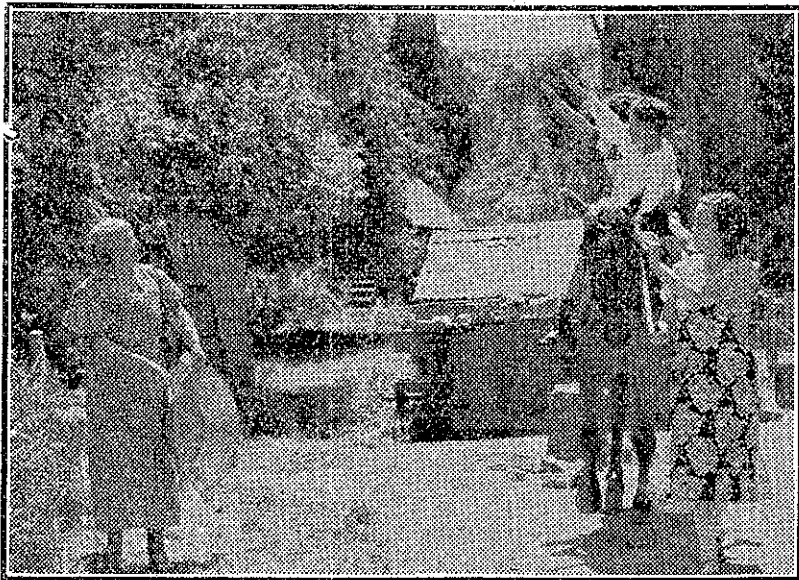
Decorations Add Fresh Attraction

LATELY there have been several books of verse by New Zealand authors published: an encouraging sign of what may yet be the start of a literary tradition for this young country. Two of the latest volumes—"The Order of Release," by Arnold Wall, and "South South Eastward Ho!" by the late Charles Oscar Palmer, have recently been received from the publishers. Professor Wall's poems, many of which will be known to readers of the Christchurch newspapers, show an ability and fluency which is all too rare among our own poets. Delicately produced, with script and decorations by V. Gould, this book has many little gems of poetic feeling that repay the careful reader. The decorations are, for the most part, apt and well done, and in many cases the combination of Mr. Gould's delightful script and illustrations brings something fresh to the verse itself.

Mr. Palmer's is a robust muse, the poem which gives its name to the book—"South South Eastward Ho!"—is a forceful sea ballad, and his narrative poem on the typical subject of Waitangi, though it has faults in over-emphasis and poor rhyming, has yet an attraction from its sincerity and power. In "A Three-fold Chord," Mr. Palmer has written a charming fragmentary piece of true verse, which has a genuine ring. An extremely attractive cover—very well designed and executed—gives "South South Eastward Ho!" an advantage which is possessed all too seldom by books of verse.

"The Order of Release," by Arnold Wall, with Text and Illustrations by V. Gould. Whitcombe and Tombs. Our copy from the publishers.

"South South Eastward Ho!" by Charles Oscar Palmer. The C. W. Daniel Company, London. Our copy from the author.



NEW ZEALAND'S FIRST TALKIE.—A scene from New Zealand's first talkie, "Down on the Farm," which it to have its Dominion premiere at the Empire Theatre, Dunedin, on Friday, May 3. As this scene suggests, New Zealand scenery is well to the fore.

I WISH, for my part, that I had heard Kreisler's Couperin pieces before I knew that they were not Couperin's. Now, I shall be unable to criticise them impartially. I shall know too much and knowing too much is the enemy of rapture.—Mr. Robert Lynd.