



Not Calling A Spade A Spade

George Orwell's Latest Creation Is Domestic Candour—And Not Just of Aspidistras

"KEEP the Aspidistra Flying," by George Orwell, is the story of a drab young man, a would-be poet, striving after Socialism and realism, but without the necessary brains to get there. Underneath all his so-called theories he possesses an outlook really Victorian, and when the girl he loves tells him she is going to have his illegitimate baby it is he who insists upon getting married.

He is thrilled at the thought of becoming a father, and immediately accepts a post as a writer of slogans for a firm of advertisers, and in this way he keeps the aspidistra flying.

"The only thing a woman ever wants is money for a house of her own and

two babies and Dragl furniture and an aspidistra."

"You talk a great deal about aspidistras," said Ravelston. "They're a dashed important subject," said Gordon.

Compton Mackenzie, writing for the "Daily Mail," says of Mr. Orwell that no realistic writer during the last five years has produced books which can compare with his in directness, vigour, courage and vitality.

In my humble opinion, Mr. Orwell doesn't merely call a spade a spade, but, as a bishop of my acquaintance once said of a miner he'd heard talking on a stage coach, "He calls a spade a damn bloody shovel."

AN N.Z. AUTHOR

Fourth Novel for a Sydney Serial

ANOTHER New Zealand author to achieve success is Mr. Monte Holcroft, of Christchurch. His fourth novel, "The Papuan," has been accepted for serial publication in "The Bulletin." In announcing that the first instalment of the novel will appear shortly, "The Bulletin" states:

"Mr. Holcroft is 33 years old and was born at Rangiora. Educated at the Christchurch Boys' High School, he was out in the world at 18, working on farms and in threshing-mills. Before he was out of his 'teens' he crossed the Tasman and spent a period as a dock-yard clerk in Sydney. He next leased 140 acres of poor land near Nowra (New South Wales), and managed to last six months—mainly on a diet of rabbits.

"Then followed a retreat to Sydney and one job after another—timberyard worker, goods porter and estate agent's clerk among them. About this time he began to write. The now-defunct 'Australia,' a magazine run by Fred Davison, father of Frank Dalby Davison, bought his first short story, and 'The Bulletin' and other papers gave him cheques for later efforts. Having found his wings as a writer, he returned to New Zealand as sub-editor of the 'Weekly Press.' When the 'Weekly Press' snuffed out, he went abroad.

"He saw a good deal of England, France and North Africa—he had a taste of the desert in Southern Tunisia

—and sold fiction to various English magazines. Returning to New Zealand, he has since lived on the proceeds of authorship. 'The Papuan' is his fourth novel, the other three, which have enjoyed good sales, being 'Beyond the Breakers,' 'The Flameless Fire' and 'Brazilian Daughter.'"

Not In The Book Shops

"Lyttelton Harbour"

SINCE the publication in the "Radio Record" a fortnight ago of the criticism of "Lyttelton Harbour," a long poem by W. D'Arcy Cresswell, several people have asked where the book might be bought. It is not available in the ordinary bookshops. Application for copies must be made direct to Mr. Cresswell, whose address is Castor Bay, Auckland.

THE ingratitude of democracy and the ingratitude of kings are as nothing to the ingratitude of newspaper readers.—Lord Hewart.

I DO not know to whom Sir Thomas Beecham was referring when he talked about savages, but in my opinion this term would be applicable to one who does not play the National Anthem before or after a performance.—The Mayor of Brighton.

A LAPP STORY

Strange Characters in New Novel

IN the translated novel by Hildur Dixellius, "Sara Alelia," there is literary food for a generous proportion of palates. It is a story in a most unusual setting—that of Lapland over a period of some 80 years from the end of the eighteenth century. Although to a large extent biographical in tone—frequent brief quotations from Sara Alelia's "diary" are included—the story is intensely interesting both as a family study and as a record of living and working conditions of which we hear little.—Publishers, Philip Allen.

The central figure of Sara Alelia is the most strangely-penned character this reviewer has encountered in recent novels. There can be no denying the appeal of her self-imposed subjugation to the will of God, on to Whose mercy she throws herself early in the tale, when the hand of man would alone have driven her to suicide. But there is some inclination to lose sympathy with the growing woman, who, in spite of personal attractiveness and marital opportunities after the loss of her first husband, shuns all thought of the healthy physical. Her dedication of her life to the nurture and godly upbringing of her son at the early age at which misfortune overtakes her makes her virtually a great-hearted nun. This trait, however, in maturity and old age commands the admiration of those who read here of her unfailing devotion, not only to her son, but to all in distress.

Yet even this unusual type is rivalled for strength of interest by that curious, sinister angel, Norenus. Here, again, is a family story interwoven with the other, but pitiful this time. This pastor's fights with church authorities, gin, starvation and himself give one an impression of having met in the flesh this truly strange being.

The snow country, the long summer days, the olden politics and ageless sins, the comparative savagery of the Lapps' inhumanity, the witchery of this northern country are pictured boldly by the writer, and every now and then throughout the saga of Sara Alelia, her son and her particular grandson, there flit across these pages the shadow or sunshine of other vivid characters, particularly Elhemon, Sahlen, Albin and the mercurial Lydia.

Deft descriptions of scenes and emotions are provided with rare ability, for by suggesting Hildur Dixellius gives the reader as fine a picture of some occasions in half a dozen lines as a less cunning author would in an unwieldy page. The book is a breath of pure, crisp, snow-laden air in the welter of this generation's novels.