

**THIS WEEK'S SIGNED ARTICLE.**

# The Book Written, The Real Trouble Begins . . . . . Stuart Perry

IT is a most extraordinary thing that if one confesses to working in a library, one is immediately assumed to spend all day and every day reading books. Actually, of course, a librarian never reads books—at least until he goes off duty. Librarianship in the last few decades has become a specialised and highly technical avocation, and the old days when the librarian sat in his office getting an inside knowledge of the books in his charge are done with for ever. For one thing the books are too many. Instead of a first-hand knowledge of the books of every author, the library worker is required to develop the faculty of judging a book from the publisher's announcement. At first sight, a hopeless task, but experientia docet, and after a time one realises that the same remark made by publisher A means something quite different in the list of publisher B. Some publishers are always over-appreciative—they are soon sized up. Some never publish a book unless it is worth while. Some never touch any but established authors. Some are reliable on economics—hopeless on machinery. And so on.

New Zealand is away from the centres of culture; but it is the aim of every public librarian to make his library the cultural centre of his city. For if the people are not brought into touch with the culture of older countries through books, it is difficult to see how they will be.

And in pursuit of this "cultural centre" ideal there are sometimes interesting passages. Shy poets in spectacles crane long necks round the door seeking advice as to quantity and scansion. Novelists, "with no work done, but great works undone," come in to see if the plots sizzling in their over-burdened brain are likely to appeal to the public. And occasionally, very occasionally, someone will bring in a really worth while manuscript. I can recall three such cases in the last couple of years.

## AOTSAOTS

JEROME BANNIGAN must never be allowed a gun in his hannigan.

IN an obituary notice a Dunedin paper referred to the deceased as "accused."

CANTERBURY Education Board's amusing quibble over Jack London's writings reminds us that this frank author is at least not as sexy as Shakespeare!

"SPICK AND SPAN" was the address on a telegram delivered at 3YA the other day. Ah, Tatt's, they thought; someone's been lucky! It was a private message for Morison and MacEwan, the popular Scottish artists.

"HE is not dead, but sleep-eth."—A remark from the chairman about a somnolent member when the Waimakariri River Trust met last week.

they are:

1. The New Zealander has little chance of knowing to which London publisher his work is likely to appeal.

2. His manuscript may be far better suited to local or Australian publication.

3. If it is not, then he should have someone in London to choose a publisher for him. Such people are called literary agents, and the majority of first books are placed through them.

4. Literary agents vary as to reliability. Some charge a "reading fee" and a "negotiation fee" and may relieve the impecunious aspirant to literary immortality of a guinea or so, and return his manuscript unsold.

5. There do exist literary agents who expect payment only by results, and then on a percentage basis. They read the manuscript free, try to negotiate it, and if unsuccessful, return it with the names of the publishers to whom it is submitted. The only charge is a reasonable one on the sale of the manuscript.

I, myself, know of two such agents in London and one in New York, but there are many more; and it is of the utmost importance to the young author to see that his book is handled by the right man. The well known New Zealand author, Mr. T. Lindsay Buick, C.M.G., one of the most painstaking of our historians, once remarked to me that the trouble taken in writing a book was about a tenth of the trouble it took to get it on the market. When one reflects that "The Arches of the Years," a best seller, is supposed to

## Writing A Book . . .

is only the beginning of the unknown author's trouble, according to Stuart Perry, the writer of this article. "When one reflects that 'The Arches of the Years,' a best seller, is supposed to have been the rounds of between 30 and 40 publishers, it takes little imagination to appreciate this fact," says Mr. Perry. Stuart Perry, who contributed an article to this page a few weeks ago, is assistant librarian at the Central Library, Wellington.

have been the rounds of between 30 and 40 publishers, it takes little imagination to agree with him. So that the journalist with his school story was making a very reasonable enquiry.

Another manuscript which came into the Wellington Public Library less than a year ago was by a young Australian. An autobiographical account of various parts of Australia, semi-starvation in Sydney, official duties in the Islands, work as a surveyor and so on. A friend of Mr. A. S. Villiers, the author is now a sailor, a well-educated man with a gift for the more modern style of self-expression. His book, when he has finally revised it, is to go Home to seek a publisher. Travel books of this kind are remarkably popular at present, and since the book is well

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## AOTSAOTS

THE Maori hoodoo on the motor-ship Maui Pomare seems to die hard.

AUCKLAND train-crew escaped with a shaking in a recent derailment. Lucky it wasn't a shake-up.

PRESIDING over a certain Wellington suburban meeting of the W.C.T.U. was a Mrs. Brewer!

WELLINGTON'S new bishop-designate described the city's hills as a delight. He has yet to meet radio men on Mounts Victoria and Etako.

CHRISTCHURCH business man's bon mot at a conference the other night: "Nearly every new opinion is an old idea that has been forgotten!"

INVERCARGILL takes its sport seriously, but not enough to declare a whole holiday last Saturday for the Ranfurly Shield match in Dunedin.

God—what He means to the average modern person—is the subject of next week's signed article.