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AH, yes, Mr. Sisson has certainly been very clever in his unmasking of a new neurosis—the public's "natural dislike" of gas. But his book is so very, very sensible that it must certainly convince us what old-fashioned fools we have been not to see the 1938 gas-minded soldier's point of view long ago.

"On Guard Against Gas," by H. A. Sisson, O.B.E., M.A., F.C.A., formerly D.A.D.G.S., G.H.Q., B.E.F. (Hutchinson, London). Our copy from the publishers.

LIMITED, BUT NOT DULL

STORY OF KATI KATI

IT is a common lament that so much New Zealand history has been left unrecorded till after the death of the original settlers. Fortunately, however, first-hand information about the founding of some of the later settlements is still available, and another New Zealand historian, Mr. A. J. Gray, is to be congratulated on anticipating the laments of future generations by recording the story of the Katikati settlement.

Vesey Stewart, who founded the settlement in the 'seventies, did not live to see the publication of this record. In fact, few of the early settlers are left now, but they were more numerous when Mr. Gray commenced some years ago to assemble his information. One of the survivors is Sam Middlebrook. Stewart's guide on his first visit to the district who is still living at Katikati.

Because of its limited scope the book contains little that is spectacular, but it is interesting for two widely-different reasons—because the circumstances in which Katikati was founded were unusual, and because the settlement's later history has been an entirely typical one.

The most avid readers will, of course, be the residents of the district, but the man who has no strong conscious interest in his country's history will find the 132 pages of "An Ulster Plantation" surprisingly good reading. It is no dull catalogue of names and events, but a brightly-written story. Take, for instance, the passage:

"The real centre of old Katikati was the hotel. It will be remembered that the Tauranga Licensing Bench, while refusing a permanent license to Mrs. Bell, had let it be known that no objection would be raised if a strong landlord could be found. Historians tell us that the hour of crisis always produces the man. So it was in this case. With the air of a conjuror extracting a rabbit from a silk hat, the thirsty men of Katikati brought forward Bernard McDonnell" (pp 79-80).

Katikati has produced more than its quota of notable men—David Galaher, who captained the 1905 All Blacks and lies in France, a world's champion axeman, the Hon. C. E. Macmillan, Dr. H. D. A. Major, who is principal of Ripon Hall, Oxford, and leader of the Modern Churchman movement, and Mr. Alan Muigan, the NBS Director of Talks, who wrote the introduction.

"An Ulster Plantation," by A. J. Gray. Reed. Our copy from the publishers.]

SMOOTHLY EXCITING BUT NOTHING MORE

TO informed readers of detective stories, a novel by Andrew Soutar needs no introduction from critics: nor will they be disappointed with his latest Phineas Spinnet story, "The Black Spot Mystery," just published by Hutchinson. This thriller is no better and no worse than what has gone before it. For years of "shockers"-writing has taught Mr. Soutar how to lay on his purple patches in just those cunning places where they will lure the frightened reader into racing on, chapter after chapter, long past his normal bedtime.

Nevertheless, for all its nicely sustained excitement, "The Black Spot Mystery" is not the book to tickle the palate of the blasé. It has no novelty either of treatment or situation, and there may be some who are growing just a little weary of murderers who leave their trademark—in this case the black spot—upon their victims; of dark, deserted houses and silences which contain a sinister presence; of homicidal maniacs and private detectives who invariably make the Scotland Yard officers look such very, very small men in their big boots.

Still, maybe, one should not cavil. Detective stories that rise above the satisfactory are rare indeed, and one must at least be grateful to Mr. Soutar for his smooth, technical competence and his dependability. His skinny sleuth with the acid tongue may not be attractive, but he is consistent and he gets there. If Mr. Soutar does not permit Spinnet to make a fortune out of his private detective agency, one can be quite sure on the other hand that Spinnet makes money for Mr. Soutar.

"The Black Spot Mystery," by Andrew Soutar. (Hutchinson and Co., Ltd., London.) Our copy from the publishers.

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