

... With ... BOOK and VERSE

By "John O'Dreams"

Jottings

Prize Poem Competition

THE style's the thing in Miss Naomi Royde-Smith's latest contribution to fiction. Related with meticulous and loving exactitude, "The Mother" is a finished study of small and happy home circle, told in introspective modern manner, of a woman's reactions to love of husband and children, en-haloed by memories of cherished days of a time long past. There are two entirely lovable small boys, and we are drawn into a gentle round of English country home life, from the time when "woods creak under the white mantle of snow that froze on their branches" till the full fragrance of mid-July. As a study of psychology, Miss Royde-Smith scores success unqualified, and her book is notable for delicate and graceful phraseology. "The afternoon cooled toward sunset, bringing a sound of crooning from the pigeon-house beyond the rose-garden; while the tobacco-plants in the long border, opening their faint green trumpets, sent forth the first notes of the hymn of scent now gathering strength for full night chorus to come." The slightest of incidents make the sum total of the narrative: Nurse writing a love-letter on a sheet of pink ruled paper with an embossed pansy in the corner; a child choosing father, instead of mother, for the honoured recipient of first daisy-chain made with infinite effort in the sunshine; the torrent of introspective emotion thereby evoked, and its final resolution into nirvana of acquiescence and acceptance of sacrificial obligation imposed by an overwhelming love.

"PARA Handy and Other Tales" makes very entertaining reading. It is a selection of sketches, collected together in omnibus fashion, by Hugh Foulis, a pseudonym of the late Neil Munro, who died about a year ago. Neil Munro was a brilliant historical novelist, but many people were not aware that he was also a humorist of first rank. Writing under his nom de plume, he contributed these delightful stories of the inimitable Scot, which are now published in book form for the delectation of those who like their humorous fiction in more or less tabloid form.

"THE BITTER ORANGE-TREE" is unusual and beautiful and strange. Its author is Panait Istrati, of mixed Greek and Rumanian parentage, and a wanderer of the world, whose poor childhood was lived from hand to mouth in the slums of the East. Drifting to Switzerland, he

THE prize of half a guinea in the current competition is awarded to "On Kawau Island," by "Karakia," whose gift of forceful and apt diction is exemplified in the unusual and poetic conception embodied in the prize poem. Very highly commended is the work of a Dunedin contributor, who in "Youth and Age," scores a notable artistic success in what is admittedly a difficult verse form.

"N": We thank our correspondent for letter, so generous in praise, from which we quote: "Allow me to express my appreciation of your literary page. During weeks of isolation in the country, your contributions came as an intellectual meteor to lighten the apathetic darkness of farm life. Also I am greatly interested in the poetry competition and accompanying criticisms."

"John Storm's" ode to a day that is dead, wistful and tender, flows with the easy rhythm characteristic of the verse of this contributor.

"Sweet Lavender" is as pretty as its name, gently reminiscent lines that limp slightly about the middle of the poem.

B. Mary Gurney's "Affinity" is vivid and striking work, with more than a modicum of the blessed quality of originality.

"Oh Mack" is commended for a poem resembling a delicate pastel landscape when the world was young.

"Erin," without doubt, has fuddled the blarney stone.

"Minstrel Boy" is in parlous case, "all for the love of a lady."

"Salamander" has studied "The Everlasting Mercy" to some purpose, but he isn't a New Zealand Masefield.

"Ferdinand's" brisk doggerel smacks of the briny.

"West Wind": Rhymed mediocrity.

"Pierrot": Say it in prose.

On Kawau Island

*Oh, I have seen the moon in all her moods—
The moon a-dying, drear and wan and pale,
The moon ablaze with mad inquietudes
That made the owls and wild things cry and wail.
But O, the moon that night was passionate red!
Red through the haze that from the hilltops spread,
Red as the blood that from the Spartans bled;
And told of love and war, that old, old tale.*

*There, down below me on the water, lay
The battleships "Dunedin," "Diomedes,"
"Laburnum." Strange, incongruous... That bay
Was made for love, I think, leaf-canopied,
And never war!... There should have been red lips
And the old stateliness of white-sailed ships.*

—Karakia.

learned French and became familiar with the French classics, wrote his books with exquisite art, and finally, after repeated disappointment and attempted suicide, wrote to Romain Rolland in desperate effort to receive recognition. Rolland recognised his genius, and sponsored his literary career. "Kura Kyralline," published in 1923, established Istrati's reputa-

tion as a high-light in literature. That reputation will be enhanced by "The Bitter Orange Tree," a simple and terrible tale of romance, breathing beauty and fragrance, pity and terror; and running the gamut of human emotion, frustration and sacrificial love, ending only with the dark waters of the Bosphorus closing over the body of the beloved.

IN "The Mango Tree," Miss Margaret Hamilton presents, with charm and authenticity, the viewpoint of a British child living in India. There is exceedingly candid comment ament parents of Umgheni Sai, who by coercive measures endeavour, without conspicuous success, to inculcate social standards and train up their child in the way she should go. Divers gay adventures and excitements are chronicled in this saga of the wanderings of a child who fraternises with snakes and monkeys, toads and bees; and who contrives for herself a frock entirely of cabbage leaves, to the satisfaction of herself and the confusion of her elders. It is difficult to convey the unique and delightful flavour of this little book, which assuredly should not be missed by those who appreciate originality of conception and naivete of execution.

MISS NORAH HOULT is a young writer of distinct promise, and in "Apartments to Let" she presents a gallery of memorable portraits. There is Mrs. Peabody, a landlady typical of her class and kind, who intimates that her lodgers must conform to her standard and "believe." The dapper draper, Mr. Hobson, and Willoughby, of the damaged romance, give her little trouble, but of two representatives of the eternal feminine Mrs. Peabody finds herself unable to approve. "Miss" Crossley, despite a husband in the mysterious offing, entertains her "boy friend"; and the tragic Josephine Moore drags her landlady with her into publicity of the most odious variety. The unhappy Josephine is a notable study of distressing mental psychology; and Miss Hoult again has proved her mettle in her latest, and perhaps most outstanding novel.

MR. STEPHEN McKENNA'S latest work of fiction, "Beyond Hell," is not in the least like anything he has written before. He has broken away from his own tradition, and in this rather disturbing story of his vision of the future, he sees a time when capital punishment will be abolished and those convicted of the crime of murder will be deported to an island in the South Seas, where a Governor, with fixed ideas of managing such a grim community, is in full charge. Eventually an English professor, sent out to the isle of horror to report progress, witnesses the murder of the Governor, whose place he finds himself forced to take in the revolution that ensues. As an effort of the imagination the book commands interest and respect, but one can't help hoping one won't find oneself an inhabitant of such a crime-infested island, even in the role of peacemaker.