

Linwood Library Gazette

"Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body."

VOL. 1 No. 7



APRIL 1936

CANTERBURY'S FIRST "AUTHOR" A Centenary

By MONA TRACY

This year marks rather an important centenary in the story of New Zealand literature. Exactly a hundred years ago Canterbury's very earliest resident "author" began the writing of a book, which, as far as New Zealand is concerned, was destined to be famous.

Does this statement seem extravagant? Certain it is that George Hempleman, the hard-bitten South Sea whaler, laboriously writing up his "log" on the bay whaling station he had established at Peraki, did not even remotely picture himself in the guise of an author. One imagines that expression came slowly to him. He indulged in no flights of fancy; not for him were the gentler flowers of speech, or excursions into the realms of imagery. The life which he described was one of stern realism; and, unlike a generation of authors who have succeeded him, he did not write with a view to publication.

Hempleman died at Akaroa in 1880, possessing then, we are told, little in the world beside a pair of blankets—and the Peraki log. He died, all unknowing that historians of the future would one day hold earnest debate over obscure passages in his log; that no collection of New Zealand literature would be complete without a printed copy of the work; and that the manuscript itself would come to be a treasure of the Canterbury Museum—a unique record of life on the wild shores of old Banks Peninsula.

Not all the Peraki log is of Hempleman's writing. At different times two or three employees of his appear to have had

a hand in its composition. One of these men was decidedly illiterate. Sentences such as: "The bots not out, for the natives goin to rob the captains hous and the peples tow" indicate how laboriously parts, at least, of the famous log were penned.

But another of the writers was a man of education. His dislike of the life at Peraki gleams through page after page. He complains of the brawling of his comrades; laments that they desecrated the "Sabaoth" by fishing. Things were not then going well for Hempleman's enterprise. Provisions were scarce . . . ("Sabaoth, but obligated to look for provisions . . ."), and grog ran out.

"A complication of wants," laments the writer on one occasion. "Our spirits quite gone, and not even the auxilliary power of mixing the sweets with the bitters. But Hope still tells the flattering tale that joy will come again."

Joy apparently did come, and thereafter we read: "The men getting drunk on some of their past and promised pay." "Too much grog in circulation—up and at it!" says another entry; and then "Danced heartily all the night."

Our writer was obviously a man of parts; for after dancing all night he proceeded to enliven the log with a sentimental poem to the sunset!

When desertions occurred the writer again burst into verse:

"With whalers and whaling there's always complaining,

Like a boat or a mill out of tune;
While the whales are in Bay, the men run away,

And we'll have a clear stage of it soon!"

The day's round at Peraki . . . the sighting and killing of whales, the cutting in, the work at the try pots, the making

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up of the slops account (so much tobacco for this man, "duck frocks" and "trowsers" for others, a mirror for some Lothario who evidently wished to admire his own countenance) the visits of troublesome Maoris, the carousals, the mutinies, the desertions, the accidents and drownings and the quiet burials in the little burial-ground where there already lay Hempleman's wife . . . all these, chronicled in the Peraki log, make it a very human chronicle.

During his lifetime Hempleman jealously guarded the log, possibly because of certain entries dealing with his claim to have purchased Banks Peninsula from the Maoris. On his death he passed it on to Mr Justin Aylmer, then resident magistrate at Akaroa. Mr Aylmer, in turn, left it to the then owner of Peraki, one Anson, whose interest in the history of the Bay induced him to make and to publish a literal transcription of the log. The book, now out of print, is eagerly sought by collectors.

The original manuscript has been seen by very few people. It is to be one of the many unique treasures on view at the forthcoming exhibition of New Zealand literature to be held in the Canterbury Public Library from April 18 to April 25. Admission to the exhibition is free.

FROM THE PRESIDENTIAL CHAIR

There is a deep-rooted antipathy in most of us, to the idea of increasing rates.

Service cannot be given without some quid pro quo, whether it be rates collected by Municipal authority, or any other form of collecting—reward or payment. In "Our Library" it takes the form of a subscription which is compulsory, if access to the Library and its privileges is desired. If our subscribers were told that a rate of 6/- per annum was going to be struck, to provide free libraries for the city and suburbs, there are some who, being accustomed to paying that amount, would probably offer no very strenuous objection, feeling that it would be worth while. But from others, protest would inevitably be made, springing from the deep-rooted antipathy mentioned above.

Let us look at this matter for a moment or two in quiet deliberation, with the aid of a few figures and we will see that the bogey "rates" is not so fearsome as some imagine.

The unimproved value of Christchurch City is £11,801,000 owned and used by 132,200 citizens. If a Library Rate of 1d in the £ were to be struck on the unimproved value, it would reach the huge total of £49,171 per annum, 1/16 of a 1d

would give us £3,073, a very comforting total for Libraries in Christchurch compared with the present grant of approximately £700.

This rate of 1/16 of a penny would mean that on a section of which the unimproved value is £500 the annual rate would amount to 2/7.

Among the workers of the city and suburbs it is probable that £300 would be nearer the average value and on that figure at the above rate the owner would be called upon to pay 1/6d per annum.

There are about 6,000 subscribers in the various suburban libraries and they pay rates of subscription varying from 6/- to 10/- per annum; add the 4,000 approximate subscribers to the Canterbury Public Library and we get 10,000 people who pay willingly from 6/- to 10/- every year.

Even if they join for six months the rate of subscription is from 3/6 to 5/6 for that period.

Compare the above with this:—That by paying 2/7 (on £500 u.v.) per annum on a Municipal Rate, ultimately Christchurch would possess free libraries, under trained supervision, with all the general and reference works in the Central National Library at their disposal.

But because of the bogey "rates" some will be loath to consider a system that gives a cheaper and superior service, allowing themselves to be governed by a prejudice that has no foundation in fact.

In the notes on Mr Pospisil's book "Wandering on the Islands of Wonders" you will notice that the following line appears: "He spent ten months in New Zealand and saw very much more than many of us who have lived here a lifetime."

"New Zealand Authors' Week" is being held throughout New Zealand for the purpose, among others, of partially removing the stigma of ignorance of New Zealand and its literature from us. Many of us have not seen much of this country because of circumstances, such as time and £ s. d., but we cannot claim that excuse when it is a question of the literature of New Zealand.

Every library possesses a New Zealand section, but whether it is used to anything like the extent it should be is very doubtful.

However, "New Zealand Authors' Week" is here and we can see for ourselves. Some of the rare books and manuscripts on exhibition at the Canterbury Library Hall, the historic value of which is beyond money, if taken on the higher though sentimental plane.

Congratulations to St. Martin's Library Committee on the excellent work done during the last year. They are fortunate in having plenty of room in a fine new building with lawn and shrubs in the front and room for further extension at the rear.

The suggested change over of the Canterbury Public Library to Municipal control was discussed at their annual meeting held recently, and keen interest was shown by those present in the remarks of Mr E. H. Andrews, Deputy-Mayor, on this matter.

We cordially wish them every success in the coming year.

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Linwood Library Gazette

The Official Organ of the
Linwood Public Library

Vol. 1 April, 1936 No. 7

An event of prime importance to book-lovers will take place during April in the form of "New Zealand Authors' Week," being celebrated throughout the Dominion. In Christchurch a band of enthusiasts has fallen in line with the movement and arranged for an exhibition of New Zealand books and manuscripts to be held in the Canterbury Public Library from April 17 to 24.

This exhibition will be of great interest, embracing, as it does, some rare and valuable first editions and manuscripts of historic interest. The occasion is one that should be taken advantage of by our subscribers as the opportunity is not likely to recur.

A feature of the exhibition will be a series of talks on appropriate subjects by local celebrities and we urge our members to visit the exhibition at least once during the week.

The object of this demonstration is to awaken the public to the fact that there is a large field of literature to be explored by the average reader; a field that will re-

Our readers' opinions upon any matter relative to Library matters are welcomed.

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veal a wealth of talent in both fiction and reading of the heavier type.

We wonder how many of our own readers have attempted a course of New Zealand history. It is a subject of absorbing interest and exemplifies the old adage that "Truth is stranger than fiction." Once embarked upon this armchair voyage of adventure, the reader will find himself loth to steer from the course. Our own non-fiction department is rich in books of this calibre and we extend to all an open invitation to try an experimental trip into the realms of New Zealand adventure.

Our fiction department has many novels by authors in our own country. Space forbids mention of each individual writer, but would-be readers of these books may always obtain information on this subject from librarians on duty.

Without wishing to appear of a parochial mind we must say that Canterbury is extremely fortunate in possessing so much literary talent and the province may be excused for being proud of such authors as Mona Tracy, Edith Howes, Ngaio March, Margaret Jepson, Jessie Mackay, Ian Donnelly, Norman Berrow, Walter P. Smythe, Monte Holcroft and Harvey Cook.

We hope that "New Zealand Authors' Week" will result in a wider appreciation of our own Maoriland talent and that this appreciation will extend to all countries where the English language is understood.

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Boys

Biggles Hits the Trail. Capt. W. E. Johns
Stories of a burning mountain lures Biggles to investigate and discover a hill of radium and a race of men who have set themselves to conquer the world. Very well written.

The Aero Contract. P. F. Westerman. The making of an exceptional plane for flying in the stratosphere, capable of unheard of speeds. A dash to the North Pole and an air race to Australia coupled with an attempt to steal the plans, makes up a well written story.

OBITUARY

It is with deep regret that we have to record the death of another of our founders—Mr Alfred Marshall, who passed away on March 27.

His early work on behalf of our Library will long be remembered. As look-buyer and treasurer for several years, he devoted much time to his fellow-citizens of Linwood.

Although Mr Marshall was not actively interested in the management of the library during recent years, he was, until quite recently, a familiar visitor, still keenly interested in literature.

Our deepest sympathy goes out to his widow and family.

The annual meeting of the Addington Public Library was held during February, Linwood being represented. The same wide awake interest was shown here as at St. Martin's, in the question of library control and its probable effect on our suburban libraries.

The forthcoming conference between the Canterbury University College Council and representatives from the City Council has naturally caused much speculation as to the possible outcome.

We heartily congratulate the Addington Library Committee on their success during the past year and with a more cheerful outlook for the future we wish them every success.

SOME RECENTLY PURCHASED FICTION

And Barry Came Too.....Dornford Yates
Ask for Ronad Standish.....Sapper
Balkan Monastery.....Stephen Graham
Bridal March.....Eliz. Carfrae
Broken Melody.....F. J. Thwaites
The Eight Crooked Trenches.. Francis Beeding
Facing East.....Andrew Soutar
Farewell to Freedom.....Phyllis Bentley
Feather.....Ruby M. Ayres
Five Ways.....Emmeline Morrison
The Glasshouse.....M. B. Eldershaw
The Greenstone Door.....Wm. Satchell
A Hand to Burn.....Joanna Cannan
Home Bird.....Lewis Cox
Hunted Riders.....Max Brand
The Kingdom of Sand.....J. S. Sisco
The Lady Was Warned.....Kathlyn Rhodes
The Lamp of Friendship.. Effie A. Rowlands
Lords of the Coast.....Jackson Gregory
The Lovely Ghost.....R. S. McNamara

Lucy and the Dark Gods.....Edgar Jepson
The Melody Lingers.....F. J. Thwaites
Miss Tiverton's Shipwreck.... Rosemary Rees
Mr Tolefree's Reluctant Witness R. A. J. Walling
Murder on the Cattle Ranch.... Chas. H. Snow
Old Soldiers.....Frederick Niven
The Pursuer.....Louis Golding
Rising Mists.....Valentine
Sam Campbell, Gentleman.... Edison Marshall
Slumgullion Trail.....Tevis Miller
Such an Enmity.....Roland Pertwee
They Found Atlantis.....Denis Wheatley
Tough Company.....Carlton Dawe
Trigger Pardners.....Buck Billings
Vengeance Trail.....Jackson Cole
Wings of Love.....Paul Trent
Wives Are Like That.....Deirdre O'Brien
The Woods Runner.....H. Pendexter
Work-a-Day Lady.....Maysie Greig

NEW NOVELS

The Glasshouse. By M. Barnard Shaw. This book is not, as might be supposed from the title, a romance or a mystery story in which a greenhouse with tropical and other beautiful plants as a background, but a story of the experiences of an observant passenger on a Norwegian freighter bound for Australia with the usual nondescript collection of passengers. Miss Armstrong is the chief character and through her eyes we are given a life-like description enriched with a certain amount of imagination of the personalities and lives of those on board. The book is well and sensitively written with a good deal of humour and will be found a pleasant and absorbing story.

Freedom Farewell. By Phyllis Bentley. A story written of the time of Julius Caesar and is mostly a well-sustained study of his career, giving episodes in his life, moving rapidly and dramatically up to the time of his murder. Although historical facts are largely included, the story is well proportioned and written in Miss Bentley's best style.

They Found Atlantis. By Dennis Wheatley. As is usual with the author this book is made up of travel, romance, narrow escapes and crime, with sufficient fact to make it interesting as well as thrilling. The story starts with an expedition headed by Dr. Tisch to explore, with the aid of a bathysphere, the site of the ancient city of Atlantis. Among the members of his party are Camilla, a millionairess and cousin Sally. "Oxford Kate," a super crook and the villain of the piece seizes the ship intending to hide Camilla. Her friends proclaim her death and claim her fortune. His plans are upset by the hero McKay. How they all escape from the bathysphere, their travels under-sea and life among the Atlantians is left to the reader to discover.

Trouble Rides the Wind. By B. M. Bower. This popular author of western stories has given us another thrilling story of the west. The chief character is Chip Bennett of the "Flying U" outfit. A reticent and retiring young cowpuncher, he accidentally overhears of a proposed frame-up against the Duncan brothers, who are close

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neighbours, and determines to get to the bottom of and upset the scheme. In this he succeeds but loses his job and from here the story goes rapidly. He is himself arrested as a horse thief, escapes and goes single-handed after the gang that "framed" him. Fights with rustlers and horse thieves, his rescue of Mary and the final fight in the rustlers' stronghold are told with thrilling detail.

Death at Breakfast, by John Rhodes, is a recommendation of the Crime Club, and therefore can be accepted as a first class thriller. The story concerns the death of Victor Harleston, who was poisoned at his house one morning at breakfast. The ingenuity with which the crime was carried out proved complex and baffling but was eventually solved by Dr. Priestley—how is best left to the reader to find out.

**NON-FICTION BOOKS RECENTLY
PURCHASED**

Wanderings on the Islands of Wonder. By Bohumil Pospisil. The author, a Czechoslovakian, wrote this book in his native language originally, and published it in Prague. Coming for the second time to New Zealand, he translated it into English.

On his first visit he spent ten months in New Zealand and in that time saw very much more of this country than many of us who have lived here a lifetime. Wherever he went he has described the object of his visit in graphic virile words, whether it be White Island, Waitomo Caves, the thermal country, or the majestic loveliness of the fiords and lakes of the south.

At Invercargill he was introduced to the mutton bird and his reaction to that "delicacy" is—well—delicious!

Mr Pospisil possesses the continental outlook and his occasional frank, direct speech must assuredly vouch for his obvious sincerity.

The book is informative and holds one's interest from first to last, proving most enjoyable company.

My Struggle. By Adolf Hitler. Here we have one of those books that are published at rare intervals—the story of a man, written by himself, who has dreamed dreams and seen visions. Whether the objective is devilish or angelic depends on the nationality of the looker-on, but about the supreme importance to everyone of the methods to be used and of the purpose aimed at, is beyond any doubt.

Anyone who has accomplished a tithe of what Hitler has done is worthy of study and much more so, when, as here, it so vitally affects our own well being and possibly existence.

A Pilgrim's Way in New Zealand. By Alan Mulgan. Mr Alan Mulgan is well known as an author and one always worthy of being read.

In this book he travels through New Zealand recording his impressions of places and people, the growth and development of the country.

Mr Mulgan has given us another most interesting book on New Zealand and one which will be widely read.