

have interests in ever-dwindling, often uneconomic, land lots.

From about 1929 on, serious efforts were made to devise ways of efficiently using Maori land. The much-vaunted consolidation and development schemes of Sir Apirana Ngata at one time seemed to offer an admirable compromise that all parties found acceptable. But, as Kawharu clearly shows, the schemes were little better than expedients designed to temporarily bypass title difficulties. The occupiers of land brought under development had no security of tenure and, therefore, little incentive to increase production. Often marginally productive anyway, the land could seldom carry the debts charged for development and at the same time provide adequate recompense to the occupiers, let alone some remuneration to the owners. By the 1960s the high costs of state-funded Maori land development forced a complete reassessment of government policy and, as Kawharu shows, experiments such as the incorporations under Maori management have fared little better. From an economic point of view Maori land has been, and still is, a major problem.

From the Maori point of view, however, land serves an important function of sustaining cultural identity. Thus, even while the majority of Maoris must now seek employment opportunities away from the land, it is hoped that the few remaining on the land will be able to safeguard the 'cultural heritage'. Whether this can be achieved within the constraints of a profit-oriented European economy Kawharu appears to doubt. In fact he concludes on a pessimistic note: 'Indeed, the Maori now faces the ultimate choice of systematically diversifying, incorporating, and acquiring management expertise or fading from the scene as a landed proprietor.' (p.311).

Those who are concerned with Maori society would do well to inform themselves of the complex factors influencing such a choice. This book provides the best informed source available.

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Letters from Gunner 7/516 and Gunner 7/517. Ed. Barbara Harper. Anchor Communications, Wellington, 1978. 48pp. N.Z. price: \$4.20.

THE EDITORIAL work here is a piece of pious illiteracy. Most references to family and friends are usefully expanded in the text, but 'Lord Croma' and the Greek statesman 'Zenegelos' go misread or unexplained. Perhaps it does not matter much. Certainly we should be grateful to have the letters and I hope that they are widely read. All but one were written by Gordon Harper, and nearly all to his mother.

Gordon and Robin enlisted in the Canterbury Mounted Rifles in August 1914. Gordon had great fun crossing the line. He is intelligent on the role the troops played in showing the flag in a Cairo which is not here portrayed as Miss Rout's.¹ Even before he went to Gallipoli he wondered whether New Zealand would be as generous to its own maimed as in a swell of fervour it was being to Belgian relief.

He landed on the peninsula in May and soon found that nearly all he knew best were dead. Meeting the two survivors of a batch of fourteen from the 'Old School' was 'rather sad'. The Turks were brave under fire but had an 'unearthly terror' of 'the dreaded bayonets'. Killing Germans was 'most satisfactory' — their implied wickedness is as near as we get to the why of it all. The sun, the flies, the sickness made life hell, but the tonic sea helped them hang on and the 'Colonials' spirit never faltered. Gordon was wounded, in a 'grand battle', in August and had an idyllic couple of months recovering in England. Then back to Egypt and long-range warfare in the Sinai. The Turks were honourable as well as brave, superior in some way not explained here to official Britain. But when a small force of them was wiped out it was impossible to feel sad. They had their turn and 'were wearing boots off our dead men and eating Crosse and Blackwell's pickles'.

The Harpers were Canterbury establishment. This branch of the family was Catholic and religion was enormously important. Confession, mass, communion, the rosary were frequent. Gordon repeated hymns from vespers and compline every night. He thought *The Hound of Heaven* very fine and carried it with him. When he died of wounds in August 1916 the priest said that he was a shining example of a true Catholic.

It is all moving, if perhaps a little understated. The latter to protect his mother? To enable himself to survive? Because of the censor's felt presence?

Had he lived Gordon Harper would have farmed in North Canterbury and tried to go into Reform politics. A country of a million lost 12,000 like him. It may — or may not — have gained 'nationhood' in exchange. Whatever the deal, it is hard not to feel that New Zealand — less important to Harper than being Canterbury or Colonial — lost on it.

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¹ See my article 'Venus and the Lonely Kiwi: The War Effort of Miss Ettie A. Rout.' *New Zealand Journal of History* I, 1, (April 1967), 11-32.