

*They Called Me Te Maari.* By Florence Harsant. Whitcoulls, Christchurch, 1979. 188pp. N.Z. price \$9.95.

THIS IS no ordinary memoir. 'Te Maari' is the young Florence Woodhead who in 1913 and 1914 undertook an arduous series of journeys in the less developed regions of the North Island (Northland, the East Coast, and the Wanganui River) as itinerant Women's Christian Temperance Union organizer among Maori women. The daily journal entries of that time comprise the bulk of the book, but some interspersed amplification (clearly separated from the diary material) is provided by the edited transcripts of recent interviews with the now octogenarian author.

Aside from its appeal as the unadorned reminiscences of an intrepid but remarkably unheroic young crusader, the book's value for the historian lies in the access it provides to the nature of rural Maori life at this time. We can be grateful for the author's consistent personal and professional interest in the living styles and social conditions of the Maori communities she visited. An interesting section records her observations of the smallpox epidemic she stumbled into and experienced at close quarters in Northland in 1913. Elsewhere, not confining herself to the aspects of Maori life (rites of passage, festivities, and so on) conventionally thought worthy of note, she again and again describes in an incidental but often detailed way the routine and ordinary modes of housing, dress, diet and health. No starry-eyed idealist—squalor and contentiousness are part of the Maori scene she describes—she nevertheless infuses into her narrative a resilient sympathy for the 'warm and fascinating community' she works with.

Te Maari's task was to establish and encourage local women's temperance groups. That a mission so Pakeha in conception could be linked so successfully with the interests and aspirations of rural Maori women (for a good response was often met with) clearly owed a good deal to the way the relationship was established. Florence Woodhead's fluency in the Maori language (she had been brought up in a Ngati Tuwharetoa village where her parents were Native school teachers), her unpatronizing and generous approach, and her introduction into each community by Maori intermediaries, were just as important as what appears to be the inherent appeal of her message in the circumstances of the time.

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*The Rise and Fall of Marvellous Melbourne.* By Graeme Davison. Melbourne University Press, 1978. xiii, 304pp. Aust. price: \$18.80.

SINCE the early sixties urban historians have been pointing out that the reality of the past for most Australians was urban, and suburban, rather than rural. Graeme Davison's book *The Rise and Fall of Marvellous Melbourne* is the most impressive study so far to have emerged from this attempt by Australians to rediscover their urban roots.

The period Davison is concerned with is the decade of the eighties—with some forward glances into the nineties—when Melbourne earned the soubriquet