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REVIEW OF POINTED THEM NORTH RECOLLECTIONS COWPUNCHER

- This book is great. The author makes you feel as if you are the heroine of this book. You live and breathe what she goes through. I love when an author sticks to the actual history of the era and

does not make things up. Anyway this book was a great read if you like history and love real romance.

- A novel similar in concept to "Gulliver's Travels", this novel leads us to the unexplored country, for Europeans anyway, of Erewhon. Through the eyes of the unnamed English protagonist, Erewhon serves as a satire to the Victorian society in existence when this book was penned. Erewhon delivers harsh criticisms of certain valued institutions, yet it lacks the pertinence and timelessness of a truly great novel. Granted, "Erewhon" was written in the 1870s, at the height of Victorian society in England. The protagonist wanders into the undiscovered country of Erewhon, which at first glance seems to be a utopia. However, the true nature of Erewhon is revealed, where a set of perverse and absurd laws govern the citizens and keep them in a static state of existence. Illnesses are crimes, whereas "moral" sins (such as embezzlement) are treated sympathetically as a sickness. Although they had been technologically advanced, all "modern" (think steam engines) machinery has been outlawed lest the machines will evolve and eventually rule the world, a la "The Matrix." Butler leads the reader into an alternate vision of reality in his land of Erewhon. The Church of England and religion in general are ridiculed by the Erewhonians beliefs, or lack of, in their own deities. The idea of imperialism and colonization for the benefits of the natives is rendered absurd, as the protagonist dreams of enslaving the Erewhonians to a "religious" sugar plantation owner for their own good (at least, I hope Butler was not serious). The aristocracy and treatment of the poor are indirectly ridiculed in the Erewhonian emphasis on aesthetics and wealth above all else. Vegetarians are satirized in a prophet's misguided treatise on how animals are similar to people. The anti-machinists and anti-progress activists are dealt a blow in the rambling, non-sensical diatribe on the diabolical humanization of machines. In addition, higher education is criticized as a bastion of singular thought where original ideas are discouraged and pompous professors profess to know everything (some things never change). Unfortunately, many of the criticisms are too obsolete for the modern reader. A central parody, the "Musical Banks", refers to an outdated process of money-changing in the English church, a reference sure to allude most readers (I needed to research it myself to see what the #@*&! Butler was alluding to). The idea that the Erewhonians are the "lost tribes" of Israel also seems to repute logic, as this country is presumably in New Zealand. The last third of the book, save the conclusion, contains a lengthy treatise on the anti-machine movement, followed by another on animals, and then plants. The anti-machine essay, in particular, is convoluted, contrived, and seems to never end, a sleep inducer if there ever was one. "Erewhon" certainly would have been provocative and controversial in the era it was written. However, it has lost some potency over time. Yet, if you can gloss over the "Book of Machines" chapters, then "Erewhon" provides a delightful and light-hearted look into the window of the Victorian mindset and one author's attempt to bring awareness of the ills of his society.