

VAUDEVILLE MEMORIES

MO'S MEMOIRS, 1945. Reed and Harris, Melbourne.

ROY RENE ("Mo") who, when Fuller's vaudeville was in its heyday, often visited New Zealand either as a solo comedy act, or with his partner "Stiffy" (Nat Phillips) in a double turn, has gathered up a host of stage anecdotes. A ghost writer and a member of the publishing firm have also dipped fingers in this ham-and-egg pie, and the result is a 200-page book. The publishers go so far as to call Rene a "national figure," and certainly he was funny. His stage clothes were funny, he said and did funny things, often doubling up even his fellow-artists with laughter, and those who remember vaudeville in this country will remember him as a white-faced, black-bearded exponent of innuendo and facial expression.

While there is some excuse in such memoirs for a high incidence of the first person singular, it is worthy of note that "Mo" also credits some other comedians with the ability to make people laugh. Still, to use his own words, "They say I am the nearest thing to Chaplin. I can have them rolling in the aisles, and then do a little quiet recitative and you can hear a pin drop. . ."

"Only Babies Have Open Minds"

"THE belief that history repeats itself is entirely unfounded. History never repeats itself, and never can repeat itself," says Lord Raglan, in his new book *Death and Rebirth: A Study in Comparative Religion*. "Every historical event of any importance brings about a change in ideas; so that a subsequent event, however similar it may seem, is really quite different in its results because it takes place in a different mental environment."

"It is not an action, or series of actions, which constitutes an historical event, but actions combined with their consequences and these consequences are conditioned by the occurrence or non-occurrence of similar events before. The same conduct which, in one age, causes a man to be regarded as a hero or saint, in another causes him to be regarded as a criminal, a fool, or just as an ordinarily decent man."

"This is because we regard every idea which is presented to us, not with an 'open mind'—there is no such thing except in a new-born babe—but in the light of ideas already present in our minds. No two people think exactly alike, because no two people have had the same set of ideas presented to them in exactly the same order. It is impossible for us to put our minds back into the past."

"To go back only four centuries in our own country—we cannot imagine how it was that the most enlightened and humane man of his age, Sir Thomas More, could have thought that the proper punishment for the crime of translating the Bible into English was death by burning. How much further beyond our grasp must be the mental processes of those who, eight or ten thousand years ago, or perhaps more, were the original founders of our civilisation."

As a recollection of days that are gone, *Mo's Memoirs* (which are prefaced by Sir Ben Fuller, and Wallace R. Parnell, who was until recently general manager and producer for the Tivoli circuit in Australia) will be of interest to those who remember him in the flesh. For those who don't there are nearly 40 photographs—most of them showing the comedian in characteristic stances. As a book it may not be memorable contribution to Australian letters (or Australian printing), but vaudeville has had many less enthusiastic epitaphs.

Books of Some Importance

VAN LOON'S LIVES: Hendrik Van Loon. 29/6 posted. Dr. Van Loon entertains the foremost people of world history at mythical dinner parties and gives us some delightful biographies in the process.

LONG, LONG AGO: Alexander Woolcott. 14/8 posted. Stories, sketches, anecdotes, and personalities from the decade of the "Town Crier's" greatest popularity.

THE ENGLISH—ARE THEY HUMAN? G. J. Renier. 14/- posted. A serious and subtle study of the English character written with a distinct humour reminiscent of the 18th Century.

THE GREAT DIVORCE: C. S. Lewis. 12/3 posted. The author of "The Screwtape Letters" discusses in symbolic form the "marriageability" of Heaven and Hell.

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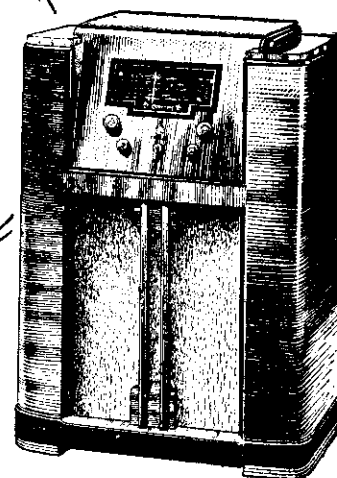
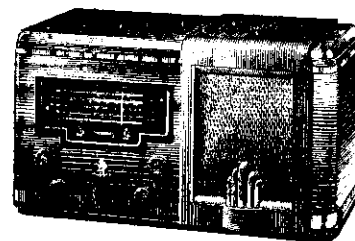
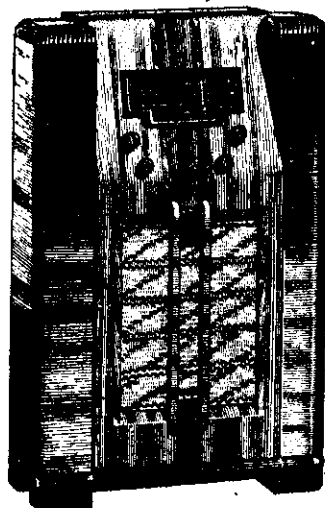
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