

Build Your Own Radio

"Supreme" 5 Valve Kit set complete with latest Tubes and Wiring Diagrams (less speaker) £11.12.6.

Write:

TRICITY HOUSE
BOX 1410, CHRISTCHURCH.

PHOTOGRAPHY

English Mounting Corners, 1/- pkt.
White Ink, 1/9. 7 x 11 Albums, 2/6.
Photo Paste, 1/6 and 2/6. Developing,
Printing and Enlarging. Photographs copied
and enlarged. Repairs to all Cameras.
Mail Orders Appreciated. Add postage.

G. B. TOMKINSON,
Photographic and Home Movie Supplies,
39 Victoria St. W., Auckland.

BOOKS

STIMULUS and CHALLENGE

SHELLEY. By Edmund Blunden. Collins.

(Reviewed by Ian A. Gordon)

B LUNDEN'S new book on Shelley is a full-dress biography of the poet, with subsidiary (though effective) portraits of the men and women like Harriet and Mary and Byron and Leigh Hunt and William Godwin who were such major influences in his short life. But it is more than a biography. It is an answer to a question that has lain behind a great deal of Shelley criticism: Is Shelley a poet for adults? Matthew Arnold with his description of Shelley as a "beautiful and ineffectual angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain" spoke for the sober adults of the 19th Century. Shelley to them was a madman who at no point made contact with adult life. Much Shelley criticism since has admitted that he was (true) a great lyric poet, but—always the "but"—he was very young and had he lived longer he would have known better. Even to-day "to rave about Shelley" is the standard description (applied of course by people who know better than that) of emotional and presumably uncritical adolescent appreciation of poetry.

IS Shelley only a poet for the young?

Most of us who have some feeling for literature struck Shelley early in our reading career. He shone from the school anthologies as the one poet who had something to say that we could understand. I suppose more boys and girls have come to love poetry initially from reading Shelley than from reading any other English poet. The *Ode to the West-Wind* became our anthem and *Adonais* the last word on the defence of poetry. As we read more widely our knowledge grew and our sympathies broadened. The 17th Century, the Elizabethans, contemporary poetry, and for some fortunate individuals the Middle Ages and the 18th Century yielded their treasures. In the process of growing up we sometimes grew a little suspicious of the romantics and decided that Shelley was only a stage on our journey and might well be abandoned. There are many men and women (I speak of those who have an abiding interest in poetry and who continue to read it) who have not read Shelley since they left school. They will find Blunden's book both a stimulus and a challenge.

What was so adolescent about Shelley? Far from being adolescent he entered adult life and assumed adult responsibilities at an age that is almost incredible. By the age of 20 he was a husband, a father, and a householder. While still a schoolboy of 17 he arranged with publishers for the printing of his work, saw it in book form, solemnly arranged for the bribing of reviewers, and made a profit of £40. His handling of editors, printers, and of his incredibly mean-spirited father-in-law, William Godwin, could scarcely have been more mature. In a Europe where travel was still by horse traffic he continually piloted an entourage of family, children, friends, and hangers-on with the skill of a diplomatic courtier. One of the most valuable elements in Blunden's

book is his successful recreation of the day-to-day life of Shelley, no madman but a very practical person. His ideas on religion and morality and society were not those of his age, and the simplest solution was to dub him a visionary. But it is a great mistake to assume (we still do it) that a visionary cannot dish out soup or put the baby to sleep. Shelley could do both, and Blunden's portrait will do much to cancel out Arnold's poet "not entirely sane."

* * *

EDMUND BLUNDEN in many ways is the right man for the job; a poet himself of real quality (though more placid than Shelley), an Oxford don who has done a bit of travel in his time, and for many years now an authority on the early 19th Century with (among many other volumes) books to his credit on Lamb, Keats, and Leigh Hunt. The early chapters I find middle-aged. In spite of his respect for Shelley he finds it difficult to sympathise entirely with his rebellion against authority at school and at university, and adopts an attitude of middle-aged conscious toleration that, I suspect, would have made Shelley himself more indignant than did the harshness with which he was originally met. When an undergraduate tells his elders that they are mistaken fools, he should not be met with benevolent co-operation. It is too humiliating.

But as Blunden follows Shelley from school and university into the world of affairs he warms to his task and the result is good reading. Though his primary concern is with biography he has not forgotten that he is writing the biography of a poet, and both poetry and biographical detail are made to illuminate each other with a skill that can only be shown by one who knows his material intimately. Blunden's biography is not written for the scholar—there is not a footnote nor an appendix nor a list of authorities anywhere in its page—but it is written by a scholar, and written with a grace and simplicity that one sometimes sighs for in tomes more apparently learned.

Before I had read many pages of Blunden's book I found myself going to the bookcase for my Shelley. What more, in the end, would a biographer want? I think that many who read this book, who had decided years ago that they had passed beyond Shelley to the reading of maturer men, will return to one of England's greatest poets with a new appreciation.

BOOKS ABOUT FOOD

(Written for "The Listener" by DR. MURIEL BELL, Nutritionist to the Health Department)

WHEN confronted with questions as to what books are available on food—what A. P. Herbert refers to as contributions to the "stomach library"—it is not always easy to give a satisfactory answer. In such a subject as nutrition, where there have been rapid advances, books quickly get out of date. It must be admitted, too, that nutrition has not yet become a fully-fledged science: it is still characterised by a good deal of conjecture: its standards are as yet only tentative. Consequently, books about food tend to be coloured by the author's

(continued on next page)

NOW IT CAN BE TOLD—



"FIDO" (Fog Investigation Dispersal Operations)

In 1942, so many R.A.F. planes were crashing in fog that Mr. Churchill ordered a remedy to be found "with all expedition".

Research workers devised a "box" of pipelines and burners surrounding the runway, burning vaporised petrol under pressure. This "dried" the air above the aerodrome and gave clear visibility even in thickest fogs.

The Shell group equipped 16 aerodromes with "FIDO", thereby saving innumerable lives and planes. Fido is already a great peacetime boon.

Shell's leadership is the result of unceasing scientific research which continues in peace as in war.

SHELL built FIDO
You can be sure of SHELL



The Shell Company of New Zealand Limited (Incorporated in England).