

effect an apologia. It is the *cri-de-coeur* of an intellectual who has refused to grow up, of a liberal humanitarian whose final comment on the world is "On, dear!" There is much delicate observation, some humour, and a good deal of clean, firm writing in *Prater Violet*; and Bergmann is a genuine creation. But there is an awful lot of self-pity, and much of it is out of date.

All the writer's gifts but one. And the one that is lacking is not love; for there is tenderness, at least, in the curious relationship finally reached between "mother's boy" and the "comic foreigner with the funny accent." There is subtlety, too often tinged with malice; there is honesty—an absolute honesty, worthy of the Oxford Group. There is even the sense of glory, that salutes Wallisch across the mountains, that is aware of true greatness in Bergmann, the old Jewish Socrates, "the head of a Roman emperor, with dark old Asiatic eyes."

All the writer's gifts but one—courage. Surely Mr. Isherwood has had time to make up his mind about the world we live in, that he sees with such engaging clarity? *Prater Violet* has been hailed in America as a modern masterpiece; most English reviews have been less enthusiastic. "Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man" may be in order; but not "Portrait of the Artist getting younger and younger."

One is grateful, as always, for good writing. One is grateful for Bergmann. But outraged feeling that leads nowhere can be a bore, even in 100 pages. It is about time that mother's boy grew up.

—J.B.

#### DEAN AS NOVELIST

ARCHDEACONS AFLOAT. By C. A. Alington, Faber and Faber, London.

IN his latest novel Cyril Alington, the Dean of Durham, relates the fictional doings ("adventures") would be rather too strong a word for such a leisurely narrative) of two Archdeacons, travelling incognito for the sake of relaxation, during a pleasure cruise through the Mediterranean to Greece. The date does not seem to be defined, but it is clearly not in very recent times, since the sole example of unrest in Greece is supplied by a romantic brigand who kidnaps one of the Archdeacons and some of his fellow-travellers and holds them to ransom, from which comparatively agreeable predicament they are rescued through the agency of a code-message which the second Archdeacon, by virtue of his classical and Scriptural education, is able to decipher.

This story is written in a quaintly archaic style, reminiscent of Victor Whitechurch, with determined attempts at a mild and clerical form of humour and with frequent digressions to permit the author to impart irrelevant information on a wide variety of topics. There is an evident desire to edify and instruct as well as to entertain; but the total effect, though infantile, is by no means unpleasant.

#### NURSERY ANTHOLOGY

NURSERY RHYMES FOR CERTAIN TIMES. With drawings by Elinor Darwin. Faber and Faber Ltd. (London).

AS Walter De La Mare points out in his foreword to this new collection, nursery rhymes really call for no introduction. They are as incapable of ageing as of being supplanted; everybody has learnt some at least and has never

forgotten them; but nobody has ever explained satisfactorily the secret of their charm and their longevity.

For that matter, unless the reviewer is prepared—which this one isn't—to launch into an essay on the subject of the origin and history of nursery rhymes, there is really not much to say about the present volume, except that it is delightfully printed, charmingly and lavishly illustrated with line-drawings in sepia, and appears to be extraordinarily comprehensive. There are, indeed, a number of verses included in the present collection which were new to this reviewer, who claims to be as well informed on the subject and have as wide a repertoire as anybody who has been a child and is now a parent. Almost as fascinating to the adult reader as finding new items and being reminded of old favourites, is the opportunity here provided to note how widely one version of a simple little jingle can differ from another. Indeed, when it comes to textual variations and emendations, the various folios of Shakespeare have nothing on "Jack and Jill," "There was a little man," and many other members of the family of Mother Goose (who herself, incidentally, shows regrettable traces of anti-Semitism).

If you are looking for a Christmas present, this is obviously worth considering; but it is too good a book to be put without reservation into the hands of infants. There are many other collections of nursery rhymes suitable for tearing up; this is a volume to be treasured.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

THE CHALLENGE TO NEW ZEALAND LABOUR. By Dudley Seers. The Christchurch Co-operative Book Society.

A POLITICAL pamphlet which is likely to be read with interest by opponents as well as supporters of the Labour Party. The author is one of the latter—"an Englishman with Labour sympathies who has lived a few years in New Zealand"—he here carries a stage further the argument contained in the "Walsh Report"; he urges the unions to adopt a policy of Full Production, but only under certain conditions. There are, he points out, snares for Labour in the present condition of full employment, and a need for new incentives now that the "fear of want" has been largely removed by Social Security.

"THE ROAD TO THE WEST." Automobile Association, Canterbury (through Whitcombe and Tombs Ltd.)

A FIRST-RATE introduction for tourists to the West Coast, from its colour reproduction of Ivy Fife's painting "Sheffield" (on the cover) to the attractive maps by Josephine Mayo. The text is in three parts—a tribute to Sir Arthur Dudley Dobson, who explored and surveyed the route, and found Arthur's Pass; a motorist's guide to the roads as they are to-day; and a description of the industries and attractions of the West Coast. All the photographs are excellent, and the production as a whole marks out this book as an example to be followed in tourist literature. It is good news that it is merely "Number one of a series . . . designed for the enjoyment of motorists."

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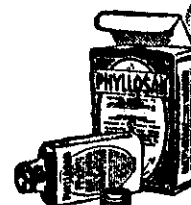
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