

(continued from previous page)

se détermine jamais. Qui n'accepte pas le regret n'accepte pas la vie. But I do wish Dr. Raphael could have left the shelter of Hume and of Hutcheson, of Moore and of Ross, to have grappled with this problem directly, especially as it is evidently one which has appealed to him.

His book is straightforward and workmanlike in the great tradition in which it was born. It is solid and without shades of perversity. Within its scope it is an entire success. If it has a moral, it is the involuntary one that truth (if I may change my metaphor) is an island, an island of a special sort: spawned out of the sea in some obscure eruption, for 20 years it stands firm, if somewhat arid and cindery, a mark for mariners, a thing to thank God on; next year it is gone. Truth is of time and of place.

## WITHOUT GLAMOUR

OF DEATH BUT ONCE. By Roy Bulcock. F. W. Cheshire Pty. Ltd., Melbourne.

THE man who recounts the treatment of prisoners-of-war at the hands of the Japanese faces a grave difficulty: the actual facts are so appalling that not so much do they challenge belief, as they cannot be set down at all in writing without overwhelming the reader with their atrocity. The narrator of events in Japanese prison camps has therefore to coax his readers with selected crumbs of truth, just so much as can be complacently digested, while he gradually builds up the true picture of the years of misery which he has luckily survived. Roy Bulcock (an R.A.A.F. administrative officer caught in Java in 1942) makes a reasonable fist of this difficult task, although, in spite of his having kept a diary at great risk, his narrative tends to be scrappy and anecdotal rather than a complete and connected story. And he sneers easily, perhaps too easily.

The book has new light to throw on the British defeat in Malaya: the panic evacuation of Kuantan airfield (a real *saute qui peut* in which few waited for orders to depart) left the nearest aerodrome to the scene of the destruction of Prince of Wales and Repulse a few days later without aircraft and virtually unserviceable. Transferred to Java, Bulcock saw the scenes of disorganisation repeated, with the difference that allies with a policy of their own added to the turmoil.

The narrative of his personal adventures reflects the characteristic experience of a prisoner-of-war in Japanese hands: the incredulity with which Nipponese hypocrisy and brutality were at first received; the moral toughness of the majority of prisoners (from those who "took" a bashing to those who risked unpleasant death to operate a secret radio, hiding it in a stool, in a tableleg, in a prisoner's wooden clogs); the intense dread of being sent to work on the Burma-Thailand railway, to the outer islands (where the chance of survival was about one in two), or to Japan itself across waters mercilessly harried by United States submarines. The Japanese could be bluff, but it was risky. Their worst characteristic was their unpredictability. Some of these stories of heroism are not well documented elsewhere: the "lady on the bicycle," symbolising the steadfast courage of Dutch women, and the R.A.A.F. Wing-Commander in the hands

of the Kempeitai whose spirit remained aggressive through years of specialised torture and persecution.

"Prison experiences are depressing," says Vance Palmer's introduction, implying a reaction against this type of war book. If that is true, we did not deserve victory. These experiences, on the contrary, should exhilarate, relating the firmness and courage of the average man on a stage remote from glory but not, it is to be hoped, from honour.

## A COUPLE OF CORPSES

THE MASINGLEE MURDERS. By Maurice B. Dix. Robert Hale Ltd.

ONE of the characteristic devices of the detective novelist, the Big Brain—the Sherlock Holmes, Lord Peter Wimsey, or Inspector Alleyn—who is so irritatingly clairvoyant and right and orders all things to fit a neat pattern, is to be found in this novel. Montgomery Wilberforce, a journalist of Chester-tonian or even Johnsonian bulk and rudeness, had his talents more keenly exercised than ever, as his son's friend, a Canadian sergeant, is in the dock for double murder. The presence of Canadian troops in wartime England allows the astute author to vary the usual ingredients. He is prudent to leave us what is not so much a problem of detection as a problem of legal probability to solve: can the defence sufficiently discredit the Crown's evidence to acquit the innocent but unattractive hero? But in spite of quite a high degree of verisimilitude, you'd be surprised at some of the goings on in a British criminal court, as stage-managed by Mr. Dix.

—David Hall

## GIRLS AT SCHOOL

MERRY BEGINS. By Clare Mallory. Geoffrey Cumberlege, for the Oxford University Press.

CLARE MALLORY was lucky in getting the Oxford University Press to take her book—a boarding-school story set in New Zealand about supposedly New Zealand girls. The school is at Dunedin (where the sun shines more often than not), Auckland and Wellington are mentioned, there is a visit to a sheep station in Canterbury (sheep aren't mentioned), and the school year starts in February. But that is about all there is of New Zealand in it. There is the familiar plot of the unpopular pre-rect Winning Through with the help of the new girl. But there are far too many House points, too much House pride, and House Honour. When perhaps 80 per cent of New Zealand children attend day and mixed high schools, it is unfortunate that overseas readers are receiving such a strange impression of the school life of our girls. Clare Mallory can write, but I would like to see her talents used in a school story that will be about the kind of school you and I went to, and about children like the kids down the street.

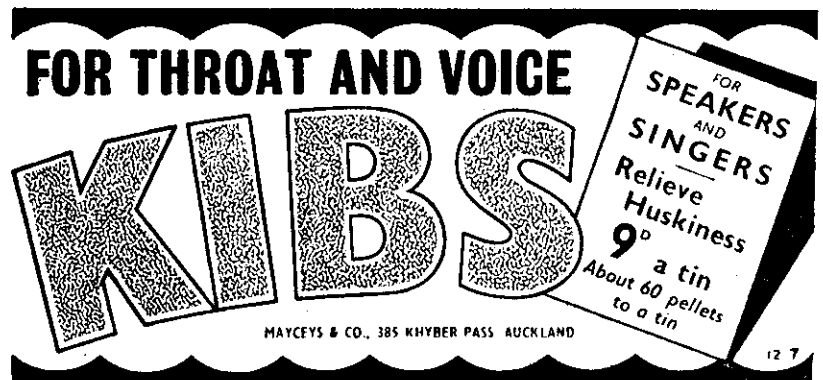
—D.R.

CECIL HAUXWELL, baritone, a member of the staff of Station 12B, Auckland, who has been heard recently in recitals from the YA stations, proposes to go to London for further study. Already he has received assistance from an Auckland business-man, and Station 12B has arranged for a public concert for his benefit to be heard in the Auckland Town Hall on Thursday, October 23.



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