

expiating a sexual offence, and in the behaviour of O'Brien, a healthy and normal man who shows in his attitude towards friendship the effects of segregation. English writers are still obliged to walk delicately around this subject; and there are few subjects in greater need of frankness and honesty. I think the one failure of understanding in the play is the portrait of Medworth. A man of his type could have been repulsive to his fellow-prisoners; but the dialogue indicates that the author's conception of his weakness is essentially conventional.

Now *Barabbas* could not have been successful if it had been blatantly a propaganda play. The misfits of society are presented without comment and are allowed to speak for themselves. Nevertheless a play which can make people think about prisons—not as settings for drama, but as places of correction towards which they have a collective responsibility, is a document of some importance. Britain is not standing still in social thought if this play can hold its own among the lighter productions which usually monopolise the West End theatres of London.

#### RECOGNISING BIRDS

**NEW ZEALAND BIRDS AND HOW TO IDENTIFY THEM.** By Perrine Moncrieff. Third Edition. Whitcombe and Tombs Ltd. (8/6.)

IT is pleasant to think that Mrs. Moncrieff's book has run through two editions and now come out in a third. For those who can't afford Dr. Oliver's book it is just about indispensable; and in any case Dr. Oliver is too big and heavy to take on a journey. The chief changes made in this edition are a revision of the section on classification and the replacement of some of the illustrations. Mrs. Moncrieff adheres to her rather peculiar method of listing birds first according to size and then according to orders, and in her index of basing a third reference on nests. While it is doubtful if this makes anything clearer or easier for the untrained, it must be confusing to others who use her book for the first time, and can be annoying.

#### FOR THOSE ABOUT TO MARRY

**GUIDE TO MARRIAGE.** By Leslie Tizard. Allen and Unwin Ltd.

THIS is an attempt, by the Chairman of the Birmingham Marriage Guidance Council, to tell young people everything they wish to know about marriage in language that they can understand. It is frank enough to give old-fashioned people the creeps or a bilious attack, and comprehensive enough to cover most questions that normal young couples are ever likely to ask. Whether it is necessary or not depends on the view one takes of the purpose of marriage, and Mr. Tizard's is not the view of puritans or priests. The book will of course sell like hot cakes, but it would be unfair to suggest that it was written to exploit an insatiable market. It was certainly written to sell, but from the point of view of circulation rather than of profit.

#### LUCKY NUMBER

**THE CASINO AND OTHER STORIES.** By Margaret Bonham, Phoenix House.

WHO writes publishers' blurbs? From the dust jacket of this book of short stories we learn of Margaret Bonham that "Her stories are very accomplished; they have completeness, but signifi-

cance, too." What is complete must be insignificant? These are good stories, whatever is said about them by their friends.

Margaret Bonham writes with grace and understanding, especially of women and of children. She does not disdain to be funny. Her stories are contrived things: the plot reaches a prepared conclusion. This does not detract from their spontaneity and their lively gift of characterisation. I hope to meet Lucy and Louis, delightful veterans of two of these fifteen short stories, again in new situations which will display their high spirits and love of life to further advantage. It would be pleasant too to meet again, as in some of these stories, the fresh idiom of Wales.

—David Hall

## THE BEST OF THE LATEST

**A LITTLE TREASURY OF MODERN POETRY**, Edited by Oscar Williams, 16/3 posted. A comprehensive yet discriminating anthology of the best of English, and American verse during the past fifty years.

**THE GOLDEN AGE OF VIENNA**, Hans Gal, 7/3 posted. The brilliant age of Gluck, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert described by a celebrated Viennese musician. Many illustrations.

**GENTLEMEN'S AGREEMENT**, Laura Z. Hobson, 11/- posted. An outspoken and dramatic novel centred around the Jewish problem in the United States, where it became a nation-wide best seller.

**THE COMPLETE BOOK OF SEWING**, Constance Talbot, 21/9 posted. A practical self-instruction guide to all home sewing, from garments to household furnishings, embroidery to mending. With over 1,000 explanatory pictures.

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