

THE KIND ENGLISH

PRIVATE ENTERPRISE. By Angela Thirkell. Hamish Hamilton.

PRIVATE Enterprise is a satirical novel set in an English county in the period immediately following the second World War. The satire is not even slightly edged with malice. Miss Thirkell seems to like her people and pokes only gentle, friendly fun at them. A love story, or rather a combination of love stories, provides the background for the fun, but the plot—if it can be called a plot—is commonplace and tedious. The merit of the book lies in its perceptive witty dissection of Various English Types.

There are The Nannies enjoying a benevolent dictatorship over the entire household. The fact that for some obscure, English reason they cannot be dismissed when the children grow up, and cannot be happy without babies, gives their employers considerable worry and a proprietary interest in the outcome of the love affairs. There are The Workmen, who in one delightful chapter bail up their mistress in her own kitchen while they bore her to tears with details she doesn't understand and advice she doesn't want. But she cannot escape without hurting their feelings. It is a nice thought that only a people innately kind could be satirised thus.

NATURE FOR CHILDREN

COUNTRYSIDE STORIES. By Nancy D. Stevens. George G. Harrap & Co., Ltd.

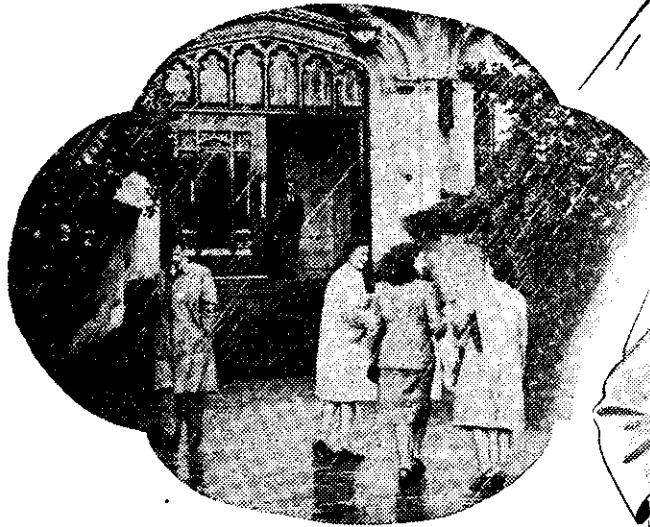
COUNTRYSIDE Stories is nature study made easy and pleasant for children. It is calculated to make them observant without telling them in so many words to use their eyes and ears and noses. Animals, flowers, and fishes talk, but only to tell their own natural histories. There are fairies and elves but they are really only children, neither whimsical nor sweet, and they only appear occasionally to give variety and to tell a story too difficult for the birds and bees. There is no "talking down"; the language is restricted to the eight-to-10-year old's vocabulary, but Miss Stevens is not afraid of using a big word where a big word is the only right one; and though there is a moral to most of the stories it is pointed, never punched.

The book is excellently set out with big print, short chapters, clear headings, and delightful wood-cuts.

WIND AND WATER

THE DUPE. By Robert S. Close. Georgian House, Melbourne.

THOUGH as one writes, Mr. Close is happily once more back in circulation, his first published novel, *Love Me Sailor*, is not. It is therefore not possible for the reviewer to point in this second novel to evidence of maturing talent, unless the total absence of anything remotely resembling obscenity or libel can be considered the fruit of deepening experience. In many ways the writing is immature. Mr. Close is infatuated with adjectives and this story of a wind-jammer's passage round the Horn (the author calls it a windship) is full of leaden days, lowering nights, thrusting bowsprits, groaning spars, whimpering sheaves, and brooding hatreds. The handling of the dialogue is at times awkward and the occasional brief excursions into dialect seem hopelessly artificial. But there is no denying that when Mr. Close forgets about fine writing in the excitement of describing sudden death or near shipwreck he achieves a raw strength that matches his subject admirably.



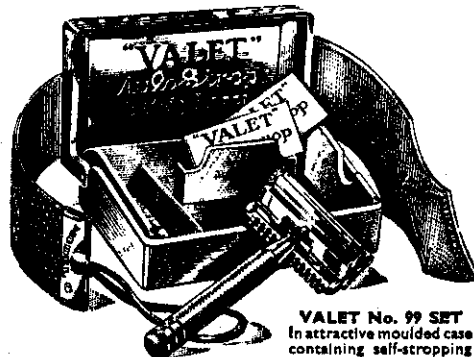
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