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## BOOKS

# GOATS AND MONKEYS

**PORTRAIT OF THE ANTI-SEMITE.** By Jean-Paul Sartre. Secker and Warburg and Lindsay Drummond.

**S**ARTRE adapts the dictum of Voltaire, applied to a different object, and declares that "if the Jew did not exist, the anti-semitite would invent him." In this short, pungent book the role of the anti-semitite in France is rigorously examined; this fruit of frustrated mediocrity and an inferiority, craving always a perpetual reassurance at the expense of the innocent and the weak, is eyed with the cold glance of reason. The proud title of "true Frenchman" would have no value if all could claim it; to exclude from it a section of the people is to allow duke and apache, peasant and landowner, to share in an easily-won superiority, a feeling at once of equality and of aristocracy.

Although Sartre writes here with both lucidity and restraint, this book is intentionally polemical. He cannot easily bridle his indignation that any Frenchman should sink to imitate, even in a comparatively mild fashion, the grossest of the iniquities of Hitler. While he examines with a certain asperity the conduct of some Jews which has played into the hands of the anti-semitite, he pays generous tribute to the achievement of Jews in many fields, including their admirable part in the resistance during the German occupation.

Anti-semitism is a waste product of nationalism. It was probably inevitable that it should encourage Jews to seek a territorial nationality of their own, and no doubt equally inevitable that the anti-semitite should then clamour against Zionism.

Sartre sums up his argument, that an underprivileged class diminishes the privileges of all, in terms that can be applied to all countries: "No Frenchman will be secure as long as a Jew, not only in France, but in the world at large, need go in fear of his life." We are lucky in this country that this book can be viewed as academic; not so lucky that anywhere in the world men should seek scapegoats for their own sickness and cowardice.

The New Zealand writer Erik de Mauny has produced a graceful translation.

—David Hall

## THE LOVER OF POWER

**THE BORGIA TESTAMENT.** By Nigel Balchin. Collins. (Our copy through the British Council.)

**I**T is a little surprising to find Mr. Balchin choosing from the packed pages of history a theme which has, in its time, attracted the attention and the labours of such different writers as Rafael Sabatini and Somerset Maugham. For the events of the lives of Caesar Borgia and his father, Alexander VI, oscillate uneasily between drama and melodrama. What, no cloak, no dagger, Mr. Balchin? Caesar Borgia was what Machiavelli found him, the most reasonable of men? No violence for its own sake, but all done out of policy, the Borgia the Polonius of princes?

This novel is brisk and rapid enough. It interests but does not enthrall. It amuses but does not delight. It is competent but not inevitable. It is good, but it seems always to promise a little more than it performs. We feel that there is, just around the corner, over the next page perhaps, the perfect description of the unutterable, the answer, the quintessence, the final judgment, the last word, the Holy Grail, the Message which will lay all flat. Somehow it remains unsaid, unuttered. Only the last pages, with their abrupt change from over-stoical autobiography to the brutal point of view of an enemy, have the vitality we would like to see diffused through the whole book.

I don't wish to leave you with the impression that *The Borgia Testament* is a flop, but it does seem to be a lesser thing than we might expect of Nigel Balchin. Caesar Borgia is a man drunk with a fatal ambition, possessed of a single-minded ruthlessness from which even his strong and experienced father recoils. His ambition for a united Italy (a Man born before His Time, of course) is this a pitiful illusion—or what? The novel seeks to explain and not to excuse, but does neither. Perhaps the writer meant me to be puzzled as to whether Caesar is villain or hero. But even if I have been led up the garden path, the flowers have been worth sniffing at and their colours brave.

—D.O.W.H.



**JEAN-PAUL SARTRE**  
*An underprivileged class diminishes the privileges of all*

## NEW ZEALAND MISCELLANY

**VINTAGE: PEOPLE AND THINGS IN OLD NEW ZEALAND.** By Mona Gordon. Caxton Press.

**T**HIS is a collection of nine papers on by-ways of New Zealand history. It might be difficult to justify all of them. So much has been written about Te Rauparaha that "The Conquest of Kapiti" reads like an oft-told tale. But there is real value in Mona Gordon's skilful assembling of facts about several other subjects, such as tribal life on the Little Barrier and the acquisition of the island as a bird sanctuary; what Sir George Grey did to Kawau and his seigniorial life there; the slaughter of the huia; the habitats of the white heron and its significance in Maori life; the building up of our lighthouse system and the story of the ships that serve it. The re-discovery of the notornis gives special interest to the killing off of the huia, by Maori as well as European. The more sensitive conscience of to-day will be shocked by Mona Gordon's story. One of the worst offenders was that famous ornithologist Sir Walter Buller. He is a leading figure, too, in "The Acquisition of Papaitonga," a summary of the dealings of Buller and Major Kemp (Te Rangihirua) in Horowhenua Maori land. It is not a pretty story. Lovers of ships will appreciate the history of the first "Hine-moa," that beautiful little ship with the most varied service of any in New Zealand waters. Mona Gordon is over-flowery and over-sentimental at times, but much more than that may be forgiven her for her understanding love of New Zealand, and her industry. Also, she documents her history. There are admirable illustrations, and the format is pleasing.

## FOUR RELIGIOUS PLAYS

**SEEDS OF ADAM, AND OTHER PLAYS.** By Charles Williams. with Introduction by Anne Ridler. Geoffrey Cumberlege, Oxford University Press.

**W**HEN Charles Williams died in 1945, the English religious drama lost an exceptionally original writer. Nine years earlier he had won success with *Cranmer of Canterbury*, commissioned for the summer festival of the Friends of Canterbury Cathedral. The four short plays in this volume were written

(continued on next page)



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