

light on the differences between English and Continental conceptions of land tenure, inheritance, and nobility.

Let the hobbyhorse once carry the reader into this interesting realm, no lifetime would suffice for the exploration of its byways, and there would be no lack of problems comparable in intricacy with those of chess or bridge.

—G.W.Z.

CLEAR RECORD

THE MAKING OF MODERN HOLLAND.
By A. J. Barnouw. George Allen and Unwin. English price, 8/6.

TO tell the truth attractively is the problem before an author who sets out to recount a national history in 200 pages or so. He has two courses—he may, as the railway time-table used to do, relate the facts at the expense of readability, or he may, as the roadside hoarding still does, achieve readability at the expense of the facts. Mr. Barnouw leans honourably, but not too austere, towards the time-table. Without sparing his data, he contrives to make a broad picture emerge. The proportions are just, and, by devoting almost half his book to the hundred years after 1572—Holland's *grand siècle*, as one would agree—he refutes the fallacy implicit in his title, the fallacy which studies historical periods, not for their own sake, but as preludes to the present, and historical persons, not for their own sake, but as dear, dead folk whose enlightened posterity we living are. The expert in Dutch history, who no doubt exists, will, of course, discover grounds for cavil. He will be puzzled to find mention of Willibrord, but none of the greater Boniface, and disappointed at the summary reference to the experiment of union with Belgium after the Napoleonic wars, which is interesting either in retrospect from that point of time, or in prospect. But the general reader, who must also be assumed to exist, should be grateful for a clear record of a national history which made the unusual progress from republicanism to monarchy and which, by contrast and similarity, illuminates so provocatively the history of the British. The two people have shared Protestantism, a

liberal tradition, maritime and commercial aptitude, imperial propensity; yet how different their destinies! Mr. Barnouw's book would be justified even if it were only to stir a few of its readers to ask themselves why, and to fall wondering about the conditions of national greatness and decay, and about what it is for a nation to be great or to be decadent.

—N.C.P.

A TIRED BATES

THE JACARANDA TREE. By H. E. Bates.
Michael Joseph. English price, 9/6.

FOR years the critics have given Mr. Bates unstinting praise, ever since he was "discovered," as a lad of 18, by Richard Garnett, a *littérateur* of discernment. It must be admitted that the prodigy has usually come up to expectation. Yet it can be debated whether unstinting praise is good for authors. Mr. Bates can, in a few words, paint a vivid picture. Take, for instance, this: "It (The Jacaranda Tree) had begun to blossom now with drops of bright blue flower among masses of tender pinnate leaves, and its fresh brilliance had the effect of making the dust seem dead." The contrast between the bloom and the dust is thrown up in sharp relief by the apt choice of a few additional words to the main description.

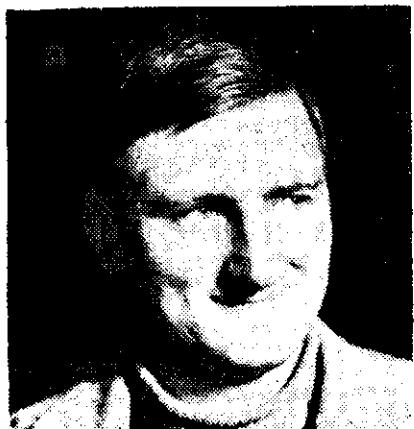
In sketching character also the author chooses his words well, and also his people, though we have met most of them before: the discontented Paterson, the silent worshipping Burmese boy and his sister, whose golden beauty is mute, vivid and, as far as Paterson is concerned, all conquerable; the silly Mrs. Betterson, whom everybody in the town regards as "batty," but who, in emergency, suddenly becomes the fully-matured emblem of eternal maternity; the nervy, unstrung Connie McNairn and her snobbish mother; and the least successfully drawn and least original, Mrs. Portman, who is the usual flighty woman one finds in novels with a foreign setting—always alert for love adventures and a bore to the reader because of a lack of reality. Mr. Bates, competent to handle situations, flattens us with hackneyed ones; competent, to handle characters, devastates us with people we have met so often before that we can dispense with their company; and bolsters up the whole with a theme that has been constantly used in recent years by less matured writers—of a crowd of white people clustering together for mutual protection in their escape from the approaching enemy (the Japanese) and the interplay of emotional reaction to the situation.

The novel has flashes of brilliant description but otherwise seems to be the work of a tired man who is abusing his talents.

—B.L.C.

Farmers Take Note!

Farmers, especially those who feel theirs is a hard row to hoe, may be interested in an opinion recently expressed by Georgie Henschel speaking in a BBC programme, *Mainly for Women*. She said, "It's a fact that however physically tired one becomes in any kind of rural occupation that tiredness is a perfectly normal thing and it doesn't create any tension, because in what you've been doing you've been in harmony with nature around you. The difficulty comes when you live in the artificial conditions of urban life; the difficulty is to carry any sort of inner harmony through into those conditions."



DENIS GLOVER (above), who took leave of absence from the Caxton Press to serve with the Royal Navy during the war, is to review "The Bismarck Episode," by Capt. Russell Grenfell, R.N., in the ZB Book Review session on Sunday evening, June 19. Eric Ramsden will chair the session, and other books discussed will be "The Heat of the Day," by Elizabeth Bowen (reviewed by Frank Sargeson), "Life Sentence," by Howard Wadman (Anton Vogt), and "On and Off the Platform Under the Southern Cross," by William and Janet Beveridge (W. J. Wilson).

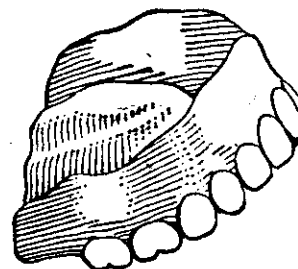
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