

naive racing away after stray moths of pointless gossip. Lady Barnard's brief residence at the Cape no doubt made her interesting to a South African, and this part of her life, well described and well illustrated, has more vitality than anything else in the book. The thanks to librarian and archivists, the bibliography (without dates or editions), and the intermittent (but incomplete and teasing) footnotes give an appearance of scholarship which is belied by the processions of clichés, the misspellings, and the atrocious proof reading. Yet, in spite of its blemishes, Lady Anne's biography shows an awareness of the psychological possibilities of its subject. It would have been a better book as a novel.

—David Hall

DOCUMENTARY NOVEL

THE RAGE OF THE VULTURE, by Alan Moorehead. Published by Hamish Hamilton. English price, 9/6.

ALAN MOOREHEAD is a newspaper reporter first and foremost, and has a habit of viewing the political scene, and the human personalities involved, in documentary fashion. It is automatic in journalism to tabulate, more or less neatly, human relationships into set categories which need never become too involved. This entirely unprejudiced but necessarily restricted mode of approach becomes a trifle awry when the vehicle to be used is fictional, because fiction, to remain true to life, has a set of standards of its own.

Had the author been content to let us regard this work more as a documentary than as an ambitious novel, the result would have been pleasing. The background descriptions, integrated with the rise of politics and the Indian attitude to the going of the British, are not only admirable but satisfying, because they do help the reader to understand what happened during the period of transition when self-government came to India. This is documentary, a method with which the author is entirely familiar. But he goes further and introduces characters who cannot possibly seem real, because they are mere sticks on which to hang the mantle of the main story.

—B.L.C.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

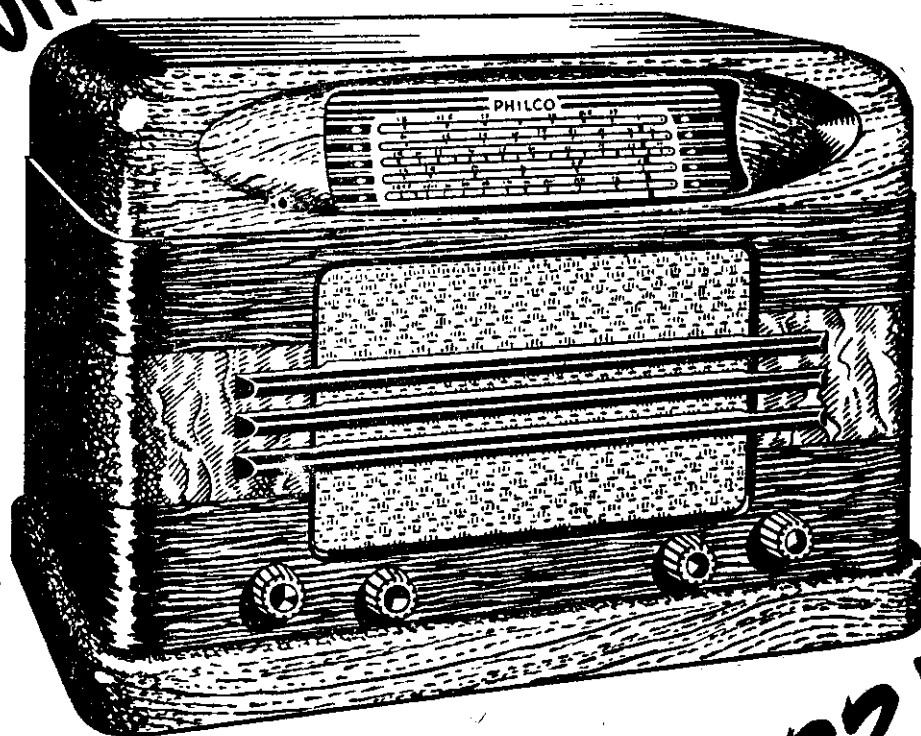
A *KNIFE* for Celeste, by Eric Burgess (Michael Joseph, English price 8/6), is a rather tense story of a man who, deserted by his wife, comes back from the war in the mood for murder. A new love deflects him from his purpose, but there are some interesting situations before the cure is completed.

ONE of the best pictures of 15th Century England is to be found in the *Paston Letters*, a family chronicle of endless value to historians. A selection from the letters, arranged and edited by Albert H. Ball, has now been included in the Holborn Library (Harrap, English price 6/-). It should permit the general reader (who does not feel himself quickly at home in the 15th Century) to sharpen his appetite for a full encounter with the Pastons of Norfolk.

JONATHAN STAGGE writes a good thriller, and in *The Three Fears* (Michael Joseph, English price 8/6) he finds his theme in murders which apparently are the accidental results of an attempt to kill a famous actress. There is a nice blend of suspense and satire, and the Divine Daphne is a character almost too good for a crime story.

N.Z. LISTENER, AUGUST 12, 1949

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