

credit. Reviewing the planless expedients that dictated the early development of his college, Dr. Beaglehole exclaims with noble wrath: "The fact represents the community—represents the colonial mind, slovenly, lazy, makeshift, satisfied with a passing enthusiasm, pretentious in the width of its idly-held ambition, willing always to retire into complacency over a half-done job or an achievement not its own; pushed and shoved along a succession of lines of least resistance by the vigorous and determined individual, but moving as little and as meanly as possible." Much of this criticism still remains valid. It is difficult to resist the conclusion that New Zealand has got the university system it deserves or, perhaps, a rather better system than it deserves. It has wanted a university that could be "justified," preferably in material terms, and with the least possible expenditure. The university cannot, of course, convincingly justify itself to the practical world, and, when it attempts to do so, it is already lost.

It will be evident that this volume, like all good history, is opinionated if not biased, and one does not always agree with Dr. Beaglehole's view of things and people. His portraiture is, I think, sometimes distorted by the inherited astigmatism; but discussion of that optical issue must be reserved for another occasion and another arena. Two trifling verbal points may be mentioned: in a book that shows so marked a feeling for language, it is a shock to see the odious vogue-word "overall" (p. 273), and I have a personal distaste for "researcher," used throughout. A tribute is due to the New Zealand University Press for sponsoring this handsome publication; now that a precedent has been established, it is to be hoped that the other university colleges will, under the same imprint, issue or revise equally comprehensive histories.

#### HIGHER CRITICISM

**COLERIDGE AS CRITIC**, by Herbert Read; Faber and Faber, London, 1949. English price, 6/-.

LAST year, at a symposium on "The Great Critics," held at John Hopkins University, Herbert Read contributed a lecture on Coleridge: that lecture, considerably expanded and fortified with an appendix on Richard Woltereck that will be of interest to philosophers, forms the substance of this 40-page monograph. It is possible to prove almost anything out of Coleridge; and Mr. Read has no difficulty in showing that "writing before Kierkegaard was born, Coleridge had already formulated the terms of an existentialist philosophy." He is also able to demonstrate that Coleridge was familiar with Vico's *Scienza Nuova* in Italian before that seminal book (with which philosophers and philologists have not yet caught up) had any European currency. Mr. Read is perhaps more successful in emphasising again the extraordinary range and catholicity of Coleridge's mind, than in proving his powers of systematisation. But he makes here a spirited plea for the philosopher in Coleridge (whom the purely literary critics have so often condemned), credits him with the first introduction in English of a philosophical method of criticism, and claims that in philosophy Coleridge, "so far from being mediocre, anticipated in many import-



D. E. BARRY MARTIN, whose "Guide to Ideal Planning and Building of Your New Home," and "Modern Decorating and Furnishing" will be reviewed by Anne Stewart in the ZB Book Review session on September 11. Other books (and reviewers) will be: "The Left Handshake," by H. St. G. Saunders (D. A. Dale); "Redemption," by Francis Stuart (Nelle Scanlan); "The Flame and the Serpent," by Hilda Osterhout (E. Ward); "Practical Homes," by R. L. Spooner and C. T. Eeles, and "Book of Good Housekeeping," compiled by the Good Housekeeping Institute (Anne Stewart). The chairman will be Pat Lawlor.

ant respects the point of view to which the philosophy of our own time is busily returning." —J.B.

#### YOUNG MR. NICHOLS

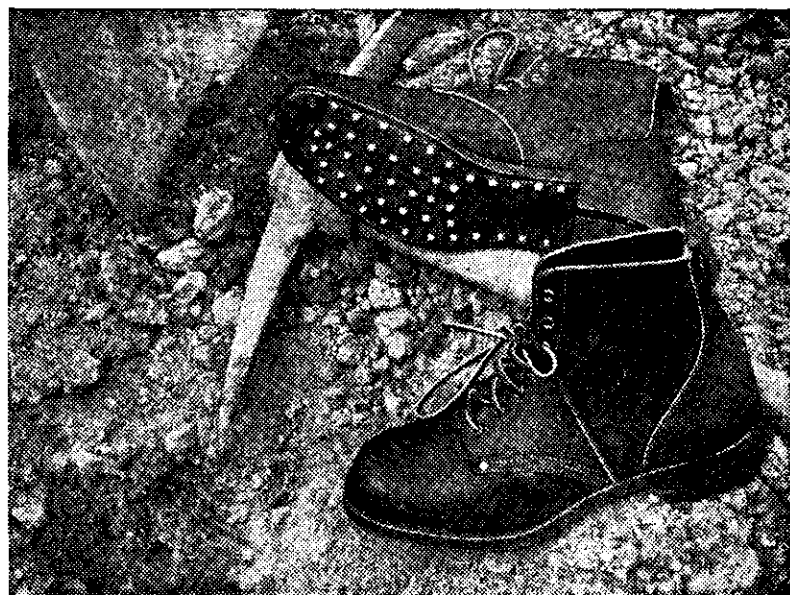
ALL I COULD NEVER BE, by Beverley Nichols; Jonathan Cape.

FOR so many years the public—and Mr. Nichols himself—have regarded the author as an eccentric young man, sensationally young, successfully young, that it is a shock for everybody all round, including Mr. Nichols, to realise that he is now well into middle age. Mr. Nichols, indeed, is sadly aggrieved by the fact, and that note of aggrieved disillusionment becomes more pronounced as we turn the pages of his book of recollections.

He begins in the famous strain of his younger days—that whimsical, come-let-us-all-be-bright-elves-together manner of his, half-affectation, half-innate, fetching, but a little cloying also. He finds himself in a house, now given to the public, where once he was very much entertained by a famous hostess; and he takes us back into the past, introducing us, scrappily, to many titled people and even to the Duchess of York, our present Queen, whom he persists, to our confusion, in referring to as Queen at a date she was "no such thing."

His work takes on a stronger note as he proceeds; he tells us of his hack-days in Fleet Street under that charming eccentric Bernard Falk, and goes on to tell of his claim to success and fame with his autobiography, *Twenty-five*, unintentionally inspired by Dame Melba, the heroine of his novel *Even-song*, which was publicly burned in Australia for remarks to which that country did not take kindly—an act which probably helped sell the book far more than any of the merits it could fairly claim as a novel.

In describing the eccentricities of the eccentrics he has met, the author is particularly good—probably because he is (continued on next page)



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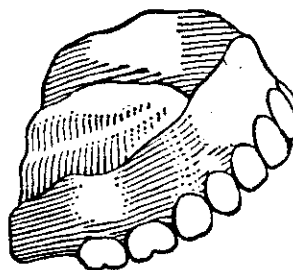
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