

BOOKS

(continued from page 17)

herdsmen who were there. Those concerned were, of course, far more than the herdsman who were buried. Most of these, in fact, do not appear as individuals at all; though one of them is the central figure who survives and returns to the world of the living.

A story such as this could have been told in many ways; there was ample scope for a writer to let himself go. M. Ramuz has high standards and has resisted the temptation. He writes with restraint, simply and economically, yet creates a suspense which in the second part of the book is sustained and at times intense. Again, he creates a really living atmosphere of place—in the hut, for instance, where the story opens, with the two men talking before the fire; and in the valley after the disaster has left utter desolation.

If there is a weakness in the book, it is in the ending. This might have been different, or more convincingly handled.

F.A.J.

FASHION SERVED

PRINCE OF FOXES, by Samuel Shellabarger; Hamish Hamilton, 12/6.

FASHION, which made men shave and women suffer corsets, has decreed that there should be historical novels. Dr. Shellabarger has a firm grasp of the magic formula. He has set his story amid the city states of Italy in 1500. He has dotted it with authentic Italian and French phrases, peppered it with sword play, spiced it with beautiful, amoral Renaissance women, and inserted, in the right quantities, famous names, historical colour, comedy, villainy, and violence. He has written it in flat prose, without undertones or implications. He knows what demands he must satisfy in this particular field of commerce, and the skill he possesses has been directed entirely towards satisfying these demands. There is no doubt he has succeeded.

—G. Ief. Y.

GERHARDI'S CHEHOV

ANTON CHEHOV, by William Gerhardt; Macdonald and Co. Ltd. English price, 7/6.

ANTON CHEHOV, first published in 1923, has been recently re-issued as volume 10 in the collected and revised edition of the works of William Gerhardt. Supplementing Chehov's (or sometimes, Chekhov, Tchekhov, Tchekhov, Tchekhoff, etc.), letters and the more recent biographical and critical studies, this book remains a useful piece of critical writing. An author's work considered worthy of reprinting in the more permanent form of a collected edition, one might reasonably expect to be well produced; in this respect the book does not come up to expectations.

—J.R.C.

ISLAND MIST

THE LOST CHART, by Neil M. Gunn; Faber and Faber, English price, 10/6.

DERMOT CAMERON, who has something to do with shipping, is now attached to Security, and has lost the chart of Cladday, an island off the west of Scotland. At the club there is much talk, bitter talk, intellectual talk of politics, religion, philosophy, music, art—and war. They argue as they wait for the finger to press the buttons which will shatter civilisation. Much of it is vague and woolly talk, and a precise statement is like a sabre thrust.

Cladday has strategic importance, but it is Cladday as he knew it in that other



DR. G. H. SCHOLEFIELD, who will preside over the ZB Book Review Session on October 9. Books for review are: "Mountain Prospect," by Scott Russell (reviewed by S. A. Wren); "The Moth," by James M. Cain (Frank Sargeson); "The Discovery of Tahiti: George Robertson's Journal," edited by Hugh Carrington (Eric Ramsden); and "Hunting the Fairies," by Compton Mackenzie (Dr. C. Silver)

war, on his secret sea-borne missions, that holds his heart. The remote, misty island, with its brave and simple people: Old MacNeal who raises his hat to the morning sun, Old Anna who curtsies to the new moon, and Christina, the child, whispering in the cow's ear as she kisses it.

There is an individual note in Mr. Gunn's writing: "The dead bracken crackled. Birch scrub along a small ravine had a curious bone-greyiness on its purple, a reflecting of the March sunlight that was strangely thoughtful and quiescent, a waiting in its twigs and branches for the birth-act below. The whole hillside was dry and drained, the grass grey and flattened, like dead hair, the rocks grey. The earth was naked and austere and beautiful."

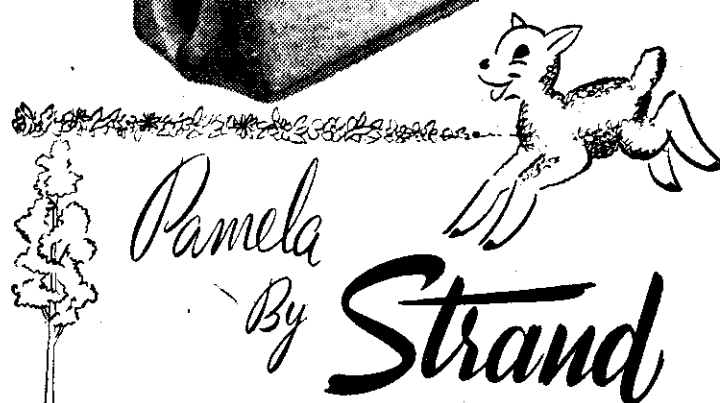
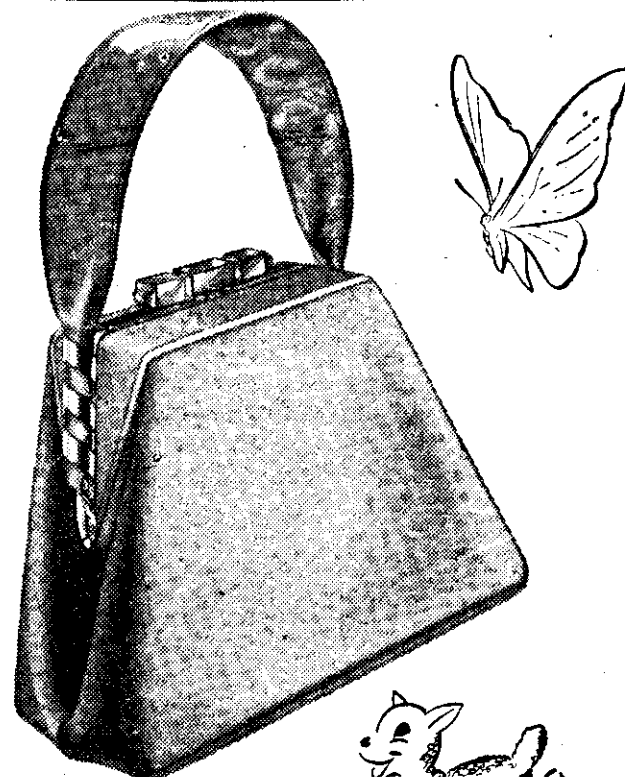
I was not convinced that the fate of civilisation rested with a gang in an old hulk. I preferred the story of Cladday itself, which was slipped into the main theme, an odd phrase here and there, with the haunting beauty of a vision half-seen through the island mist.

—Nelle Scanlan

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

AFTER reading 669 pages of detective fiction a reviewer may be excused for feeling that there are many monsters in the world, and that bodies are useful mainly for baffling the police. The addict, however, will find that only the best murders are included in *To the Queen's Taste*, a crime anthology edited by Ellery Queen (Faber and Faber, English price 12/6). But even the addict should be warned that it is wise to take murder in small doses.

MY Best Story for Boys (Faber and Faber, English price 8/6) has a title which needs no explanation. The stories are good of their kind, but it is interesting to notice that most of them are in the orthodox style favoured by boys' magazines. If it is true that children are conservative in their reading (a point about which this reviewer is by no means certain), the book should be popular. Its widest appeal, however, may be to fathers.



Pamela
By Strand

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