

sing joyous songs, sheep roam, brown leaves dance, leafy woods have secrets. Eileen A. Soper, incidentally, is not to be confused with Eileen L. Soper, historian of Otago womenfolk.

—D.N.W.

CONFUSED CAMPAIGN

THE WAR IN MALAYA, by Lieutenant-General A. E. Percival; Eyre and Spottiswoode. English price, 16/-.

GENERAL PERCIVAL'S thesis is the "traditional" unpreparedness for war of the British Commonwealth. It should be the duty of Governments, he contends, to put the issues before the people in time of peace, however unpalatable those issues may be. We have seen in New Zealand, in the recent referendum, an indication of how such an appeal would be received.

We paid heavily in Malaya for that unpreparedness, in prestige as well as in men. General Percival stresses the importance of this loss of prestige and its effect on the morale of troops (especially Indian troops) and civilians. The process was cumulative; the sinking of the Prince of Wales and the Repulse, Japanese superiority in aircraft and tanks, the loss of territory through continual withdrawals, the evacuation of the naval base. The "scorched earth" policy of denying the country's resources and installations to the Japanese during the withdrawal was especially damaging to civilian morale.

With the help of 18 excellent maps and diagrams General Percival has written a clear account of this confused and unfortunate campaign. But more important than the operational narrative are his comments on British strategy. In the light of those comments it is not remarkable that Singapore was lost; when Japan struck at the end of 1941 it was too late to put things right.

With few aircraft (and most of those obsolete) we relied on our strength in the air for the defence of the Far East. We relied on the British Fleet to come

to the rescue as soon as danger threatened; but the Navy already had its hands full guarding Britain's supply routes in the Atlantic and protecting convoys to Russia. The Army's job was to defend advanced airfields in Malaya and to hold the naval base until the Fleet arrived; it lacked tanks, modern weapons, and experienced officers and men, and few reinforcements could be spared from other theatres. And lastly, because Britain was weak and wished to avoid war with Japan and because she could not depend on support from the United States should she provoke Japan to attack her, our policy in the Far East, especially in our relations with Thailand, was timid in the extreme.

—W.A.G.

THE INNOCENT HEART

THE RETURN OF ERICA, by Louise de Vilmorin; Hamish Hamilton. English price, 6/-.

THIS gracefully written tale of innocence in rural France has, for its first hundred pages, the delightful quality of a fable. Modern civilisation has not yet reached Bourg-en-Pas, the remote French village where every man is a craftsman—a clockmaker or maker of musical instruments. Erica, the daughter of Elloi Dullum, is loved by all for her beauty and purity, and even when she breaks her father's heart by falling in love with the vagrant Hugo Sandermeur, her friends cannot renounce her. Scenes of dancing on the frozen lake, and the lovers' trysts in the charcoal burners' huts at the edge of the forest form a background to the story, until Erica, tormented by her conflicting allegiances, drowns herself in the village pond. Then, in the final pages, she comes back as a vision to gladden her father's last days. It is this extension of the fantasy, incompletely realised and out of tone with the rest of the book, which lessens complete enjoyment of the whole.

—P.J.W.

GAINSBOROUGH

GAINSBOROUGH, by Mary Woodall; British Painters Series, Phoenix House. English price, 16/-.

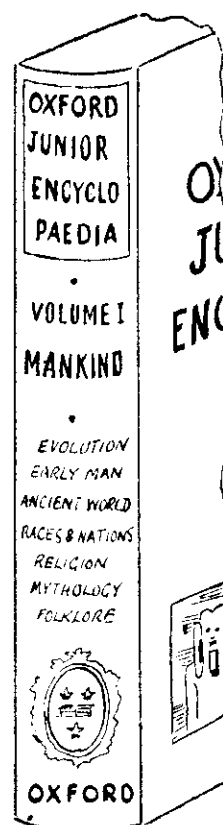
LIVING in an over-mechanised age, it is impossible for us not to have at times a nostalgic longing for the England that existed before the industrial age. And we must sometimes feel that an essential part of the English tradition found its truest and most poignant expression in the work of some of the poets and painters who lived just at the time when the cloud of industrialism was about to obscure the sun. Wordsworth is not the greatest of English poets, but he is one of the most indispensable.

Thomas Gainsborough, who was born forty-three years before Wordsworth, painted many pictures that seem to have a close affinity with his poetry. Although there is much in the artist that is not to be found in the poet, Gainsborough's paintings of cottage girls, and many of his landscapes, have the same simple lyricism as Wordsworth's poems about country people and places. And so we may say also of Gainsborough that, although he is not the greatest of English painters, his romantic feeling for Nature, and for the simplicities of rural life, make him just as indispensable as Wordsworth. Technically, he is most interesting. He is one of the few Western painters to exploit fully the possibilities of line and texture; at times he attains

(continued on next page)



"THE Essential Neville Cardus" (the pictorial Neville Cardus appears above) will be reviewed by Les Edwards in the ZB Book Review session on Sunday, October 23. Other books to be noticed are "Armed Pilgrimage," by J. Davidson-Houston (reviewer, H. McC. Studholme); "The Prevalence of Witches," by Aubrey Menen (Anton Vogt); "The Silent Traveller in Oxford," and "The Silent Traveller in London," by Chiang Yee (A. R. D. Fairburn)



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