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BOOKS

(continued from previous page)

space-ship research I have yet seen. The author makes the case that if this work is to be pursued on a national basis, then the power first to establish a base on the moon will gain control of the universe. On the other hand, as the passage of every day leaves the earth with 70,000 additional mouths to feed, it is only a matter of time before man must decide between finding some way of voluntarily reducing the population and finding somewhere else to accommodate the overflow. —B.C.

A DISAPPOINTMENT

THE FABER BOOK OF 20th CENTURY VERSE, edited by John Heath-Stubbs and David Wright; Faber and Faber, English price 12 6.

IT is difficult to know what to make of this new Faber anthology. By comparison with *The Faber Book of Modern Verse*, now pretty well established as a classic, it is something of a let-down. Its attempt "to represent the English verse of the last half-century—from Thomas Hardy down to the present day," is neither happy nor even very interesting. It is perhaps symptomatic of the change in the literary climate of the times that the "social and political realists" of the 'thirties should have been reduced to a minimum. But the result is an anthology of lesser density and weight than its predecessor.

The trouble as I see it is the lack of any real purpose behind the selection (or if there is the editors have been at great pains to conceal it) other than a wish to do well by as many poets as possible from the different poetic generations irrespective of their stature and significance in the pattern of recent verse. So that many threadbare favourites or schoolboy aversions (Newbolt, Brooke, etc.), are as likely to be given as much space as the major names.

There are, furthermore, some surprising omissions. I can think of at least 10 poets who have as strong a claim to a place in this anthology as a good third of those included, e.g., Roy Fuller, Henry Reed, etc. But none of these objections would have mattered if the anthology was successful in other ways. Unfortunately, there are few compensations in the way, say, of recent finds, and there are few poems of outstanding interest (with the exception of some im-

pressive freaks such as C. M. Doughty) which are not already well known or easily accessible either in the poets themselves or in better anthologies.

Having said much that is disparaging it remains to add a little by way of restitution. It contains some excellent things. I haven't seen, for instance, better selections from Vernon Watkins, W. S. Graham or David Gascoyne; and there are a number of slight but lovely lyrics by relatively obscure poets which are not to be found in any other collection. But all in all and considering the wonderful anthology that might have been compiled it's a disappointment and something of a bore.

—Alistair Campbell

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

PORTRAIT OF AN AGE, by G. M. Young; Oxford University Press; English price, 18/-.

The second edition of a book which for many years has been admired for its balanced view of Victorian England.

LAUGHTER ON THE STAIRS, by Beverly Nichols; Jonathan Cape; English price, 15/-. A characteristic volume which explains what the author did to an old Georgian house which had been much neglected by its previous owner.

IN THE LAND OF MAO TSE-TUNG, by Father Carlo Suigo; Allen and Unwin; English price, 18/-. The experiences of an Italian missionary who was a prisoner in Communist China.

ON LEARNING THE ENGLISH TONGUE, by Vicars Bell; Faber and Faber; English price, 8/6. An intimate study of English language, of interest to teachers, but aimed also at the general reader.

THE MODERN INQUISITION, by Hugo Dewar; Allan Wingate; English price, 15/-. A study of Soviet "confession trials," brought up to date with a postscript on the "Doctors' Plot," and ending with a last breathless note on later arrests. The news moves too fast for publishers, but the earlier part of the book has interesting material on Russian methods of interrogation.

FLYING DUTCHMEN, by Frank Clune; Angus and Robertson; Australian price, 18/9. The indefatigable traveller is on the move again, this time to Holland. He continues to write as if dictating at high speed, but his enthusiasms are infectious.

COMING ROUND THE BEND,

with Denis Glover

MANY a man who can see a red light, two miles away doesn't take a warning from lipstick in the dark.

I SHALL never forget my astonishment, on reading the manuscript of a New Zealand novel, to find: "But ho, lads! There's the whistle. Let's back to work!"

TRADITION outlasts laughter.

WHEN I asked, in a kindly but perhaps patronising manner of an eighteen-year-old trainee, "What's to prevent you becoming a colonel?" he replied very smartly, "All the other colonels, sir."

I CANNOT but rejoice to see so many central and wholly admirable city business sites occupied by churches.

CHINA has always been able to wait a thousand years: the West fills in daily time sheets.

SOMETIMES I have expressed my impatience with grand opera, though prepared to admit I am full of ignorant prejudice. But what, after all, is opera but dialogue at the top of your voice?

MANY a conscientious employer tries hard to put himself in his workers' shoes. But he never walks far in them.

LAUGHTER outlives tradition.

THE world is largely full of people with ordinary ideas, thank goodness. But they are never as interesting as the people with extraordinary ideas.

"WHAT'S in the lung comes out on the tongue," said a cockney to me, in one of their rhyming proverbs. On inquiry he proved to be a non-smoker.

N.Z. LISTENER, JANUARY 29, 1954.