

## ELEMENTARY

HOLMES AND WATSON. A Miscellany, by S. C. Roberts: Geoffrey Cumberlege, Oxford University Press, English price 12 6.

"I FOUND myself seated beside him in a hansom, my revolver in my pocket and the thrill of adventure in my heart." But Sherlockians and Watsonians are not satisfied with the published adventures. Their thirst for biographical data exceeds the output of the research students. One of the first was Monsignor Ronald Knox, who wrote a delightful and gravity-removing essay. This short treatise by the Master of Pembroke College, Cambridge, is in the same vein and a worthy successor. He takes the learned "Knocksius" seriously to task. ("Knocksius's incursions into critical exegesis are not wholly fortunate.") However, while concluding with professorial solemnity that Knocksius is unscholarly and careless, Mr. Roberts concedes the difficulty surrounding the work of the research student.

"In justice to Knocksius it is only fair to say that the whole problem bristles with difficulties. Neither Keibosch nor Pauvremütte seems to us to have faced the central problem—the date of Watson's marriage." After full examination of available evidence Mr. Roberts fixes the date and concludes that the ceremony took place in Camberwell. But he has some reservations. "It is possible, of course" (he says), "that the marriage took place at a register office. But on the whole Watson and his bride are likely to have preferred a religious service. Each of them spontaneously thanked God at the time of their betrothal." Mr. Roberts completely demolishes the critic who maintains that Holmes's arithmetical calculation on the speed of the train in the opening pages of "Silver Blaze" was a piece of bluff to impress Dr. Watson and was too overwhelmingly complex to be true. On the contrary it is shown to be elementary.

This is the best piece of light reading to come my way in years, and buyers of the book will get more than their money's worth. —F. J. Foot

## AN IRISH CHILDHOOD

TWENTY YEARS A-GROWING, by Maurice O'Sullivan; the World's Classics, Oxford University Press, English price 5/-.

THIS book was written by its author in Irish and published 20 years ago. In the same year an English translation appeared, with an enthusiastic introduction by E. M. Forster. Praise by Forster is something that an author both hopes for and fears. A critic of his quality confers an accolade. But he

MARGARET MCCARTHY'S "Generation in Revolt" is to be appraised by Richard Beauchamp (below) in the ZB Book Review session on February 28. Three other books will be discussed in that session: "Sigmund Freud: Life and Work," Volume 1, by Ernest Jones (reviewer, Dr. G. Blake Palmer); "Apes and Ivory," by Joy Packer (Jim Henderson); and "The Escapers," by Eric Williams (Malcolm Mason). A recorded talk by Eric Williams will also be broadcast during the session.



is so discriminating and so scrupulous that he tends to make the reader fear that here is another book for the cultured minority.

Perhaps for that very reason *Twenty Years A-Growing* has tended to be a minority book, which is a pity. For it is a simple unsophisticated autobiography full of richness and humour, written in its English version with delight yet without the whimsy that repels many English readers of Irish material. I know no Irish but I know enough about the technique of translation to recognise this one as first-class. The present edition is one of the popular World's Classics, put out by the Oxford University Press, and both the prestige and the price of this series will ensure the book having the widest possible audience, which it deserves.

Maurice O'Sullivan grew up as a small boy on Great Blasket, in the Atlantic off the South-west corner of Ireland. Filmgoers will remember much the same setting in Flaherty's *Man of Aran*. But while *Man of Aran* concentrates on the theme of man's heroic struggle with the sea, *Twenty Years A-Growing* (although the Atlantic seethes and rumbles throughout it) is a gentler piece of production. The childhood in a primitive community, with the coracles and the fishing, the lobster pots and the boat races and the escapades that brought both delight and adventure are recorded lovingly and yet without sentimentality. The Great War comes, but for Great Blasket it means wrecks aplenty and the atmosphere of *Whisky Galore*:

"By God," one man would say, "war is good."

"Arra, man," said another, "if it continues, this Island will be the Land of the Young."

The war years were good for the Island. Money was piled up. There was no spending. Nothing was bought. There was no need. It was to be had on top of the water!

But the palmy days of war and free floating drink and food passed away and O'Sullivan grew up to manhood. He had to leave his island. The description of his journey by train (his first train) from the West of Ireland to Dublin is epic. He fell in with a couple of strangers as innocent as himself, and each accepting eagerly the advice of the others, the trio landed up in Cork. But he got to Dublin in the end, sat an examination for the Civic Guards, and there we leave him on the edge of manhood and of action.

A wonderful book.

—I.A.G.

## TRICKS OF THE TRADE

SINGER AND ACCOMPANIST, the Performance of Fifty Songs, by Gerald Moore; Methuen, English price 25/-.

TO be able to do something well and, in addition, to be able to explain convincingly how it is done, is a rare accomplishment. Gerald Moore's analytical advice on the performance of fifty songs will throw new light on music that most singers and song-lovers will know and whet the appetite for some that may not be so familiar. Mr. Moore's writing is as authentic as his playing. Ten years ago, in *The Unashamed Accompanist*, Gerald Moore wrote a lucid account of the fundamentals of good accompanying, the approach that has made him one of the most eminent practitioners of an art which

is something much more than just "at the piano." In his new book he gives away many of the tricks of the trade.

He begins each song-essay by sketching the mental picture the song suggests to him, and then he goes on to describe how each song might be interpreted and the musical and poetic evidence that determines the interpretation. It is all very good musical common-sense. While Gerald Moore emphasises the importance of good accompanying, he always contrives to make it one of the most delightful if not one of the easiest things to do. For instance, after an imaginative description of how Schubert's "Erl-King" should be interpreted, he goes on to suggest that the

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## D.C.L. YEAST TABLETS

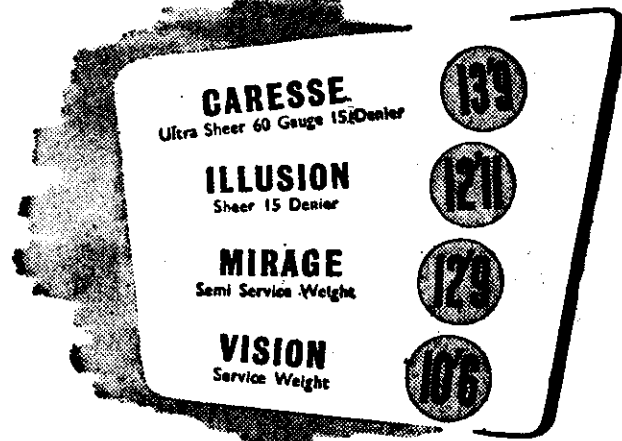
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