

# Stone Dead Hath No Fellow

HANGED—AND INNOCENT? by R. T. Paget and Sydney Silverman; Victor Gollancz, English price 12 6.

(Reviewed by David Hall)

THIS disturbing book discusses three recent convictions for murder in the English courts, in two of which (Rowlands and Evans) grave doubts have been cast on the guilt of the men hanged, while in the remaining case (Derek Bentley), a young man was hanged who was admittedly an accessory, while the actual murderer, on account of his youth, was sentenced only to life imprisonment. The two writers who examine the evidence in these cases are lawyers who are also members of Parliament, while Christopher Hollis, another M.P., writes an epilogue pointing what is evidently the main moral of the book, the need to abolish the death penalty.

Cynics used to say that Britain had the best system of justice that money can buy. No doubt this is still true. Criminals, however impecunious, can be

sure of an adequate defence at their trial, which will be fairly conducted, but there is no provision by the State for the cost to the defence of the miscellaneous inquiries which may be needed to seek out vital evidence, and it never has the advantage enjoyed by the prosecution of the services of the police machine and the Home Office scientific branch or the co-operation of the public. Nevertheless, most people believe that the chances of the conviction of an innocent man are infinitesimal. This book seriously challenges this preconception in two of these three cases.

Strangely enough, on the evidence adduced here it is difficult to see how, either at his trial or even at the posthumous Home Office inquiry after the Christie case had broken, Timothy Evans could have avoided being adjudged guilty. In spite of the appalling coincidence of two multiple stranglers living on the same premises which sticks in everyone's gizzard, the case presented here is still clouded; perhaps it was part of his bad luck that Evans, innocent or guilty, was a compulsive liar. The Rowlands case, with its unsatisfactory identi-

fication of the accused, seems a much stronger support of the authors' thesis. The Bentley case raises a question of public policy in regard to the administration of the death penalty.

Even though its emotional overtones are very strong, this book must weigh seriously upon the public conscience; it presents competently a valid materialist argument for abolishing hanging.

## WORD COLLECTING

A WORD IN EDGEWAYS, by Ivor Brown; Jonathan Cape, English price 7 6.

IVOR BROWN, whose stint of journalism has included responsible positions on the *Manchester Guardian* and *The Times*, has for many years been a collector of strange words. Begun almost as a hobby, as another man would collect lepidoptera or break out in model aeroplanes or the stamps of Brazil, his word-collecting habit has spread from newspaper contributions to one bound volume after another. This is the eighth volume of a series that includes *I Give My Word* and *I Break My Word*.

The plan is simple. His correspondents tell him a new word down in Zummerzet or up in Wensleydale; and Brown, if he does not hare up and down the face of England, at least has a lot of fun flipping through the pages of what must be a most impressive collection of dictionaries. In no time he comes up with a brief article, sometimes quite scholarly, sometimes a mere surface skim along the troubled sea of semantics, but always readable and entertaining. As the articles pile up, another



IVOR BROWN

Brown book on words is ready for the press. The process has no end. In spite of his promise (now in its third edition, at least) that this is the last word, the only thing likely to stop the flow is the lack of suitable titles containing the word "word." However, he has not yet used "My Word!" or "Words, Words, Words!" and I am sure at least two more volumes are on the way.

The present volume begins with Alamoality and finishes with Zest. Between these two alphabetic limits it runs

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