

BOOKS

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was almost too successful. In his youth he made himself a considerable reputation as a poet, so that after the victory of Blenheim it seemed quite natural for the Chancellor of the Exchequer to climb up to Addison's third-floor garret and ask him to write a poem to celebrate the event, in payment for which he was given a sinecure, and the promise of better things to come. (Could anything like this happen today?) His tragedy *Cato* was written and talked about for two centuries; and his papers for the *Spectator*, written in collaboration with Steele, gave him an unrivalled place as an essayist.

From modest beginnings, he lived to be a statesman known throughout Europe, a wealthy man, and undisputed ruler of the literary scene. According to Peter Smithers, the influence of his moral writings was profound and far-reaching. And C. S. Lewis is quoted as saying: "He appears to be (as far as any individual can be) the source of a quite astonishing number of mental habits which were still prevalent when men now living were born. Almost everything which my own generation ignorantly called Victorian seems to have been expressed by Addison." It is not easy to feel affection for a Moral Force, and perhaps it is significant that Mr.

Smithers, who always refers to Steele as "Dick," only rarely speaks of Addison by his Christian name.

This book is very much the story of a successful man, but it also gives a full picture of London in the early 18th Century, and especially of the intellectuals—the patrons and the place-men, the arguing groups in the coffee houses, the quarrelling writers and booksellers. And although some readers may be a little repelled by Addison's supremely tactful progress in politics and letters, they should feel at the end that justice cannot be done until they turn to *The Spectator*, and taste again the prose of a master.

—H.

ROUND THE SOUTH-EAST BEND

FARTHEST SOUTH, by A. H. Reed; A. H. and A. W. Reed, 12/6.

HAVING already taken the reader north, west and east, A. H. Reed leads him in this little book for a walk along the curve of the South Island coast from Chaslands to Bluff, then inland by bus to Invercargill and Tuatapere, and on to the western fringe of settlement at Te Wae Wae Bay, where one looks on the tumble of mountains in Fiordland. The record of this walking tour illustrates afresh the isolation of some parts of this country not very far from cities or towns. As indicated in the recently published history of Chaslands, this south-east bend of the "Mainland" is little known, so Mr. Reed

and his nephew were in a sense explorers. Here is Slope Point, the most southerly point in the island. Leading to Bluff harbour is a long stretch of desolate and inhospitable country. There the Reeds were entertained by a solitary old man who had lived all his life on that one spot, his only means of access to the world a distant road over a swamp. He told his guests that it was about six years since travellers had called.

Yet this arc of coast, right round to Riverton, is old in European contacts, ante-dating the Otago plantation. It has memories, visible at times, of whaling and gold-getting. As usual, Mr. Reed discourses pleasantly and informatively on landscape and history, and introduces us to interesting living people, though now and then there is rather more trivial detail of the daily round than is necessary. As one expects from experience, the illustrations are excellent.

—A.M.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

GUARD YOUR DAUGHTERS, by Diana Tutton; Chatto and Windus; English price, 10/6. A first novel which follows the fortunes of four girls whose father, a famous detective novelist, has troubles at home as well as in his books.

HERBS IN THE KITCHEN, by Ambrose Heath; Faber and Faber; English price, 7/6. A book for cooks who are also gardeners. There are many recipes, and some notes on cultivation.

HOW THEY BEGAN

IT seems to be a necessity for novelists to get certain things out of their system—one might even go so far as to say that a novelist's life consists of nothing else but getting things out of his system. That is the opinion of R. C. Hutchinson, one of the speakers in a new series of BBC programmes, *My First Novel*, which starts from YC stations next week. Other well-known writers who contribute talks in the series are Sir Compton Mackenzie, Rosamund Lehmann, Norman Collins, Joyce Cary, and Emma Smith. The first speaker is Sir Compton Mackenzie, and his talk will be heard from 1YC and 4YC at 9.30 p.m. on Monday, March 8, and from 2YC at 8.15 p.m. the same day, from 3YC at 8.46 p.m. on Wednesday, March 10, and from 4YA at 9.30 a.m. on Saturday, March 13.

He relates the history of *The Passionate Elopement*, which he wrote in his very early twenties. At the time he was meant to be a playwright, and in order to encourage the continuance of a yearly allowance from his father, the famous actor-manager Edward Compton, he wrote *The Gentleman in Grey*, which went into the Compton repertoire of 18th Century plays. Then young Compton Mackenzie had the idea of turning his play into a novel as *The Passionate Elopement*, and in his talk he describes its weary journey round the publishers before an enterprising young newcomer to the business made it the first novel of his publishing house.

Joyce Cary found the material for his first novel, *Aissa Saved*, during his time as a member of the Nigerian Political Service. The book deals with the life and death of a girl converted by a mission, and into it went people and backgrounds that Cary had noted over a period of years. He admits that he cannot remember when the book actually began: his books do not begin with a plan but in a character sketch or scene, which may or may not grow into a short story or novel.

Rosamund Lehmann describes her first novel *Dusty Answer*, which was written when she was still suffering from mental and spiritual growing pains. She speaks vividly of the impact on a young writer of the reception of her book by the critics: a discouraging reception at first, but quickly turning into a considerable success with the public after Alfred Noyes had written in praise of it in a Sunday newspaper.

For Norman Collins, author of *London Belongs to Me*, the writing of novels is an occupation for late at night or the early hours of the morning, when the jobs of his normal day's work have been cleared up. His first novel, *Penang Appointment*, was produced in his spare time from working as deputy-chairman of a publishing house, and he prepared the ground for it by making sure that he had at least one other published book to his credit.

Writing her first novel, *Maiden's Trip*, was as easy as falling off a log, Emma Smith confesses in her talk in the series. She describes lightheartedly how the perfect set of circumstances joined hands—a shortage of money which induced a flow of ideas, an indulgent mother who made things easy for her at home while the book was being written, and first-class material to draw on in the shape of two years she spent working in canal boats during the war.

N.Z. LISTENER, MARCH 5, 1954.

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