

assembled here. That is the extraordinary thing about *The Reason Why*: it is true.

SOUTHLAND POET

COUNTRY ROAD and Other Poems, by Ruth Dallas; Caxton Press, 15/-.

THE appearance of this first book of verse is a welcome addition to the growing bulk of creditable work produced in this country. Miss Dallas is an accomplished poet with a keen eye, a quick and ready sympathy and a fine ear. At her best she writes with a mature composure and fluency, keeping securely within the limits she has defined for herself; at her worst she perpetrates the all too familiar landscape poem with its appearance of having been written in the damp mood of sentimental reflection. Such work casts suspicion on the better landscapes and should never have been included. It's a pity also that Miss Dallas finds it difficult to resist the merely pretty conceit or the facile metaphor: "Hands like fallen acorn-cups," women "shut within themselves like flowers in rain"—lapses which the exercise of a more rigorous self-criticism might have eradicated.

Miss Dallas is happiest in poems like "Milking Before Dawn," "Farmyard" and "River-paddocks," all of which are completely realised. In such poems she reveals her real strength (and limitation) as an artist. Her verse in no way illuminates the character of a people as the blurb suggests; she is not even very much concerned with people except as part of an intensely experienced landscape in which everything is suspended in a sort of timeless nostalgia. What prevents the best of her verse from sagging is the faithfulness of her vision which enables her to maintain a taut clear outline.

Here their midnight shadow lay, where sheep
And straggling cattle tear dry grass, where
dust
Is white on gorse and broom, or rolls like
smoke
In the wake of cars, betraying hidden roads.

Such verse, which on the surface appears so easy to write, has its own special problems. To be successful it calls for something of the skill of an equilibrist. No word or image can be out of place. For where the thought progresses pictorially the intrusion of a single jarring note is often sufficient to upset the balance and wreck the poem beyond repair.

Of the "straight" lyrics I like particularly the song "Her True Love Has a Second Wife" and the excellent "Elegy in Spring," which loses nothing by being compared with Housman (except for the faintly comical line "Plum as many springs and more"). In the quality of its printing, the book is well up to the high standard we have come to expect from the Caxton Press, but so unfortunately is its price. To ask 15/- for a thin book of verse (and a first book at that) is fair neither to the author nor to the public who may wish to buy it.

—Alistair Campbell

TEACHING ENGLISH

ENGLISH FOR TEACHERS, by Anton Vogt; the Pegasus Press, Christchurch.

THIS book comprises four parts—an introduction in which the author outlines some general views, a chapter that covers a Master Scheme for teaching, a chapter on some related problems, and an appendix containing some essays published some years ago in *Education*. The book is essentially one to make teachers think for themselves, which many people do not care to do. Its style is dogmatic, provocative, and challeng-

ing. Take, for example, the first sentence in the preface—an unnecessary dedication to "the over-worked, under-paid and undervalued members of the teaching profession"; or the first sentence of the introduction: "English is the most important, the most exciting, and the most difficult subject to teach." But once into his stride Mr. Vogt proceeds with exemplary economy of words to elaborate his theme, criticising many common practices, such as the faulty compartmentation of the subject, which (as Mr. Vogt indirectly proves) are common because convenient and economical of mental and nervous energy on the part of the teacher, who by this means can resist being over-worked by the only people who can overwork him, namely, his pupils.

Mr. Vogt next discusses the teacher's dilemma in having to choose, apparently, between formal instruction, with cramping of the initiative and imagination of the pupil, and greater freedom for the child, with resultant slovenliness and inaccuracy in expression. He submits as the way out, the recognition of two fairly distinct areas in which different methods should be adopted—creative English, which is an art, which the teacher cannot "teach" but where he may guide, and communication English, which is a science with a social function requiring skills which must be taught. An important point here is that the materials for practice should be found in the factual studies such as Arithmetic, Social Science, Nature study, where the teacher may "teach and drill, test and correct," for here he will not be "mistaking means for ends."

When I say that these ideas are not entirely novel I hasten to add that I do not know where they have been expressed with such vigour and clarity. My best commendation of this book is my hope that every teacher will read it (for every teacher teaches in English), and that every headmaster will have at least four staff meetings (out of school hours) to consider its implications.

—L.J.W.

A SYSTEM THAT WORKS

THE PARTY SYSTEM IN GREAT BRITAIN, by Ivor Bulmer-Thomas; Phoenix House, through A. H. and A. W. Reed, New Zealand price 31/6.

MOST of us were brought up to believe that the party system as it is known in the United Kingdom and other parts of the Commonwealth was not only democratic but represented the highest form of democracy. Probably all that should be claimed is that, in a country with British social traditions, it works.

The important question is why it works rather than how it works. But this book gives no answers which would help a student of politics. It is essentially a short sketch on the organisation (continued on next page)

TRAVEL and adventure are the themes of ZB Book Review for March 28, when the books for review are the following:

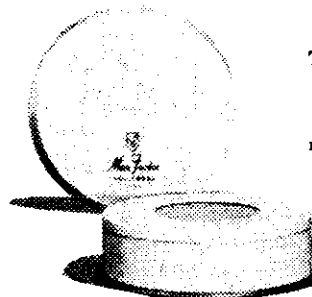
"The Ascent of Everest," by Sir John Hunt, which will be discussed by H. E. Riddiford; "Report on Indo-China," by Bernard Newman (Bryan O'Brien); "The Alien Sky," by Paul Scott (Joyce Martin); and, finally, "Round the World in 465 Days," by Jean and John Creasy, which will be reviewed by O. A. Gillespie (above).



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