

BOOKS

(continued from previous page)

(which he doesn't), and so on, he speaks to every intelligent reader. This is true also, though perhaps less so, of his notes at the end about Alain-Fournier, Forrest Reid and Proust, writers who in different ways bore witness to "something permanent in human nature"—"our desire for our true country which is not here." The rest of the book is a collection of notes likely to interest only writers, critics and a few others, who will find it learned, stimulating and provocative.

"There is no certain prospect of work as a writer for anybody," says Mr. Strong, in capital letters, in his foreword. But if you must write here are some of the more important tips from a very experienced writer, set down at the suggestion of the Society of Authors. The title is accurate, for this is a practical handbook; though it should be said that Mr. Strong doesn't see authorship as only a trade. Where there is a real conflict between telling the truth as you see it and pleasing the public he is unhesitatingly on the side of honesty.

—F.A.J.

MILDLY AMUSING

AN AUSTRALIAN ALPHABET, by J. D. Medley. Illustrated by Armstrong. Melbourne University Press. Australian price 10/6.

THE level at which light verse deserves publication in solid and expensive book form should be placed

pretty high, especially when it is to bear the imprint of a University Press. Competence is not enough. It is with nothing more than this collection, partly reprinted from Australian journals but mostly written for private circulation, ranges over subjects under the alphabet's letters, from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, through Betting and Beer, Liberal and Labour, Quizzes, and Universities, to Xmas and Zebu. There is some deft handling of words and an occasional bright idea, but no real flash and crackle, and some of the stuff is dull. Armstrong's illustrations are a little funnier than the verses.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

JEN HUTTON, by Laurence Kitchen; Phoenix House, through A. H. and A. W. Reed, English price 5/-. A short biography of a great cricketer, written before he led England to victory in the 1953 Tests with Australia.

THESAURUS, by Peter Mark Roget; Penguin Books, N.Z. price 6/6. An abridged edition of a famous work of reference. The abridgment "consists mainly in the omission of some terms and variants which may now be regarded as obsolete . . . and certain technical, scientific and highly-specialised terms, together with a considerable proportion of foreign expressions. . ."

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT, by F. M. Dostoevsky, translated by Jessie Coulson; Oxford University Press, English price 16/-. A new translation, said

by the publishers to preserve "the character and spirit, the variety of mood, and the intellectual penetration of the original." Most English readers must take the translation for granted, but they will welcome an edition worthy of one of the greatest novels in any language.

SCARLET AND BLACK, by Stendhal, translated by Margaret R. B. Shaw; Penguin Books, N.Z. price 4/3. Stendhal's "chronicle of the 19th Century," and one of that century's great novels, has been newly translated for the Penguin Classics.

NEW Pelican titles include *The Legacy of the Ancient World*, by W. G. De Burgh (two volumes, 3/3 each, Penguin Books, Ltd.), a study of the evolution of faith, freedom and law; and *Viruses and Man*, by F. M. Burnet, a lucid description of the smallest living organisms and of the damage they cause in human bodies.

THE fullest use of pictures, many in colour, has been made by the editors of Odhams *Encyclopaedia for Children* (through Whitcombe and Tombs, 25/-), a massive book which offers information in easily digestible form to young readers.

ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF NEEDLE-CRAFT, Odhams Press, through Whitcombe and Tombs, 20/-. Comprehensive treatment of dressmaking, accessories, embroidery, lace making, knitting, crochet—and toy making.

LOOKOUT

The H-Bomb

LET'S suppose we pack the H-bomb round with, say, cobalt so that when the bomb explodes the radio-active dust is distributed in the atmosphere at such heights that it must inevitably blanket the earth—blanket the whole earth and destroy all life upon it. But is such a horror possible? Possible? It's not even unduly difficult. Then why should it ever be developed? Why? Because if we don't the others will. But then, whoever would actually use it . . . when it means his own annihilation? Think, if you were Hitler in that bunker at the Chancellery, all lost, an hour or two at most to live, and you had this bomb. Think that one over.

But doesn't that mean that no power would dare push another power to such a strait that this bomb became the last bargaining counter? Oh, yes, but who decides what pressure will lead to a decision to use it? . . . This H-bomb isn't an instrument of policy any more. Of the type I've described only one will ever be exploded. It is not a weapon of retaliation. And there's no safety, anywhere. An A-bomb exploded over Japan is of academic interest to us. An H-bomb packed with cobalt exploded anywhere would be of the same interest—for a very different reason. And why this grisly race to extinction? Clearly men are not consciously bent on self-extermination.

It all arose out of the quest for . . . the weapon which would secure for us, without loss, whatever we cared to demand of the enemy. A super A-bomb or an ordinary H-bomb is in this class. The new H-bomb is not. You see, this H-bomb isn't a remedy for anything at all. It's merely a measure of how far technology has outrun politics.

But peril doesn't necessarily mean panic. The production of the H-bomb strains the resources of the greatest industrial powers in the world. At once the race to perfect the H-bomb falls into place as one aspect of the great struggle which we in New Zealand watch from the side-lines. In essence, of course, it's a struggle for men's minds. Their bodies are incidental. So regarded, possession of the cobalt H-bomb is no guarantee of victory, but it is an insurance against defeat—it is the ultimate blackmail.

Then let's suppose both sides have it. What then? Neither uses it. But wait a moment, who decides this point? Curiously enough, though, when both sides have the cobalt H-bomb there will, there must, be a speeding up of the campaign for men's minds. The best guarantee against not using this bomb is not to need to. If the contest for the minds of men is won, victory is obtained and there's no point in any kind of bomb.

Now, how is this campaign to be conducted? The best way to look at that, I suppose, is to look at it where it is being conducted now. A couple of years ago I wandered at random over Europe, living with the folk, sharing their lives as well as I was able. The talk was all of war which no one wants but everyone expects. Very few talked of the war being

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