

ON DYLAN THOMAS

*MOURN, Wales, and the cumbered hills of London!
Cold are your granaries, your mines empty.
Dionysus has met Charon on the bronze threshing-floor
And Charon conquered. In a foreign land, alas,
Died the Godbearer, nor did his songs help him.*

—James K. Baxter

two sentences. We have no real reason for believing in a perpetual continuance of life. And we have ample evidence to the contrary.

—J. D. McD.

PILES OF CAVIAR

*LOST SPLENDOR, by Prince Felix Youssouppoff; Jonathan Cape, English price 18/-.
HANDS ACROSS THE CAVIAR, by Charles Thayer; Michael Joseph, English price 12/6.*

PRINCE YOUSSEPOUFF'S memoirs are a glance back at his gilded youth and cover in this volume the events before he went into exile in 1919, rescued with other royalties—he married a niece of the Tsar—by a British cruiser from the Crimea. The highlight, of course, is his patriotic murder of the infamous Rasputin, who was gruesomely hard to kill. Apart from this he gives us a nostalgic but realistic picture of the fringes of court life in pre-revolutionary days.

Charles Thayer's light-hearted and hard-boiled account of his frustrated dealings with Russians as allies in Yugoslavia, Vienna and Korea is both amusing and illuminating. This American soldier-diplomat shows that even Marxists can unbend. The biggest surprise is the survival of sheer snobbery in the Soviet Union.

Both books prompt the reflection that the ruthless despotism that governs Russia is based on a realistic assessment of the essential scattiness of the Slav temperament.

—David Hall

HALF THE STORY

THE EDDIE CHAPMAN STORY, by Frank Owen; Allan Wingate, English price 10/6.

WHAT was Eddie Chapman: a British agent playing a hazardous game as a member of the German secret service, or a traitor living in luxury in Europe on his earnings as a German spy? In this book we are told only half the story, and in a postscript the author hints infuriatingly at another side, which, even after ten years, must stay an official secret. Chapman was the only Englishman to win the Iron Cross during the war, an award given in 1943 to the member of his section of the German Secret Service "who had shown the most outstanding zeal and success during the year."

A notorious safe-breaker, Eddie Chapman was serving a sentence on the Channel Island of Jersey when the Germans arrived in June, 1940. After his release and a short internment in France, he joined the German secret

SIX books are scheduled for discussion in ZB Book Review on April 11. They are the following (with the names of the reviewers in parentheses):

"Clubland Heroes," by Richard Usbourne (Martin Cock); "The Siren Sea," by Frank Laskier, and "Sea Hunters," by Frank Robb (Ralph Goodwin); "Unborn Tomorrow," by Gilbert Frankau (Isobel Andrews); "The Best of Husbands," by Alba de Céspedes, and "Ladies With a Unicorn," by Monica Sterling (Dorothy Eden).



R. B. Goodwin

service and was trained as a saboteur and spy, salary £45 a month. In December, 1942, he was dropped by parachute on his first mission, which was to blow up two power-houses at the De Havilland aircraft factory near London. He escaped to Portugal as a steward in a British freighter. Next he was offered £50,000 to go back to England to obtain details of our Asdic apparatus that was causing U-boat commanders such anxiety, but at first he was reluctant to return: "I had made enough money; now I only wished to lead a life of pleasure for a while."

Much of his story is taken up with this life of pleasure as a Wehrmacht officer in Germany and the occupied countries; it ends with his return to England in July, 1944, ostensibly still working for the Germans. On the face of all this (one wonders) why wasn't he shot as a spy? Occasionally, however, he hints that his allegiance was not wholly German and of his interest in Hitler's new secret weapons, but much has to be looked for between the lines.

—W.A.G.

PERIOD PIECES

THE VICTORIAN MOUNTAINEERS, by Ronald Clark; B. T. Batsford Ltd., English price 18/-.

IN his previous book *Early Alpine Guides*, Ronald Clark presented historically interesting vignettes of some of the professional climbers of Central Europe. Now he serves the guides' employers from Britain who numbered such notable names as John Ruskin, evangelist for mountains, Michael Faraday the scientist, Albert Smith who was reputed to have made £30,000 from his illustrated talks on Mont Blanc, Edward Whymper of the Matterhorn, the American Miss Brevoort who beat donkey-drivers if they ill-treated their animals, her nephew W. A. B. Coolidge, a quarrelsome Alpine historian, and many foundation members of the Alpine Club, London. Quaint photographs support a scholarly text.

Perhaps the most interesting uncertainty faced by the author is why the Victorian age produced mountaineers of such physical toughness. His conclusion is that "The Victorians were always asking questions and they climbed fundamentally because they wanted their questions answered. . . . It is no coincidence that scientists and clergymen were so numerous among the early mountaineers."

—John Pascoe

HORNBLOWER AGAIN

HORNBLOWER AND THE ATROPOS, by C. S. Forester; Michael Joseph, English price 12/6.

SINCE this, the third of the throw-back Hornblower tales, leaves him in line for a frigate command, and the first of the originals shows him a frigate captain, the new book may be the last of the whole series—but you never know. I am inclined to think it is the best of the three. There is comparatively little fighting, but Forester is just as skilful out of battle smoke as in it. Hornblower finds excitement as he travels across England by canal boat with his wife and child, and more of another kind in organising the river procession for Nelson's funeral. Then recovery of sunken treasure in the

Mediterranean in command of a sloop, and a whiff of battle. Forester again shows his astonishing mastery of technical detail. His odd characters are perhaps odder, and there are masterly little sketches of St. Vincent and Collingwood. We also see a good deal of Forester's one pathetic character—Hornblower's wife, Maria.

—A.M.

WRITERS ON WRITING

*SOME PRINCIPLES OF FICTION, by Robert Liddell; Jonathan Cape, English price 12/6.
THE WRITER'S TRADE, by L. A. G. Strong; Methuen, English price 7/6.*

WHEN Mr. Liddell begins by discussing the difficulties of the writer in the world of today (which he exaggerates), the value of the individual (continued on next page)

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