

Mare on the title page, and it may have sat in front of her as she wrote. Certainly her book is enchantingly selfless and undogmatic. Perhaps she has seen too much to be as certain as others are—as pupil and teacher she has experienced almost the whole range of educational method in New Zealand. She has plenty to say about it that is sound and practical, as well as often witty and wise. But humanity and common sense are the book's shining qualities, and may lead the layman to his own conclusion—that school methods and equipment are trifles compared with the teacher's personality.

Teaching is all, to Miss Barr. "Indeed, there are few careers," she concludes, "that bring such satisfying rewards in their train, or that offer greater opportunities for satisfying work. There were times when, with the parents behind me, the staff working enthusiastically, and with the girls happy and eager, I felt I could have moved mountains."

—D.F.T.

DEATH'S ADVERSARY

A *SURGEON'S LIFE*, by Ferdinand Sauerbruch; Andre Deutsch, English price 15/-.

SO many good doctors have written bad books that one tends to shy off a new one. But Ferdinand Sauerbruch was more than a good doctor: he was a discoverer. And he was more than an amateur writer: he was a distinctive personality, devoid of cant. His book, translated from the German by Fernand Renier and Anne Cliff, comes through cleanly and vigorously: with the high adventure of the Axel Munthe school, sans the sentimental baloney.

Sauerbruch's great contribution to surgery was the pressure chamber. Until he thought it up in the early hours one morning in 1905, operations could not be performed inside the chest cavity. . . The solution was so simple! He worked feverishly, startled by his own audacity: experimenting first with animals, then with human patients, whose death would otherwise be a foregone conclusion. He failed, and then succeeded. The chapters on this are so vividly told that the reader shares in the discovery: sharing his elation in the conquest of pain, and another frontier gained against death.

Other chapters, on his work in the Kaiser's War and then in Hitler's Reich, are equally inspiring. They reinforce one's sure knowledge that knowledge is international: that science belongs to humanity, and that everywhere "ironic points of light flash out where'er the just exchange their messages."

—Anton Vogt

MEN AT WAR

SIDE-SHOW, by Gerard Bell; Frederick Muller, New Zealand price 13/3. *TUMULT IN THE CLOUDS*, by Andrew Cunningham; Peter Davies, New Zealand price 10/6.

THIS side-show in Burma, in which a flank guard of 90 men killed almost a thousand Japanese in a night and a day of savage fighting, has the reality of a soldier's battle dream. It has all the nightmare horrors of close combat with bayonet and grenade, the suspense of waiting in the dark for the enemy to attack, the terrifying, screaming charges; in it also is the fanatical courage of the Japanese soldier and the bravery of the stolid British infantry and machine-gunners of Fourteenth Army who held him back. The author handles his troops with tactical skill and his characters no less ably. He knows how soldiers talk and what they talk about; how they re-

SEVEN books are to be discussed in ZB Book Review on May 2. They are the following (with reviewers in parentheses):

"Lamb to the Slaughter," by Dorothy Eden; "Murder Must Wait," by Arthur Upfield; and "The Coatline Case," by A. J. Colton (Frank Jackson); "Wings Off the Sea," by J. E. MacDonnell; and "The Quiet River," by James Dillon White (Eric Blow); "Hotel Talleyrand," by Paul Hyde Bonner



Gordon Troup

(Gordon Troup); and "The Death of Kings," by Charles Wertenbaker (R. T. Robertson).

act to close combat, noise, fear and death. The publisher says most of it is authentic.

Cunningham's book is based closely on his own experiences as a navigator in night-interception and intruder fighters in England, Malta and Italy during the war. It is reporting rather than creative writing, a collection of brief essays rather than a novel; but he is a sensitive and sincere observer. Perhaps the fussiness of the schoolmaster-navigator can be sensed in his descriptions of people and operations, and at times some Air Force slang embarrasses some excellent writing.

—W.A.G.

MR. ELIOT'S COMEDY

THE CONFIDENTIAL CLERK, by T. S. Eliot; Faber and Faber, English price 10/6.

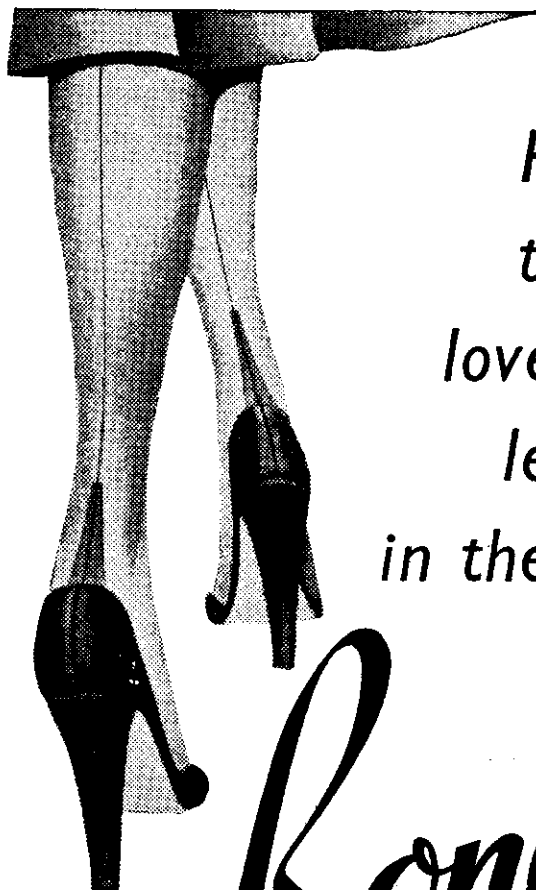
T. S. ELIOT'S new verse play was well received on its first appearance at the Edinburgh Festival last year. Perhaps there is something in it which can be brought out by good acting, but so far I have been unable to discover what could have impressed the audience. The story, which could have become farce or melodrama, attempts a middle course and subsides into rather weak comedy. The plot hangs upon two mysteries of parentage. We have to believe that Sir Claude Mulhammer and Lady Elizabeth, his wife, each had an illegitimate child before their marriage, and that both children were mislaid in mix-ups with foster parents. Such carelessness, as Lady Bracknell would have said, is quite inexcusable.

The resemblance to *The Importance of Being Earnest*, although confined to problems of parentage, is unfortunate. Oscar Wilde's wit could sustain a farcical plot without the slightest difficulty. But what is to sustain *The Confidential Clerk*? No comic character emerges, though the playwright tries hard with Lady Elizabeth, a rather vague woman with an interest in New Thought of the kind that leads to vegetarianism. But remarks which might have been mildly amusing from the stage do not always wear well in print. This is how Lady Elizabeth describes the death of her lover. He was run over. By a rhinoceros—in Tanganyika." And are mixed metaphors an unfailing source of amusement? Eggerson, the discreet and diplomatic clerk, can speak quite plainly when he wants to. Here he is at his worst:

He'll be a power in the City!
And he has a heart of gold. But not to
beat about the bush,
He's rather a rough diamond.

The verse has a conversational smoothness and a subdued casualness, but not a single line or phrase stays in the memory. Can poetry be restored to the theatre by making it so unobtrusive

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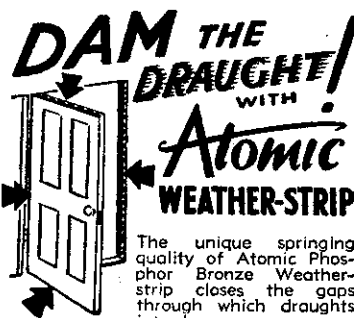
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