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BOOKS

(continued from previous page)

past an inevitable melancholy that stems from Keats in adolescence rather than from tragedy in real life; or so it sounds.

The most accomplished poem in the book is Ruth Gilbert's charming "Li Po":

Asleep in a lacquer pool,
A young moon on his breast.

Richest in promise is Ruth Nicholls:

My Son you be
Mute and undone the boy let fall in agony
his tears
Fears he had fought alone turned quick to
flee . . .

There is refreshing humour from Helen Diana Clyde:

The ghost of Fry in haste returning.
Cries out, "The Lady's Not For Burning."

I've never been in favour of burning
any kind of lady. —Anton Vogt

PRE-WAR DIPLOMACY

PRELUDE TO WORLD WAR II. by Gaetano Salvemini; Victor Gollancz, English price 30s.

THIS is a fine and heartening book—heartening because there can be published today a volume which has the moral indignation of the nineteen-thirties. Salvemini was driven into exile by the Fascist dictatorship in 1925 and returned to his Chair of History at Florence in 1949. In the intervening years, mainly at Harvard, he worked on this book—the story of the diplomacy that led to the last war. The biggest shock is the revelation of British foreign policy as carried out by Austen Chamberlain, Simon, Hoare, Baldwin, or—yes, Eden. By contrast, Neville Chamberlain shines with a dull lustre.

For the historian, political scientist, or person seriously interested in public affairs this is the best book written in English on the period. If there is any criticism it is that the author sees history too much in terms of the moral attitudes of the makers of policy, and not sufficiently in economic forces.

—W.B.S.

JOY IN OBSCURITY

THE WEAVING WILLOW. by John Marshall, with a foreword by John Arlott; Hodder and Stoughton, English price 7/6.

THIS is a cricket book with a difference. One or two eminent players walk into it, and many more are impersonated by youngsters in garden or

street (I did this myself once), or are discussed round the bar, but primarily and almost entirely it is about very minor cricket, from domestic nursery to village green. We need reminding periodically, as John Arlott reminds us here, that only a handful of men play in the mind-racking tests, but thousands, or tens of thousands if we cast widely enough, toil obscurely on the grass and get a lot of fun out of it. John Arlott has known fine players who did not enjoy the game, but he says all bad cricketers do enjoy it.

Like much English humour, the book suffers from tepid over-dilution, and arch thrashing of situations. Though the detailed accounts of children's games awakened memories, I found them boring, and was happier when John Marshall grew up. The English seem to lose their heads easily over children. And it is astonishing that in this year of grace (or rather, Hutton) Mr. Marshall, editor of a London daily, should inflict on us a whole chapter on a Frenchman's impressions of the game, done in the traditional broken English of the stage.

However, there are some bright spots, including good stories, and "Gus's" drawings are the funniest I have ever seen on the subject, or perhaps for any game. Don't miss them. —A.M.

HORRID WARNING

THE SEVEN YEAR ITCH, a romantic comedy by George Axelrod; Heinemann, English price 8/6.

WHAT shall I say of *The Seven Year Itch*? I shall say this: that it is slick and nasty, and a deplorable bore. Who cares if Richard something's wife is away and he consoles himself with the chook upstairs? Who cares, if on reflection his wife still seems his sunshine, his only sunshine? Adultery is the classic comic theme, but let it for pity's sake have wit and style, or if this is not possible, let it be broad and lusty! *The Seven Year Itch* gives you titillation, and nothing more. This is always offensive by what it implies, not that men are often unfaithful to their wives, but that this primitive itching and tickling is proper behaviour for men and women. I regret to record that Mr. Axelrod has found it a profitable theme on both sides of the Atlantic. I issue here a horrid warning. If any of our societies produce it, it will confirm my worst suspicions.

—Bruce Mason

Last Session of ZB Book Review

THE Commercial Division's popular *ZB Book Review* is closing down. R. M. Burdon, who chaired the first session in February, 1949, will deliver the valedictory at the end of the final broadcast on Sunday, June 27. The review will be replaced by a weekly series of hour-long dramatic programmes from the studios of the NZBS, the EBC and the Voice of America.

During its five years and four months on the air, *ZB Book Review* has featured 245 different speakers. Nearly 1500 books have been reviewed, wherever possible by specialists in each particular subject. For the first three years the session had a different chairman each week, but latterly each chairman has served for a month. The reviews were recorded in the various centres and forwarded to the studio in the chairman's home city, where each programme was finally put together.

In the last session on Sunday, June 27, the following books will be reviewed: *Among the Americans*, by Rom Landau (reviewer, Stuart Perry); *I Left My Roots in China*, by Bernard Llewellyn (James Bertram); *English for Teachers*, by Anton Vogt (John Reid); and *Animals, Myths and Men*, by Morus, otherwise Richard Lewisohn (Angus Ross). The chairman, of course, will be R. M. Burdon.

The end of *ZB Book Review* does not mean the end of broadcast book reviews. *Book Shop*, once a leisurely programme about books and topics connected with books, is now being broadcast weekly instead of fortnightly, and includes some four reviews a week instead of one every two weeks. It can be heard from the four YA stations and 3YZ at 8.20 p.m. on Wednesdays, 4YZ at 9.15 p.m. on Wednesdays, 1YZ at 5.0 p.m. on Sundays, and 2YZ at 6.0 p.m. on Sundays.

N.Z. LISTENER, JUNE 18, 1954.

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