

all the great names are there and how they interpreted their famous roles, but there is even greater interest in Grigoriev's study of Diaghilev himself, the organiser, inspiration, tyrant and friend of this turbulent crew.

An excellent appendix gives a complete list of the Ballet's productions with credits and casts. My only complaint is that the illustrations are rather poorly reproduced.

—M.J.B.

A YEAR FOR HISTORY

SURVEY OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, 1951. by Peter Calvocoressi; Geoffrey Cumberlege, Oxford University Press, English price 45. **DOCUMENTS ON INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, 1951.** edited by D. Follies; Geoffrey Cumberlege, Oxford University Press, English price 60.

THESE two volumes form a distinguished addition to the informative series published over the years by the Royal Institute of International Affairs. The survey is admirably done, though a New Zealander is bound to notice that the balance lies away from the Pacific. Mr. Calvocoressi has a first-class mind and can reinforce an argument with the crack of a verbal whip rare in discussions of this calibre. He takes for granted the basic Western premise, namely, that the World has been split by Russian intransigence into two hostile sections, yet he does not whitewash the West and an occasional aside, penetrating if diplomatic, castigates also the shortcomings of Anglo-Saxon behaviour. The survey itself is fully documented, and is further backed by a parallel but independent and well-arranged volume of key documents.

Taken together the two books illuminate a year whose events are still close enough to be charged with great practical importance and yet to be difficult of objective analysis.

F. L. W. Wood

SAINTS AND OTHERS

FIESTA, by Prudencio de Pereda; Victor Gollancz, English price 12 6. **SET ALL AFIRE**, by Louis de Wohl; Victor Gollancz, English price 12 6. **THE OTHER LANDSCAPE**, by Neil M. Gunn; Faber and Faber, English price 12 6. **EVENTIDE**, by Arthur F. Nickels; Jonathan Cape, English price 12 6.

IN theme very like Kazantzakis's *Christ Recrucified* but vastly inferior in execution, *Fiesta* tells of Ros, a Spaniard who revisits the village of his birth, and saves the life of Tomas, a young visionary, who is to play Christ in a Passion Play. While enacting the role, however, Tomas does die, in a vaguely defined sacrificial gesture. The mood is that of the 'thirties. The author suggests that the Hemingwayish Ros, a secularised, womanising revolutionary, is the real Christian and the professing Christians reactionary mockeries. There are some slight compensations in the glimpses of Spanish village life.

Louis de Wohl, who has based several readable novels on lives of the saints, fails to bring St. Francis Xavier alive in his new book. Xavier's remarkable missionary work in India, Japan and China offers excellent material, but the author is content to observe only from the outside. The result is a pedestrian job which never at any point looks like doing justice to its subject.

Neil Gunn's story of an archaeologist trying to discover the real tragedy behind a tale written by a lonely Highlander carries a heavy load of muzzy mysticism and would-be profound Kierkegaardian sig-



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nificance. The best parts are the things Mr. Gunn always does best—some high comedy involving an English major's feud with a gillie and the evocation of the atmosphere of a remote Highland village.

Least pretentious of all, *Eventide* succeeds in creating the crotchety personality of an 80-year-old naval pensioner, who, between intervals of fighting official attempts to seize his cottage, sets down his reminiscences. The convincing stylisation of his speech, racy and lively, expresses his tough independence and truculent conservatism. But this is no sentimental whimsy. The old man's story of his terrible childhood with a drunken father is starkly real, while there is genuine tenderness in his memories of his Chinese concubine. This is a vigorously original novel, rich, gamey and human.

—J.C.R.

SHORT PIECES

THURBER COUNTRY, by James Thurber; Hamish Hamilton, English price 12 6.

"AT forty," wrote Thurber in the preface to *My Life and Hard Times*, "my faculties may have closed up like flowers at evening, leaving me unable to write my memoirs with a fitting and discreet inaccuracy or, having written them, unable to carry them to the publisher's." That was in 1933. Forty has come and gone long since, and the world surveyed through the old boy's pebble lenses has become even more frantic, but in these 20 years no one has emerged to challenge his position as America's finest humorous writer.

Thurber Country—"a new collection of pieces about males and females, mainly of our own species"—conducts the reader by paths now delightfully familiar around the lunatic contemporary landscape of frustration and neurosis. Most of it is uproariously funny (Thurber's owl-eye is one of the saving graces of American civilisation) but it is also first-class writing. "The Figgerin' of Aunt Wilma" is a masterly piece of observation and description, as well as a gem of good-humoured story-telling, while "Joyeux Noel, Mr. Durning"—James Thurber v. the Bureau of Customs—neatly presents the problem of Authority and the Individual. One or two of the pieces are a little too sharp and uncompromising in their observation of human frailty to invite laughter. "Teacher's Pet"—the best example of these—would, however, grace any modern short-story anthology.

—J.M.

IN CENTRAL OTAGO

THE DUNSTAN, by C. W. S. Moore; Otago Centennial Historical Publications, 15/-.

OTAGO has amply demonstrated local pride and a feeling for history and tradition in its centennial publications. This latest, about the Alexandra-Clyde district, is a well-arranged and sufficiently documented account, though shorter than most of its companion volumes. A general picture of the district is followed by chapters on the early pastoralists, gold-mining, and gold-dredging, and coal-mining, the industries that supported the fluctuating population of early days. The story of local government and of the personalities involved is fully covered, and there are accounts

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