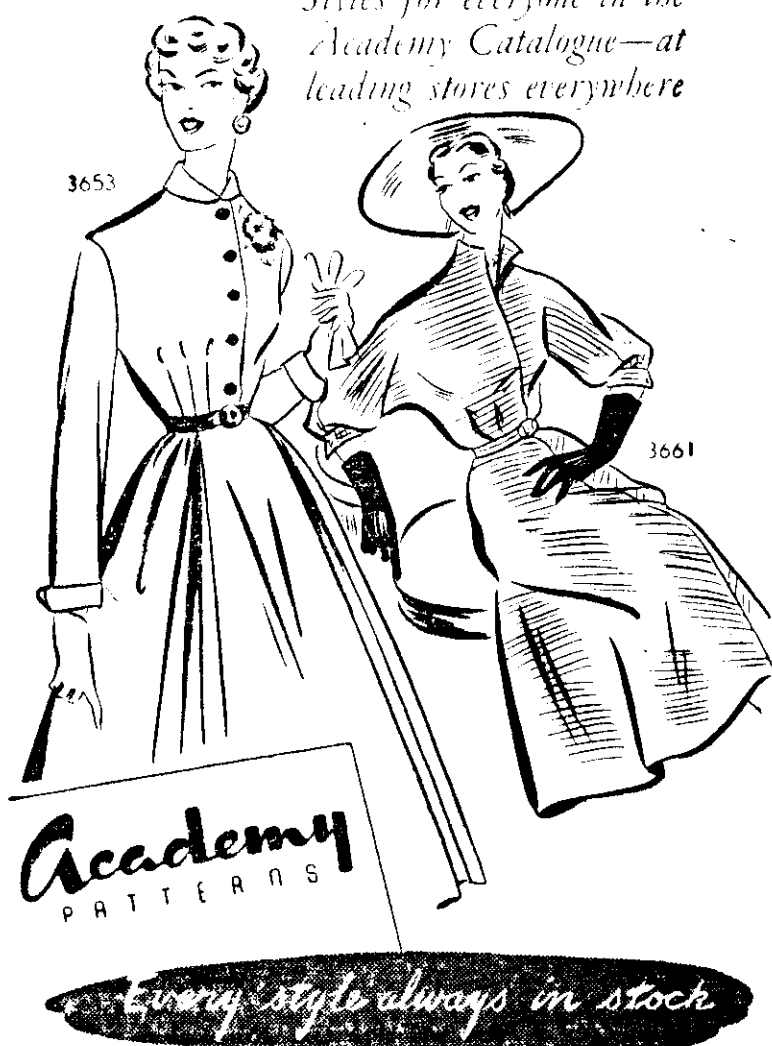


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## BOOKS

(continued from previous page)

through his creed alone can all problems be solved. There are also political factors which operate in favour of Communism. China, for instance, has suffered humiliation for more than a century at the hands of Western nations. Her alliance with Russia is popular, therefore, not only on ideological grounds, but also because it enables her to defy the nations who imposed their will upon her with such little regard for her national pride.

Most of these essays have already been printed in various reviews. All of them bear upon the circumstances which have led to the present disastrous division of the world into armed camps; and all of them may be read with advantage by anyone who is interested in trying to separate fact from fiction in contemporary history.

—R. M. Burdon

### SERIOUSER AND SERIOUSER

*THE LAUGHING MATTER*, by William Saroyan; Faber and Faber, English price 12 6. *THE SCATTERED SEED*, by Stuart Engstrand; Jonathan Cape, English price 12 6. *THE OUTSIDER*, by Richard Wright; Angus and Robertson, Australian price 17 6. *THE VENETIAN BRIDE*, by Magdalen King-Hall; Peter Davies, English price 12 6.

"WHEN you love everything, and you're sad, it makes you funny doesn't it?" Saroyan goes to the trouble of subtitled his study of the emotional vicissitudes of the pure-in-heart "a serious story," and it is damn serious. A small matter of adultery retailed in his peculiar simple-Simon baby-talk which the intrusion of several children scarcely condones, is indeed the series of graduated pills subtly suggested by the circles on the dust jacket. By flashes Saroyan is a great writer, but not great enough to carry off the weight of so much boredom.

*The Scattered Seed* is all about a near-disreputable character using the opportunities of tree-surgery in a Southern state to hop in through bedroom windows. He is played for a sucker by his landlady's insignificant daughter, whose feminine ruthlessness is well conceived. This is a crude story about wholly uninteresting people, but it is less tedious than Saroyan.

Richard Wright's *The Outsider* is more serious than Saroyan, and it is an-

other story of the essential innocence of heart of a put-upon hero, this time after only four murders. This distinguished Negro writer could hardly fail to say something worth while about white-coloured relations. (It is interesting that Australia's well-developed racial consciousness does not extend to literature.) But the grotesque bloodshed and the need to expose the nastiness of the Communist Party (Wright is a famous seceder) seriously diminish its merit.

The last (and only non-American) novel is an old-time romance about an impoverished 18th Century Irish squire bringing home a treasure greater than he realises, the Venetian bride of the title. This is comfortable reading for the long winter evenings, wholly unserious.

—David Hall

### MILD ADVENTURE

*OUR VIRGIN ISLAND*, by Robb White; Victor Gollancz, English price 13 6.

THERE'S something of Robinson Crusoe (1953 edition) about this humorous and colourful story of mild adventure on the islet of Marina Cay in the British Virgin Islands of the West Indies. However, as well as a competent equivalent of Man Friday, there's a wife in the case, and a very self-reliant and dependable woman at that. The author has been an American naval officer, and those who like stories of sailing are promised special enjoyment. Some bitter resentment against British administrators, or, at least those in the colonial service, may be taken as spice to the yarn.

—L.J.W.

### THE ABBEY THEATRE

*THE IRISH DRAMATIC MOVEMENT*, by Una Ellis-Fermor; Methuen and Co. (second edition, revised), English price 18 6.

THIS standard account of the early years of the Abbey Theatre and the contribution of Irish playwrights and players to modern European drama, first appeared in 1939: it concentrates on the work of Yeats, Lady Gregory and Synge, and brings the story in detail down to about 1912. Professor Ellis-Fermor has now abandoned her projected second volume; but this new edition of the original work contains an expanded final chapter with a very brief notice of later dramatists. Though incomplete, the book remains an indispensable text for drama students.

—J.B.

## COMING ROUND THE BEND

With Denis Glover

PROGRESS sometimes seems to consist of having the bones taken out of fish, wrapping up old pre-sliced bacon in cellophane, and having to eat tough steak with a blunt silver-plated knife.

"I AM Te Heu Heu," said a noble native. What a wonderful yet dignified statement.

I WISH I could have made it up: "It doesn't taste like pork," said a young wife dubiously. "No," said her friend, "it's hogget." Pause. "But I always thought a hogget was a little pig!"

THIS spectacled eyes looked like the headlights of a second-hand car. They shone ahead all right, but there was no warrant of fitness behind them.

APPARENTLY it is a fact that Rubinstein's practising upset the Pekinese of the woman in the flat next door.

"WE could have went up and seen Bill," he said. After all, he might have said. "We had of oughter went up and seen Bill."

THE best conversation should be well-punctuated—with silence.

IF tailoring weren't so conservative there would be more pockets to hold licences.

CONSIDERING the enthusiasm shown by small boys for pointing sticks at each other and saying "Bang! Bang!" it is remarkable how little they like being called up and given real weapons to play with.

NICOTINE on the fingers looks much worse in the morning than it did the evening before.

I DON'T want to change with the times, I want the times to change with me.

"ARE there many in tonight?" "No, just a mediocre crowd."

N.Z. LISTENER, JULY 2, 1954.