

St. Loe Strachey, or *Punch*. Now I am reviewing the life story of Strachey's second successor, Wilson Harris, who reigned from 1932 to 1953, and made the *Spectator* better than it had ever been in my long memory, an opinion strengthened by what I read here of the compliments paid him on retirement. In length of life and sustained quality, the *Spectator* has been the most famous English literary weekly of our time. You might not agree with it, but you always respected it.

So its editor for twenty-one years has a valuable story to tell and a long one, perhaps a shade too long in some of its details of travel and hospitality. Wilson Harris admits it is discursive; but, so, he says, an autobiography should be. It is the story of a Quaker upbringing in Plymouth; education at a sound school and Cambridge; a short spell of teaching, during which he was a colleague of the original "Mr. Chips"; Liberal journalism in London, which involved covering some of the most important international conferences abroad after the first war; his long editorship; and election for Cambridge University in 1945. The conference chapters have a special interest for students of history. Nearly every leading figure in the European post-war world, and some Americans, with a host of permanent officials, walk through the pages, in a light cast by a trained observer, and we are given glimpses of the negotiations that shaped history in what proved so tragically to have been armistice years.

Similarly, in London, scores of distinguished figures are associated with Wilson Harris. He maintained the "left-centre," independent tradition of the *Spectator*, and the reader realises how difficult it was to take an editorial line amid the many crises. We get a picture of a man of the highest integrity; strong in opinion; scholarly, and well informed in world affairs; a maker of friends; a little dry perhaps, but forceful, and at times witty. Moreover, he was "Janus," and really good columnists are about as rare as good editors. At seventy, he was asked to resign "to give the younger men a chance," and didn't like it.

The Parliamentary chapter is the brightest. Like Herbert Morrison in his book on government, Wilson Harris brings out the basic spirit of co-operation in the House, and the bouquet of Parliamentary witticisms he gathers is delightful. He left politics with the abolition of the University seats, after illustrating admirably the value of a special representation for which there is little or nothing to be said on strictly democratic grounds.

—A.M.

SUGAR PILL

THE ART OF BEING HAPPILY MARRIED, by André Maurois; the Bodley Head, English price 8/6.

EVEN the best books of good advice probably have little influence upon behaviour. We accept as much as our self-love will allow and forget or, more likely, ignore the rest. If, as seems probable, the strength of our resistance is directly related to the extent to which we are talked at, this little book should be more effective than most; for M. Maurois talks to us not directly but through an imaginary Professor of Matrimonial Relations (French, thank heaven!) and an imaginary couple who act out his advice. Those seeking a deeper understanding will get it, though with more effort, from Tom Hopkins's recent *Love's Apprentice*, but this is all the same a useful and very practical



ANDRÉ MAUROIS
On the side of fidelity

primer, which says more than most books of the kind, and is very amusing as well.

M. Maurois is on the side of fidelity, but he doesn't believe infidelity or the seducer's success should cause surprise or be the occasion of too much self-righteous anger, if love and intimacy in marriage have been allowed to become a mere habit. He would probably agree that art is the operative word in his title, which is another way of saying that even such virtues as, say, frankness and spontaneity, may serve us ill if we don't try first and last to be civilised. Attractively produced, *The Art of Being Happily Married* would be a useful present for any of the many who still fly in the face of Mr. Punch's advice.

—F.A.J.

A GUM TREE GROWING

MEANJIN, Vol. XIII, No. 1, Autumn, 1954; University of Melbourne, 5/-.

UNDER C. B. Christesen's editorship *Meanjin's* tempered and patient growth is something Australia may be grateful for. In 1940 it was an eight-page bi-monthly; in Number 56, as a quarterly, it reaches 160 pages, containing more reading than the average novel. Mr. Christesen reaffirms its aims as "the re-examination of the roots of Australian society," the support of those who are "coming to grips with immediate contemporary problems," "the presentation of a new and questioning generation in Australian letters," and the founding not of a "school" but a "meeting-place for progressive intellectual expression."

These are phrases familiar, heaven knows, to the inkwell of any editor of any literary journal conceived to mirror and express its own environment. Without a manifesto less general phrases can scarcely be found. But if the pages of *Meanjin* have sometimes echoed the emptiness of an Australia perhaps too big to be grappled with, it may be that the editor knows that a gum tree takes a long time to gum up, where an acanthus (such as *Angry Penguins*) spikes as a more temporary irritant. *Meanjin* is not gummed up: it has grown to mean something in Australia, and to make Australia more meaningful to us.

Of the new number's material some is of interest primarily in its Australian context, but there is a great deal ("Culture and Comics," Norman Bartlett, and the articles on, and by, James Picot) of interest anywhere. The stories and some

(continued on next page)

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