

This is super-Buchan stuff in the crazy speed and variety of its thrills. It lacks the master's touch, but there is plenty of excitement, and Venice's part in the tale gives it a few extra marks.

In *Venice, Preserve Me*, by John Appleby, of the BBC, we are on a much higher level—a well-written book, with judicious thrills balanced by an original presentation of a man driven to murder through wounds to his self-esteem. Someone murdered a woman in a hotel room now occupied by an English girl on holiday, and left a vital clue behind. The battle is fought between the murderer, and the girl and her former fiancée, an unconventional rolling stone who has become a tourist guide. The action takes place against a skillfully painted background of history and art.

Murder is murder everywhere, but after so much communing with it in hotel lounges and night-clubs, I find it a pleasant change to study it in a rural scene like the New Forest. Something of the good earth of ancient England comes in to John Lukens's *Adders Abounding*. The hero, toughened by war, joins a community of forestry workers to find out what happened to his brother, and uncovers something very sinister. The industry and its setting are well described, and there is a convincing love romance.

How would you feel if you were a penniless artist going blind? The narrator of Denise Egerton's *No Thoroughfare* is in this plight in London, when a proposition of impersonation in Cornwall is put to him. The skulduggery in Cornwall seems to me pretty ordinary, but the reactions of the narrator to his blindness in all kinds of situations give the book some impressiveness.

After "following" "Sapper" in several books, Gerard Fairlie, in *The Return of the Black Gang*, resurrects Carl Peterson to confront Bulldozer Drummond again. Carl didn't die in that air-crash after all. And Irma reappears, too. No more need be said.

At the end of the procession I give a curt nod to "The Toff," off on his ninth adventure. —A.M.

NO DULL MOMENTS

TRAMP ROYAL, by Sir Michael Bruce, of Stenhouse and Airth; Elek, New Zealand price 16/-.

THERE is supposed to be a 200-year-old curse on the Bruce family because one of Sir Michael's ancestors, another Sir Michael, used the stones from an old relic to build a dam. The author, the 11th Baronet, has certainly had more than his share of bad luck. I lost count of the number of times he had been wounded or shot at, shot down in aircraft, injured in motor accidents or in fights, thrown from horses, torpedoed or sunk at sea. He was once trampled by a herd of 800 cattle, and he has also been married three times. None of this discouraged him: he was a born soldier, a man to whom war and battles are

"fun"; he was never happier than when in action and in peace he was always quick and capable with his fists.

The easiest way to classify this story of his adventures is as "a good yarn," interesting, at times exciting, but nothing in it very deep or thoughtful. But sometimes he does give the reader a sense of participation in his adventures, notably in his account of a treasure-hunting expedition in the Amazon, of which he and an Indian guide were the only survivors. To a New Zealander he may seem something of a Jingo, a Kipling man, as the title of his book shows. He ends his story, characteristically, with his family tree from 721 A.D., the accuracy of which is discredited when it is found that the dates of two important events in his own biography and the maiden name of his first wife differ from the details given in the text. —W.A.G.

ARTHURIAN BRITAIN

THE WORKS OF SIR THOMAS MALORY, edited by Eugene Vinaver; Geoffrey Cumberlege, Oxford University Press, English price 21/-.

THIS is a good, compact, well printed edition in the Oxford Standard Authors series. The famous prose epic is in the main an adaptation from French sources by a knight who, according to many sources, was little better than a blackguard, and who probably died in Newgate. As a publication it may be said to have been a Caxton first. It is in prose eminently suited to the subject. Here are the elemental passions of the members of the Arthurian Court. The sudden quarrels, hatreds and reconciliations of the brave, the fair and the ignoble are portrayed. There are stories of love, jealousy, revenge, magnanimity, purity and unselfishness. Running through it is the quest for the Holy Grail, arising from the tradition that the Chalice or Grail which held the Body and Blood of our Lord at the First Supper was hidden in Arthurian Britain. There is in it a musical cadence and an illumination like that of the Italian primitive paintings. It should be on your bookshelves. —F. J. Foot

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

MAHURANGI, the Story of Warkworth, by H. J. Keys; Cameo Press Ltd., Warkworth, 25/6 (standard edition, paper-covered, 12/6). As with most district histories, the weight of names and the details of local activities bear heavily on the narrative. The material, however, has been carefully and fully collected, and the book should be valuable for reference.

FAR EASTERN AGENT, by Donald Moore; Hodder and Stoughton, English price 15/-. A close look at the peoples of Asia.

THE PARISH OF ST. MEL'S, and other verses, by "John O'Brien"; Angus and Robertson, Australian price 12/6. A second collection of light-hearted verse by the author of *Around the Boree Log*.

FOR JANE

*NOW the brief moment after death
When love has purified
The winter of years the unuttered song.*

*Such beauty sweeps out fear,
Blinds like snow on the peaks,
And for one deep hour we are certain*

*That the summer is there,
For you my prayer that it should be;
How else fashions your loveliness?*

—Paul Henderson

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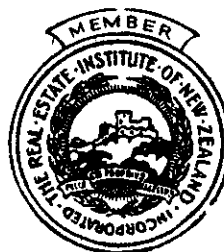
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