

BOOKS

(continued from previous page)

irregular trial, at which the truth is sensationally revealed. The trial is a sheer impossibility, but the drama is tense and the dénouement very ingeniously contrived. The book's chief merit, however, lies in its picture of an ingrown society.

In *The Hero of Saint Roger*, Jerrard Tickell, who wrote *Odette* and *Appointment with Venus*, gives us a tale at once mad and delightful. To recover their chief asset, the tourist trade, the principals in a French Caribbean island decide to create a war hero, after the manner of the fraud in *General John Regan*, but it is a body that is to be brought in, not a statue. Reaction to the plot is terrific and diverting. Britain, America and Russia all claim the dead hero (who really is alive and of no account), with trumpeting in the ether and elsewhere. The whole idea is fantastic, and there are yawning gaps in the joinery, but I was carried along happily in a rare mixture of excitement, romance, humour, beauty and tenderness. Whether he is describing a scene at sea, or a taxi chase through Paris; or interpreting the mind of the young Frenchwoman roped into the deception (one of the most attractive heroines I have met in a long while), or of the worldly but kindly prefect; or showing us the island priest wrestling with his duty—Jerrard Tickell writes uncommonly well. There are moments of enchantment.

Why are several attempts made, in which a black man is involved, to kill a girl in England? Protecting her costs the hero a leg on the eve of the European games, where he is booked to run. Probing the mystery leads him to ritual murder in an African tribe. *Death Out of Darkness* is rather crude, but Michael Halliday's reference to a terrible problem facing European rule in Africa gives the tale a topical interest.

Jokes about the Pentagon, that vast defence centre in Washington, such as the boy messenger who entered the building and came out a colonel, have reached New Zealand, but *Last Clear Chance* introduces it to me as the basis of a thriller. This is a fast moving story of treason and counter-measure in high quarters in the United States, with an English V.C. holder as one of the chief actors. Wealth and power, beautiful women, fast motor craft, kidnapping and slugging, intrigue on the knife-edge of danger—the tale has its impossibilities, but real life presents some resemblances, and Burke Wilkinson writes with verve and point. There are more quotable things here than in most thrillers.

A Beauty for Inspector West is, I think, the first of this John Creasey series I have read. It is somewhat higher than the "Toffs."

—A.M.

EVADING THE ENEMY

EVADER, by T. D. G. Teare; Hodder and Stoughton, N.Z. price 12/6.

IT is one of the penalties perhaps of the wider literacy of our time that anybody who does anything immediately sits down and writes a book about it all, while those of us already seated stir only far enough to buy or, preferably, borrow the latest of their adventures. And if style is the art of having something to say and saying it, most of these adventurers with a story to tell are competent tradesmen, their stories coherent and readable.

Denys Teare is no exception. He's not a first-rate writer, but he doesn't

have to be; he lets his story tell itself. He had all the usual excitement and adventure and disappointment of the shot-down airman evading the enemy in Occupied France, working, fighting and hiding with the Resistance for a year, learning to speak French so well that he found it hard at first to return to his own tongue. A good soldier. I should say, capable, a planner, daring and physically tough.

—W.A.G.

STRING BAG TRAVELLER

WHO WANDERS ALONE, by Peter Pinney; Angus and Robertson Ltd., Australian price 21/-.

THIS is the second travel book by the author of *Dust On My Shoes*. Peter Pinney must have achieved as high a degree of freedom as anybody in this shrinking world. He travels with the bare minimum of luggage; in fact his necessities, including camera, all fit into one small string bag.

The book starts with Pinney in Trieste, and his description of the high feelings and bitter hatreds engendered by the elections makes interesting comparison with the freedom of speech and opinion enjoyed in New Zealand at election time. From there the author makes his way to Yugoslavia, where he sees some Communist parades. In Greece Pinney finds a temporary job as night editor on the *Athens News*. Naturally, a man with such an outsize wanderlust finds it irksome to stay long in any one place, so we soon see him on the road again. His wanderings take him through Tunisia and Algeria, across the Sahara Desert into Nigeria, Kenya and Zanzibar.

Pinney's recurrent brushes with authority emphasise the suspicious frame of mind the world has got itself into. Why should a peaceable citizen not be free to roam at will? Immediately the reply is formed—how do we know he is a peaceable citizen?

I found this a most enjoyable book, although the author's tantalising descriptions of his hobo existence made me even more conscious of the narrow confines of a normal job.

—B.C.

TIGERS

NINE MAN-EATERS AND ONE ROGUE, by Kenneth Anderson; George Allen and Unwin Ltd., English price 15/-.

THIS is a book for those who would like a little tiger-hunting, a form of excitement I think I should not enjoy. The victims herein described—except the one rogue, which was "the rogue-elephant of Panapatti"—were man-eaters in the jungles of South-east India; and man-eaters, we are told, are rare and abnormal, and for their bad manners meet for destruction. The author obviously knows his jungle and the ways of its various creatures, and conveys to his readers both the atmosphere of the hunt and the excitement of the kill. Stories of tiger-hunting, when the tigers are man-killers, need no dramatisation, but simple realism makes inevitable "tensed nerves," "crashed bullets," "gleaming canines" and "bloody mass."

—L.J.W.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

MY GYPSY DAYS, by Dora E. Yates; Phoenix House, through A. H. and A. W. Reed, N.Z. price 16/-. An interesting study of the gypsies by a woman who has known them closely for 50 years.

ACROSS THE SEVEN SEAS, by E. H. Carter; Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., English price 12/6. The story of the British Commonwealth and Empire, told simply and with many illustrations, presumably for younger readers.

N.Z. LISTENER, MARCH 11, 1955.

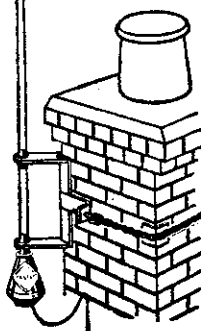
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