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BOOKS

(continued from previous page)

Davies admits right away that his exploration "must be, perforce, as fragmentary and ambiguous as its subject matter," and so almost disarms us. But, then, what is a Humanist, for example, to say when he speaks in the same sentence of his exploration "amid the ruins of fallen man," or when he asserts that it is human nature to be anti-feminist, to think evil of sex and to have a death wish?

Still, the argument is worth pursuing, through the early philosophers, Christianity, Greece, Rome, Provence and the Enlightenment. The author takes his own line about the invention of love: a fusion, he thinks, of Provencal erotic ideology with the cult of the passionate love of the Virgin. Summing up he usefully urges a frank recognition in our morals of the difference between the sexual (procreative), erotic and lustful uses of the human body. As a history of ideas about sex the book will trap the unwary newcomer with its mixture of fact and opinion. Read critically, on the other hand, it is a very effective mental stimulant.

Lionel Trilling's well-known essay on the first Kinsey report ends the symposium edited by Mr. Geddes with the remark that "although it is possible to say of the Report that it brings light, it is necessary to say of it that it spreads confusion"; and that's a pretty fair judgment on Kinsey, who is another snare for the uncritical. This book is much more a symposium than a critical analysis; and it has the fault of most symposia—it is repetitive, and their merit—it takes in many points of view. As in most symposia, too, the contributions vary in quality, and it's a pity we have to read them all to extract the core of valuable criticism.

—F.A.J.

BACK TO ATLANTIS

DANGER MY ALLY, by F. A. Mitchell-Hedges; Elek, English price 18s.

THERE should still be room, even in these hurried days, for travel-and-adventure works running into three volumes. I can see no other way in which a man of the calibre of F. A. Mitchell-Hedges can do justice to his life. Two hundred and fifty pages is too little space for the account of his early career in money-crazy pre-1914 America, let alone for that of two South American expeditions which seem likely to change present concepts of pre-history.

The author himself seems aware of this deficiency, and tries in his preface to establish some sort of mystical theme. But the canvas is too small and the blocks of detail too large for the theme to develop fully before the final chapters. There, however, it does develop, as he finds—first in the jungles of Iubaantum and later among the Bay Islands—traces and artifacts of a race that had its history before history began: the civilised race that once lived on the sunken continent we call Atlantis.

There is much more in this book besides. Too much. We would appreciate a second and third from a man who believes that life is to be lived at all, it is to be lived dangerously.

—Peter Cape

SATIRE AND SUSPENSE

THE ECSTASY OF OWEN MUIR, by Ring Lardner, Jr.; Jonathan Cape, English price 12/6. *THE DESPERATE HOURS*, by Joseph Hayes; André Deutsch, English price 10/6.

A YOUNG American, Owen Muir, has a tremendous willingness to see the other fellow's point of view. He argues

all the way against convictions that inevitably become his own. Born from a wealthy business family, behind the war effort for a dollar a year, he goes to a conscientious objectors' camp, then to battle in Normandy, then to "novelty" business back home. So far so dull—until it dawns on you that out of the populous emptiness of American fiction of this class emerges satire of skyscraper sharpness. Poor Owen rejects, accepts, then re-rejects his father. Here's father's advice: "You find a way to put opium in a bubble gum and make it legal, and I'll get you a billion dollars' worth of finance." Naturally the novelty business succeeds. Naturally he marries the girl. Naturally she's his secretary. Awkwardly, she's a Roman Catholic. But the logic of things demands the diabolus ex machina, Monsignor Frasso. Subtle theological persuasion ranges on and on in a feast of casuistry, brilliantly done, with deft irony. But Owen's soul is at stake. In saving it he loses his wife. He begins to doubt everything but individual faith, and he defeats the world only by a monastic withdrawal from it. Owen Muir's ecstasy is consummated in the last sentence of the page. Mr. Lardner merits many enemies.

Well, now, an honest to goodness first-class suspense thriller. To lump in a thriller with more "serious" work, and apologise for it, is to make a distinction no longer made by publishers or readers. But to find a normal family held to terror-pitch by three escaped criminals, and to look into the mind's and motives of both sides, is an experience no one has offered better than Mr. Hayes. *The Desperate Hours* is a distracting novel for those who can feed on distraction, and are not disturbed to the point of destruction.

—D.G.

COURAGEOUS WOMEN

I WILL LIFT UP MINE EYES, by Ilse Stanley; Victor Gollancz, English price 13/6. *NO ROADS GO BY*, by Myrtle Rose White; Angus and Robertson, Australian price 16/-.

WITH perhaps a shade too much of the histrionic in her manner, Mrs. Ilse Stanley, an actress and the daughter of a synagogue cantor, tells of her experiences in Nazi Germany, and her work, with the help of an ex-policeman at Gestapo Headquarters, on behalf of Jews imprisoned in concentration camps. The atmosphere of Berlin in the middle thirties, and the gradual acceleration of anti-Semitism are forcibly conveyed. A sincere story by a courageous and deeply religious woman, *I Will Lift Up Mine Eyes* reminds us both of the horrors of life under the Gestapo and of the heroism of many decent German souls. It is not very well written, but the matter triumphs over deficiencies in style.

No Roads Go By is a welcome reprint of a successful book first issued in 1932. Its lively, warm, accepting account of the life of a cattle-rancher's wife on a very lonely station in South Australia is also a story of woman's courage, enlivened by the simple humour of everyday and sweetened by a gentle philosophy of endurance. Mrs. White's simple, direct style has a tang of the backblocks about it, yet it is never crude or sentimental. She even manages to convince the reader that people can become attached to desert areas that seem very little this side of Hell.

—J.C.R.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

THREE new Puffin Story Books are: *Enjoying Paintings*, by A. C. Ward; *Going to the Ballet*, by Arnold Haskell; and *Going to a Concert*, by Lionel Salter. All are published by Penguin Books (N.Z. price 3/3).

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