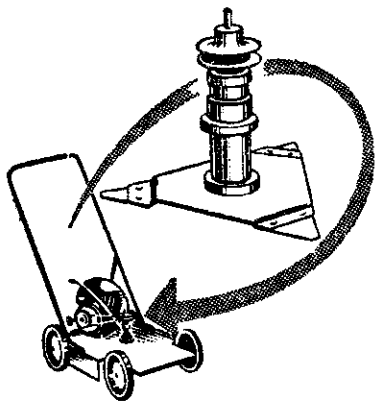


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Books

GUIDE TO THE ARTS

THE OXFORD JUNIOR ENCYCLOPAEDIA.
Volume XII, The Arts; Geoffrey Cumber-
lege-Oxford University Press. English price
30/-

(Reviewed by J.M.)

TENTH in order of appearance, twelfth (and last) in numerical sequence, *The Arts* is pictorially the most resplendent and stimulating of the *Junior Encyclopaedia* volumes so far published. The topics covered—literature, drama, music, painting, sculpture, architecture—do, of course, provide an unparalleled opulence of material, but the richness of an illustrator's resources multiply his (in this case, her) problems. Helen Mary Petter, who has acted for the O.U.P. throughout the project as illustrations editor—and fulfilled her duties with distinction—is here the Volume Editor as well. This additional responsibility, and the freedom of choice which goes with it, has no doubt contributed materially to the pictorial quality of Volume XII. Miss Petter's craftsmanship as an illustrator is almost an art in itself and has not been seen to better advantage than it is here. She selects well, with a keen eye for the appropriate and illuminating picture; fastidiously avoids the banal and the hackneyed, and has been admirably served by the process engravers. Indeed, the pictures which she has selected for the *Encyclopaedia*—already some thousands in number—are in themselves a liberal education.

The text offers the reviewer equally small scope for complaint. There are the occasional (and apparently unavoidable) typographical errors—there is, for example, a literal in the second clerihow on page 94, and Ngaio Marsh's fictional hero is deglamourised to Inspector Allen in the note on detective stories—but one has to scratch hard to find such slips, which seem more infrequent than in earlier volumes. Nor are there any omissions of substance in the subject-matter. Film enthusiasts may be disappointed that the cinema is not yet rated as an art, but they were handsomely treated in Volume IX (Recreations).

One legitimate ground for criticism, however, is the inadequate reference to strictly contemporary trends in the arts (as distinct from "modern art" or "modern poetry" in a general sense), and to particular contemporary artists. The short story, for example, is covered without naming a single living writer save A. E. Coppard, who is mentioned in a parenthesis. Benjamin Britten is given a passing reference in Modern Music, but is not mentioned in the section dealing with Opera. A little more attention to the contemporary scene, however brief the references, would have enhanced the value of the volume to the young student.

Nevertheless, youth is here well served—and more than youth. Parents who will this year be facing the ordeal of School Certificate and other external examinations should not be without this volume.

THE JOKE THAT DIDN'T QUITE

THE HUMOUR OF HUMOUR, by Evan Esar; Phoenix House, through A. H. and A. W. Reed, N.Z. price 12/6.

PERHAPS I expected too much of Evan Esar's *The Humour of Humour*. The author, in his preface, says: "Ever since the days of Plato and Aristotle the



main tradition in the study of comedy has been philosophic. Only within recent decades has it turned scientific, chiefly through psychology." This made me expect to be told a little about the mechanisms that make human beings laugh when they laugh. I found instead that Mr. Esar was intent on creating what he calls a science of "humorology" (and a vocabulary to go with it), and that what this science boils down to is a minute classification of types of funny story without the slightest reason being given as to why we should find them funny at all.

However, making my way through ladders, twistwit, fuddletalk, biograms and blendwords. I did find that even though there may be no new jokes, there are innumerable different ways of retelling the old ones. Apparently fashions in humour change, some quickly, some very slowly; hence the disappearance of the knock-knock joke and the awful permanence of the one about mothers-in-law. More than that, various times produce various types of humour. In our age of neurosis the humour of utter insanity has shown a not very surprising development—take, for instance, the story of the two psychiatrists who greeted one another on the street with "You're fine, how am I?"

On the whole, then, Mr. Esar has achieved something. And if it is of value to know whether your favourite joke is a Freudian twist or merely a Bull, something of importance. But I can't help feeling that it would have been so much better done in a serio-comic manner. It could have been a gorgeous joke, but as it is it doesn't quite come off.

—Peter Cape

INDUSTRIAL UNIONS

MAGNIFICENT JOURNEY, by Francis Williams; Odhams Press, through Whitcombe and Tombs, 18/9.

THIS is a very able, sympathetic history. It gives a lively picture of the rise of the great industrial unions. The power of the unions has been evidenced and confirmed by many successful strikes, and by the mauling which the employers have received in the unsuccessful strikes. This being so it is no surprise to find a great part of this history devoted to these struggles, but one would like to find some expression by the author of the principles which, in his opinion, govern the question whether a potential strike is just or unjust. Whether the cause is just is (one supposes) usually a question of fact. No one any longer denies the right of man to combine to cease work to achieve

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