

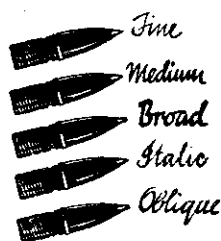
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BOOKS

(continued from previous page)

the daily self-help; and in the third corner, Wetsie (sic), with an I-eye and a feminine pen.

As a meal of oysters this is not as satisfactory as one might have expected it to be; it is filling enough, and yet one sighs a little at the sameness, at the monotonous luxury of the feast.

The Guinea Stamp is a novel that returns an Oxford-educated African to West Africa and a job on the mainly British staff of a new University College. It might be one with a dozen other not dissimilar novels did not the writing and the perception in some measure redeem it. There are, Mr. Loader demonstrates, good motives on either side of the racial curtain; but "good" is an active condition, and the good motive in action is peculiarly liable to be sullied by circumstance. At this level the mad snare of personality, possession, unhappiness, would seem to be the same for African as for European; with the important difference, of course, that the European has rather more devices of distraction, and has the escape-hatch of "home."

Racialism is a real thing, a confused and difficult problem; and it is to Mr. Loader's credit that he has not been satisfied with the easy cliché for it.

Provincial bohemia is the grey environment of *The Hosanna Man*, and though I cannot think it a good novel, though it is virtuous enough, it serves in its way to remind one of Leslie Fielder's observation that bohemianism has become an escape from art. As a novel this is strangely without ferment, either of imagination or of personality; quite as though what happens to anyone, the mere event, is of an ultimate importance.

—M.D.

FASTER THAN SOUND

THE LONELY SKY, by William Bridgeman; Cassell and Co. Ltd., English price 16/-.

TOWARDS the end of the last war quite a number of fighter pilots experienced a strange and frightening change in the handling of their aircraft when in a high speed dive. The aerodynamicists knew the reason for the peculiarity—it was the effect of "compressibility," an aerodynamic phenomenon associated with movement through air at a speed approaching that of sound waves. Just why and how, nobody knew—how to overcome it was anybody's guess. One thing was certain; unless man was prepared to admit he had reached the limit of speed someone had to find out all about this compressibility. Both the Douglas and Bell concerns in America designed an aircraft with but one purpose—to fly faster than the speed of sound.

Without a complete understanding of the problem, it is difficult to grasp the immensity of the step it was planned to take. It fell to Bridgeman's lot to fly

the Douglas product. At the time he can hardly have ranked among the top flight of test pilots as he had never flown a jet. He was a bomber pilot in the last war, an airline pilot and, later, a production test pilot on single-engined conventional aircraft. When he accepted the challenge of the Skyrocket he had to

learn to fly jets, pick up as much as he could of the problems of high speed flight and then get familiar with rocket motors.

This book takes the reader step by step with the author through the transition from being an unknown production test pilot to being the man who had flown higher and faster than any other man living. It is a story of superlative skill and the kind of courage few men possess. Anyone with any interest in flying will find it thrilling—anyone with experience of test flying will lose himself in admiration for the author and his colleagues.

—B.C.

WAITING MEN

THE LONG ROAD HOME, by Adrian Vincent; Allen and Unwin, English price 15/-.

THIS, the author says, is the story of the "average" prisoner of war, if there is such a man, captured by the Germans in France in 1940, and resolved to make the best of things and to wait as patiently as he can for the war to end. Escaping plays no part in it, except for brief interludes outside the wire to seek the consolation of Polish girl friends; Gestapo searches are the only excitement and there are no heroics. It is a drab record: of hunger, boredom, and disease in German *stalags* and working parties; of the "softening" of guards and venal Kommandants by gifts and blackmail; of the taming of bullying overseers in Polish coal mines and cement works; of petty prisoners' squabbles over food and cigarettes. But, drab as it now seems, this is how our prisoners lived, surviving only through their skill in the prison-camp arts of making their lives as comfortable as possible by any means at hand. Mr. Vincent had five years of it and kept a daily journal to refresh his memory. He has an easy style and writes without self-pity or introspection.

—W.A.G.

WELSH FARMLET

A PLOUGH ON THE MOUNTAIN, by Lawrence Morgan; Odhams Press, through Whitcombe and Tombs, 12/6.

THIS sort of book seems to command a ready sale in England—the "back to the land" sort. Well, that's a good thing. You like the country and you like writing; so you buy a bit of land, derelict for preference; with an old house, more or less derelict too for preference. Then you proceed to show how the farm can be restored, and how the good life may be lived on the nuttiest of bread, and the creamiest of butter, and the freshest of fruit and vegetables—all with due respect for the soil. Well, that's a good thing, too.

Mr. Morgan, whose farmlet is in the Welsh hills, has had the advantage of sound training in agriculture and good practical experience. He knows what he is doing and why (though astray in his one reference to New Zealand). Yes, there's a nice little minor romance; the major one is obviously being kept for another book.

—L.J.W.

Parking Metres

DISHWATER RUNS DEEP

*THE tumults and the shoutings die,
 The guests and guestesses have fled.
 When we have said the last goodbye
 And it is time to go to bed,
 I catch the love-light in her eye,
 And when the dawn breaks in the sky
 They're all washed up. And so am I.*

—R.G.P.