

A pity that Mr. Hoffman found nothing but a mound of hard-packed yellow sand in Sir Thomas Walsingham's tomb. But there's another coffin below that, just as there's always another last chamber in the Great Pyramid. "These oracles are hardly attain'd, and hardly understood."

—Denis Glover

PROCESSION OF EDITORS

"WE" AND ME, by J. W. Robertson Scott; W. H. Allen, English price 21/-.

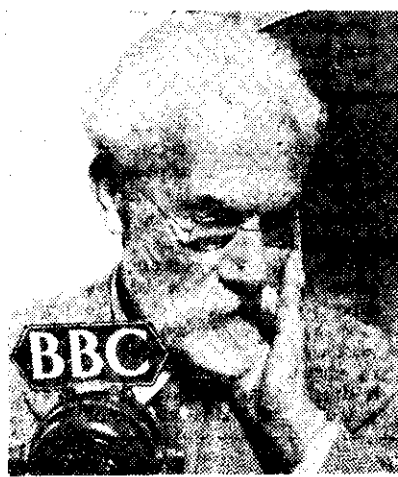
THOUGH the author has covered its general ground before, this book is unique, and likely to remain so. Robertson Scott, founder and editor of a famous country magazine, for which he still writes at ninety, there surveys English editing, with W. T. Stead for a start, his *Pall Mall Gazette* chief in the eighties. Moreover, whether such a review is called for in the future, will depend on how editors fare, a question of great public moment. They are now less potent than they were.

Of the four eminent editors who form the core of the book, J. A. Spender, master of the simply-written persuasive editorial, was so influential in the Liberal Party that he was called "Minister without Portfolio." Everybody in and around the official world read his Westminster leaders, but the sale was never more than thirty thousand, and the paper lost money steadily. A Balliol product, Spender had a restricted news sense, and stood somewhat aloof from the masses. H. W. Massingham, the leading radical journalist of his day, left the *Star* and *Chronicle* on questions of principle, and saw the *Nation* sold over his head. This famous weekly had a circulation of only fourteen thousand, and had been run at a loss for some time. Today the *New Statesman* and *Nation*, which absorbed two other weeklies (an ominous process) sells seventy-four thousand.

Numbers of other journalists walk on to this stage, and there are many glimpses of the political scene. By reason of personal portraits, discussion of craft technicalities, and questions of journalistic responsibility, this book ranks as one of the most fascinating and important of its kind. Spender and Massingham set a very high literary standard, and Robertson Scott counters a stupid contrast between "soul-destroying journalistic hackwork and literature" by quoting Shaw's dictum, illustrated from literary history, that "the highest literature is journalism." Many newspaper articles are literature, and much bad writing is accorded book covers.

Robertson Scott drives home the simple truth, so often overlooked, that a newspaper or periodical lives by advertisements. The landscape is strewn with the bodies of excellent ventures that died from this starvation. He tells us here how he started the *Countryman* against expert advice, with a capital of £500, and succeeded because he worked as hard over his advertisements as over his reading matter. Every reader knows that the *Countryman's* "ads" are a real "draw." The quarterly has been run at a profit, and has a glittering and varied roll of subscribers.

Lastly, there is a most interesting but disturbing chapter, with examples



BBC photograph

J. W. ROBERTSON SCOTT

"A newspaper lives by advertisements"

right up to the last few years, on differences that have led to retirements, and how such breaks might be prevented. Robertson Scott thinks that "almost the only editors perfectly at ease are the owner-editors, of whom there can never be many." Yes, indeed; the faculties of making money and of editing are quite different. It all adds up to the dictum quoted with approval by Wickham Steed, himself an ornament and a victim, that "the Press is the central problem of modern democracy." —A.M.

UNDER THE SPELL

THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA, by Dorothy Woodman; the Cresset Press, English price 30/-.

INDONESIA is a fascinating country; the Indonesians are charming and attractive people. The diversity of life, from the central State of Java to the exotic island of Bali and the wildness of Borneo, lends colour and interest to the traveller's journey. If there is a spell of the East, surely Indonesia casts it? This is the conclusion one reaches from reading the books of enthusiastic, and especially female, visitors.

Enthusiasm is all very well for amateur travellers' tales, but it is dangerous when an author has a more pretentious aim. Dorothy Woodman has. She is described on the dust cover as "an authority on Asian affairs," and her book is intended to be an historical survey, a geographical and cultural description of the principal islands, an account of the Indonesian struggle for independence, a history of the new Republic and a discussion of the major political, social and economic problems of the young State. A task for a scholar who is a linguist and an anthropologist if one's book is to be anything more than a journalist's impressions. Miss Woodman is earnest and enthusiastic: the bibliography suggests that she is also industrious, but none of these qualities are sufficient in themselves for the kind of book she is credited with writing. It never rises above the level of the *New Statesman*: intelligent and well meaning traveller's tales.

Miss Woodman has swallowed the Indonesian case. She dislikes colonialism and the Indonesians who won their freedom have her sympathy. She has talked to Indonesian leaders who have told her of their visions and their intentions. Her book, like so many others about struggling colonial peoples, refuses to face the dilemma that political independence

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may, and usually does, mean economic retrogression. Whatever the intentions of the Indonesian Government, it is not as efficient, competent or disinterested as the Dutch administration. Perhaps this is the price necessarily to be paid for independence; perhaps, although I have seen no convincing evidence, the politically unconscious are glad to pay it. But let's not pretend, as Miss Woodman does, that political progress and the welfare of the people are the same thing.

—Francis West

FRESH AND SALT

RISE FISH, by R. Dickinson; Whitcombe and Tombs, Ltd., 13/6. CREATURES OF THE DEEP SEA, by Klaus Gunther and Kurt Deckert (translated by E. W. Dickes); Allen and Unwin, English price 18/-.

BETWEEN the fish with which Mr. Dickinson is primarily concerned and those described by Messrs. Gunther and Deckert there is a great gulf fixed, but it is possible to discern an element (other than water) common to both books. Mr. Dickinson, assiduously fishing his way from Taupo to the Bay of Plenty (with a perfunctory glance at the Bay of Islands), the other two peering through the quartz ports of Beebe's bathysphere or following the Challenger and the Dana as they dredge the deeps, are in their diverse ways responding to the same impulse. It's true that Mr. Dickinson may simply be looking for a trout that will wipe all eyes, but like the others he is responding to the attraction of the unknown. He sounds a pleasant fellow—a little behind the times, perhaps (the solunar theory must be at least 20 years old), and sometimes scarcely orthodox (his description of Ohau Channel tactics would cause an epidemic of apoplexy in the Fly Fishers' Club)—but it is a pity he did not spend more time and space on the Bay of Plenty rivers and less on the Taupo-Rotorua area.

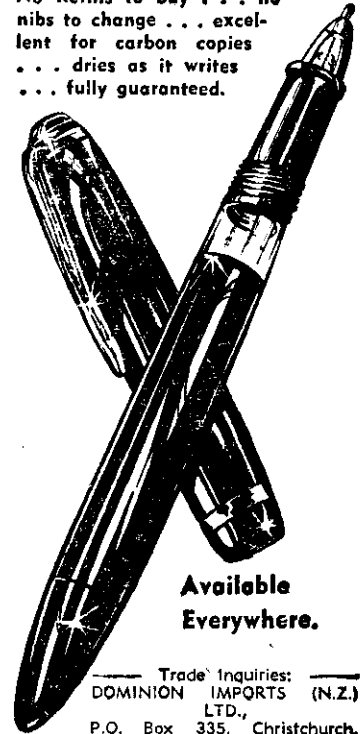
Mr. Dickinson has a theory that the deepest lakes produce the biggest fish. It doesn't seem to work in salt water, as readers of *Creatures of the Deep Sea* will discover. Most of those horrifying swollen-bellied abyssal monsters

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A NASTY wobble in my steering wheel—
But that will soon be remedied, I feel.
The garage which attends to this community
Vill handle it at the oiliest opportunity.
—R.G.P.