

It was the first of the great cultural levellers and its effect on the last two generations is incalculable. As far back as 1912, the Victor Company's advertising budget for the year exceeded £300,000; by 1954, 21 recordings of Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony alone were available on American LP's.

At the heart of the story are the scientists, businessmen and musicians whose careers were anchored to the fortunes of the gramophone. There is a memorable picture of Edison, as stubbornly unimaginative in business as he was brilliant in scientific invention; Eldridge Johnson, the modest genius behind the Victor Empire; Francis Barraud, originator of the famous "His Master's Voice" dog; and there is a legion of great musical personalities, headed by the incomparable Caruso who, incidentally, earned more than £400,000 for recordings during the last ten years of his life.

Statesmen reaching back to Bismarck and Gladstone, authors to Lord Tennyson and Browning, and actresses to Ellen Terry, left their voices to the wonderful talking machine. Ravel has been recorded conducting his own compositions. With such a legacy, it seems almost incredible that no public library exists for the preservation of early recordings of great historic value. Perhaps one will be created, before it is too late.

—Henry Walter

SOCIAL CONFLICTS

CUSTOM AND CONFLICT IN AFRICA. by Max Gluckman; Blackwell, English price 12/6.

THE Third Programme has done many good things, and the publication of series of talks in book form is one of them. Professor Gluckman's six talks, a discussion of an important theme by a distinguished anthropologist, make an excellent little book. Since he is addressing laymen Mr. Gluckman's work is free from the jargon so often bandied between professionals, and the result is a lively and stimulating discussion on the fascinating theme of the conflicts within African societies and the ways in which they are solved or held in check. He explains that conflicts of loyalty which threaten to disrupt society are resolved by other loyalties which cut across them and so contain the conflicts, which would otherwise prevent the continuance of social life. He analyses these conflicts as they operate in kingship, marriage, witchcraft and ritual, and reaches the conclusion that the customs which produce social instability are controlled by wider relationships; and so life can go on.

How a society preserves itself is, of course, a vital question. For other than anthropologists the most interesting aspect of the book is Mr. Gluckman's attempt to relate African social conflicts to our own. He throws out some profitable suggestions about the conflicts which exist in European society from the analogy with the more easily detected and analysed conflicts of primitive societies: the conflicts are not essentially different in character. Looking at the solutions adopted by these primitive societies, he can make enlightening comments on our own methods of social control. His assumption is that by drawing on our knowledge of these societies we can better understand our own (which is undeniable) and, by implica-

tion, use this knowledge to engage in social engineering (which is more open to question).

I suppose that the root assumption of social anthropology is what has been pretentiously called "the psychic unity of mankind," and Mr. Gluckman assumes this when he identifies our social conflicts with African. He begins his talks with T. S. Eliot's observation that conflicts in our society are favourable to creativeness and progress. These are not the hallmarks of African society, even allowing for their appearance in different modes, but Mr. Gluckman does not explain this difference: why should similar conflicts have different results? It is unfair to criticise him for failing to do something outside the scope of his purpose, perhaps even outside the scope of his discipline; yet the question must occur to the reader of the book, and the quality of Mr. Gluckman's mind must lead us to hope that one day he will discuss it.

—Francis West

DECLINING GLORY

THE HAPPY EXILES. by Felicity Shaw; Hamish Hamilton, English price 12/6. **THE DARK OF SUMMER.** by Eric Linklater; Jonathan Cape, English price 15/-. **THE RED PRIEST.** by Wyndham Lewis; Methuen, English price 15/-. **GIANT'S ARROW.** by Anthony Rye; Victor Gollancz, English price 12/6.

COLONIAL social life is the theme of Felicity Shaw's most felicitous novel, treated with the astringency and wit it deserves. The scene is patently African, but unanchored in any identifiable place; the time the present. This is a commentary on the abdication phase of imperial history from a domestic or distaff viewpoint, a delicious comedy of manners told with almost Jane Austenish decorum. One imagines without much difficulty the years of boredom and contempt which here find their revenge.

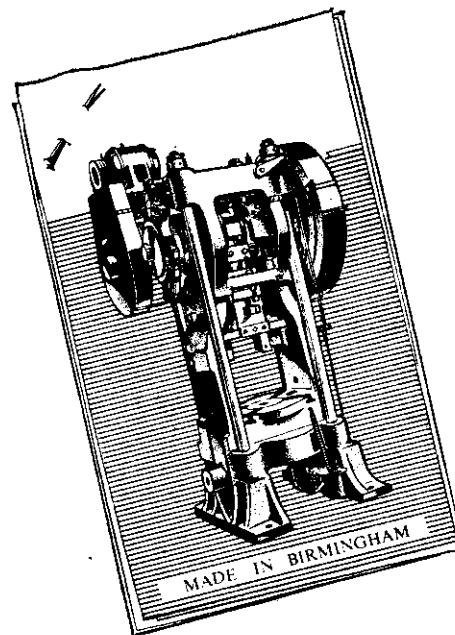
Professional writers have a hard time of it in competition with the enthusiastic amateur; Eric Linklater keeps his end up well in *The Dark of Summer*, a highly improbable but convincing tale about the unmilitary conduct of a soldier chasing up a rare case of Hielan disloyalty in World War Two. The plot takes him to the Shetland Islands mostly, but later entangles him in the Korean War, a virtuoso performance lit up by the occasional flash of epigram—"... rich friends... give you the privilege of wealth and save you the responsibility of looking after it."

Wyndham Lewis is sensitive to social atmosphere and by implication paints a gloomy picture of modern England—which "is not on the way to being a second Sweden, with the beautiful houses of working men, whose rooms glow with the inside of forest trees—not that, but a sort of Methodist model of Russia." This is the Red Priest talking, an embarrassing Anglo-Catholic who combines his own aggressive brand of hot gossiping with sudden outbreaks of physical violence. At the beginning one takes Father Card quite seriously; at the end he is merely grotesque. I cannot decide whether the book is a grand assault on a sect—or simply a literary intention imperfectly realised. But I am grateful for the wayside bits of comic dialogue which make the journey so pleasant.

Giant's Arrow deals with the entangled marital commitments of two London couples and their hangers-on associated in business. The story (the plot has its improbabilities) is told realistically, and the reader accepts its detail and feels the tragic force of its conclusion.

Each of these novels is worth reading

—David Hall



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