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BOOKS

(continued from previous page)

finds romance behind the counter, and our old friend Inspector Chudleigh. A sound job.

I take Henrietta Hamilton (*The Two Hundred Ghost*) and Margaret Erskine (*The Voice of Murder*) to be beginners. Both have something to learn. Henrietta Hamilton chooses a London shop that deals in rare books, and gives her tale an interesting literary flavour. Margaret Erskine overflows her stage, presents her murderer as candidate for hero, and assigns him two murders with an inadequate motive. I just don't believe it.

The cult of child psychology goes distressingly to seed in Margaret Shedd's *Run*. A baby is murdered, and its fifteen-year-old brother goes into hiding in the town, with authority after him as a suspect. For 250 pages we are given, in closely-pressed detail, this boy's movements and thoughts, tied up with the psychological history of his parents. The

tension of the run and the chase is bogged up a glue-pot road. I have seldom found a book so difficult to finish.

—A.M.

SWEET AND TOUGH

THE SWEET SCIENCE, by A. J. Liebling; Victor Gollancz, English price 18/-.

WHEN American journalists settle down to a job in which they are really interested, surely they are the world's best. Followers of the Fancy (now *The Sweet Science*) will be delighted with Mr. Liebling. He is rich with a dry humour, he takes no sides, he talks to winners and losers and trainers and hangers-on, and he loves the Noble Art. ("A boxer, like a writer, must stand alone.") Faced with a rival, he tells us, an American newspaper will usually offer to buy it, which is sometimes done in Scientific circles but is not considered ethical. All the great modern fighters are here—Louis, Marciano, Walcott, Archie Moore, and a lot of interesting boys of no more name than willing fists will earn them. ("But I must have didn't do so bad, because they all applauded me.") And for those who think boxing both brutal and dangerous he produces a "resonant old gentleman, wiry, straight, and white-haired," who invited them to a nineteenth birthday party in another saloon. On the invitation was "Billy Ray, Last Surviving Bare Knuckle Fighter." Asked how many fights he'd had, Mr. Ray said, "A hundred forty. The last one was with gloves. I thought the game was getting soft, so I retired."

On the Fancy Jeffrey Farnol wrote with romantic enthusiasm, Hemingway with tough-guy lack of humour. Hazlitt adorned it with good prose, and Dickens could not overlook reference to Tom Cribb. Liebling's hero-chronicler is Egan, who in 1812 turned out the racy *Boxiana; or Sketches of Ancient and Modern Pugilism; from the days of Broughton and Slack to the Heroes of the Present Milling Aera*. After the classic age of trulls and lushes, toffs and toddlers, Liebling deals with only 1951-55, but he has the eye and the wit of his master and the game of man against man, skill against skill in the boxing ring, is a deal less questionable than some other forms of combativeness.

—Denis Glover

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

THE EARLY CHRISTIAN FATHERS, edited and translated by Henry Betterson; Oxford University Press, Geoffrey Cumberlege, English price 16/- . A selection of great value to the non-academic reader. The period opens immediately after the New Testament and ends with the Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325).

CONFUCIUS, by Shigeki Kaizuka, translated by Geoffrey Bownas; Allen & Unwin, English price 12/6. A study of Confucius and of the background to his thought in China in the sixth and fifth centuries B.C.

SEA FIGHTS AND SHIPWRECKS, by Hanson W. Baldwin; Museum Press, English price 16/- . A collection of tales from maritime history covering the period 1816-1945 and told with some pretence towards documentation.

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