

son, and, in his last years, a middle-aged man determined to found a family rooted in the soil. As a young Catholic, he literally danced with rage when the Recorder of London raided the Portuguese ambassador's chapel during Mass, and 12 years later was an impetuous volunteer on the fleet that fought the Armada. Such men, indeed, lived dangerously. His brother was maimed by torture during the "cold war" arising from the Papal monopoly of alum—an essential element in England's major industry—and a span of fifty years covered both the accumulation of his fortune and its dissipation by his unsubstantial heirs.

All this story is told by Mr Stone agreeably and with scholarly control of a wide range of well-documented detail. The book is admirably presented, and makes good reading, though there is some repetition, and the writing is fluent rather than sparkling. Mr. Stone has placed firmly and attractively in the centre of the stage a man whose career illustrates many facets of an exciting and richly varied age.

—F. L. W. Wood

#### NEW ZEALAND AT SPEED

ROAMING ROUND NEW ZEALAND, by Frank Clune; Angus and Robertson, Australian price 25/-.

THE prolific Australian writer in this book describes his three months' sojourn in New Zealand at the beginning of 1956. Clune saw a great deal, by car, and poked into many odd corners of both islands, besides visiting all the well-known resorts. He writes with zest, in a lively hard-hitting style which hardly suffers from some of the blows failing to connect with reality. He recounts local legends and history wherever he goes, but a book which was conscientiously conceived is marred by mistakes in detail—the other side of the brisk self-confidence which is its chief charm.

We can bear up when Frank Clune writes of Katherine Mansfield as a parasitical remittance-woman and her work as "empty, tedious and scarcely worth reading," for he is entitled to his opinion. But we do totter a little when he tells us that Sir Harold Beauchamp, by giving money to help establish the war memorial art gallery in Wellington, "did more for the cultural life of New Zealand than his runaway daughter."

How far he can stray from fact we see when we learn from him that Samuel Butler's "grandfather, the bishop, was the author of a well-known satirical poem, *Hudibras*," or that Oamaru was the first port in New Zealand or Australia from which frozen mutton was shipped to Britain, "in the steamer *Dunedin* in 1884." But it is more often the interpretation which goes awry.

Clune gives us a fairly good idea of what it feels like to belong to that

oppressed minority, the overseas tourist; the picture is reasonably reassuring. He met only one snooty receptionist (in Christchurch) and one really poor hotel. The constant comparison with Australia will interest New Zealanders, and I have no doubt that this book will bring Australians to New Zealand. The maps and photographs are useful. The errors are due to haste and could be corrected in a new edition—which might be recommended to visitors.

—David Hall

#### TOP SECRET SERVICE

BE SHOT FOR SIXPENCE, by Michael Gilbert; Hodder and Stoughton, English price 12/6. THE OTHER ISLAND, by E. H. Clements; Hodder and Stoughton, English price 12/6. NIGHT DROP, by Stephen Ransome; Victor Gollancz, English price 10/6. GIDEON'S WEEK, by J. J. Marric; Hodder and Stoughton, English price 12/6. THE BARBERTON INTRIGUE, by Seldon Truss; Hodder and Stoughton, English price 11/6. THE TWO HUNDRED GHOSTS, by Henrietta Hamilton; Hodder and Stoughton, English price 10/6. THE VOICE OF MURDER, by Margaret Erskine; Hodder and Stoughton, English price 11/6. RUN, by Margaret Shedd; Victor Gollancz, English price 12/6.

[F Michael Gilbert is not "the greatest post-war arrival in crime fiction" (an English reviewer), he is certainly good and very dependable. *Be Shot for Sixpence* is his starkest story, and its concern with secret service on the Hungarian frontier gives it a topical interest. The English narrator repels at first, but we find he is an ex-prisoner of war (as is Gilbert himself), and has seen terrible things. What happens to this agent is most exciting and tense, and so full of uncertainty that it is difficult to be sure, even at the end, who was straight and who was double-crossing. If this picture of ruthlessness encountered is only a fraction justified, it explains the Hungarian loathing for the secret police.

Miss Clements is another safe bet. This time Alister Woodhead investigates leakage in a secret experimental station on a small Welsh island. On another island is a monastery, and the affairs of the establishments become intertwined, with adventures from which Woodhead escapes finally by the thickness of gold-leaf. After Michael Gilbert, there is an agreeable infusion of sweetness and light; but Britain is not Hungary.

Another established writer, Stephen Ransome, brings off in *Night Drop* a first-rate blackmail thriller. Those New York private sleuths, Cole and Speare, again seem to have only one client, and are again torn between co-operation and non-co-operation with the police. The solution is a masterpiece of surprise, and will give the reader a glow of satisfaction. Full marks for this Olympic finish.

I recommended J. J. Marric's *Gideon's Day*, a round in the life of a Scotland Yard superintendent, as an excellent picture of varied police activity. I can

do the same for *Gideon's Week*, written on the same lines. The central problem is an escape of prisoners from gaol, with one of them bent on vengeance. Gideon, now promoted Commander, is a very likeable policeman.

Seldon Truss's latest, *The Barberton Intrigue*, gives us murder and blackmail in a London departmental store, with, among the characters, a beauty without morals, an ex-crook who is boss of the business, a young righter of wrong who

(continued on next page)

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THE hooters hoot the knell of parting day.  
As summer skies are fading into grey  
Commuters homeward sweat their weary way.

None of us has a chance of tasting life  
Nearer the madding crowd's ignoble strife  
Than when returning nightly to the wife.

But what I find encourages profanity,  
Simmers the blood and even tests the sanity  
Is not so much the heat as the humanity.

—R.G.P.

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