

treat. These, then, are his swans. His ducks are largely the same as O'Faolain's.

As far as I am aware, no serious novelist has ever written a book about a critic.

PLAY WITH QUALITY

THE TRIAL OF THOMAS CRANMER. by Anne Ridler; Faber and Faber, English price 12/6.

THE combination of verse drama with both history and religion presents curious and considerable problems to the writer; so far poets seem only to have found two satisfactory solutions to the dilemmas. Eliot, Fry and others convince us of the reality and the humanity of the protagonist (e.g., Becket and Moses), and present a dramatic clash on personal, legal and spiritual levels. Charles Williams, Claudel, and their like speak dramatically to the inner ear—of the mysteries—and in such a way that we are satisfied with the outer conflicts even when structurally the play may not be adequate.

In this play Mrs Ridler does not quite succeed in either direction. Historically she reconstructs the last few years of Cranmer's life, failing to make him an entirely real person as husband, archbishop or martyr. For the play to be wholly gripping all three facets would probably be necessary. Of course, with the compelling background of St. Mary the Virgin, Oxford where the play was presented and where stands the actual pillar against which Cranmer made his final apologia, the atmosphere might carry the work triumphantly.

Needless to say, Anne Ridler turns her verse well and without obscurity. There are moments of spiritual inspiration and dramatic poignancy, but the play does not fulfil the considerable promise of her earlier nativity play *The Shadow Factory*. It may be (Charles Williams also had a try) that Cranmer is not the subject for a play; certainly his wife suggests more dramatic possibilities, since she remarried not once but twice after his martyrdom, which surely constitutes some sort of a record. Anne Ridler may still write a play in speakable, understandable verse of fine quality.

—John V. Trevor

MILD AND BITTER

THE STUFFED SWAN. by John Appleby; Hodder and Stoughton, English price 11/6. **DEATH'S BRIGHT ANGEL.** by Thurman Warriner; Hodder and Stoughton, English price 11/6. **VOTE AGAINST POISON.** by John Sherwood; Hodder and Stoughton, English price 12/6. **CONSIDER THE LILIES.** by Harriet Ainsworth; Hodder and Stoughton, English price 10/6. **THE CHINA ROUNDABOUT.** by Josephine Bell; Hodder and Stoughton, English price 12/6. **STRANGER'S MEETING.** by Richard Savage; Museum Press, English price 10/6.

IF authentic personal testimony came to light showing that some one else wrote Shakespeare, some of the reactions might be similar to those highlighted in John Appleby's amusing story *The Stuffed Swan*. A letter written by Queen Elizabeth, declared genuine by an expert on Tudor calligraphy, reveals the Queen as the author of *Hamlet*. The comedy in today's reception of this sensation lies in the attitudes of certain schools and vested interests. A Stratford alderman foresees the ruin of his town; a champion of the Earl of Oxford is indignant; a Baconian is furious; and a publisher about to issue a Shakespeare for schools fears for his pocket. Perhaps the funniest is the Baconian. A middle-aged accountant who has been impervious to other snares, he now meets "an assault on the one love of his life." This group tries to steal the document, and then the publisher applies literary blackmail. These mild crimes put into the thriller class

a book very different from Appleby's tales of violence. The dénouement is ingenious.

If you want stronger meat, I commend the return of Thurman Warriner's unconventional and engaging couple, Archdeacon Toft and Mr Ambo. With his blend of worldly understanding and religious wisdom, the archdeacon is one of my favourite sleuths. *Death's Bright Angel* hovers over the West Country coast of the Bristol Channel, where forces of good and evil fight for the life of a gifted young man. He is being murdered by fear, but is saved by the love and faith of a woman. This is a mystery story of exceptional power.

Can you imagine a Parliamentary election more complicated by personal issues than if the late member has been murdered, and the Conservative and the Labour candidate (the former his grandson), and his daughter, are suspects? This happens in an English town in John Sherwood's *Vote Against Poison*. He mixes politics and detection well, and salts the dish with humour. An acquaintance of some of us, Mr Blessington of the Treasury, intervenes with his inevitable success.

Consider *the Lilies*, a title taken from one of the most beautiful sentences in English, refers to the refusal of a wealthy and nasty old woman in an English village to give lilies for church decoration. There is an atmosphere of evil from the first page, and this deepens with murder. Harriet Ainsworth constructs the plot competently and sweetens it with some pleasant characters. A curious social incident is the proposal of the charming detective-inspector to the heroine, in front of people. I find his assurance a little disturbing.

In *China Roundabout*, Josephine Bell gives a new twist to the old theme of Indian treasure. A maharajah gave the child of an English officer an exquisite roundabout of china horses with riders, which moved to music. This family heirloom becomes the subject of murderous intrigue in a London house of flats. I am not sure where, in the motives, jewels end and drugs begin, but there is plenty of excitement and a wide variety of characters.

In Richard Savage's *Stranger's Meeting*, a wounded Dartmoor escapee seeks sanctuary, assaults the doctor attending him, and steals his car; the doctor's wife, on the verge of unhappiness, sets out to investigate his disappearance, crosses the criminal's trail and straightens out his inner troubles. Then, all on the same night, she and her husband return to happiness. A tense story well rounded off with a moral.

—A.M.

THE LONG DAY

SPRING ON AN ARCTIC ISLAND. by Katharine Scherman; Victor Gollancz, English price 18/-.

THIS record of six weeks on an island north of Baffin Island gives an impression of a longer stay than the short Arctic spring. Member of an American scientific party camping on Bylot Island to study its flora and fauna, the author was soon caught up in "the serene timelessness of the long, long day," when the sun never set and the temperature stayed about 36 degrees. She writes amusingly about the discomforts, and tells of exciting sled trips across the sea ice, of seal hunts, of netting salmon, of the activities of the many birds, and the appearance of wild flowers of the tundra. In Idlout we are given a happy portrait of an Eskimo, expert hunter, sled driver and guide, observant and kind, always laughing and joking. But there is evidence that the Eskimos are becoming too dependent on the luxuries obtained at the trading post, where the author also spent some days, learning

much of interest about the life of the traders, the missionaries and the police. There are illustrative photographs.

—L.J.W.

INSIDE PORTUGAL

BLUE MOON IN PORTUGAL. by William and Elizabeth Younger; Eyre and Spottiswoode, English price 30/-.

THIS is a good travel book on Portugal. Admirers will find its romance gracefully captured. Expeditions into lesser-known parts are charmingly narrated. There are 40 photographs and useful notes for travellers. If one might venture a criticism it is that there is a terrible to do and to say about "Port," a much over-rated drink from Portugal, and now used by polite society in Paris solely as an aperitif.

—F. J. Foot

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS REVIEW, which for several years has been issued by the Department of External Affairs in cyclostyled copies, has now reached the dignity of print; and the result is in every way an improvement. The Review contains material of immediate interest to students of world affairs, but it also has reference value, and this value is increased as the journal becomes easier to read and easier to keep. Especially useful is the Chronology of International Events, a feature which should help editorial writers and sub-editors to check their dates quickly. The Review has a small but influential circulation, and its new format will be warmly approved and welcomed.

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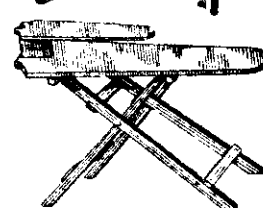


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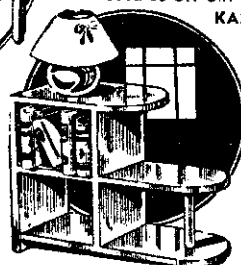


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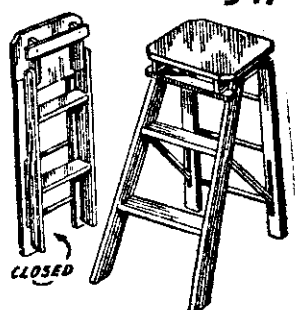
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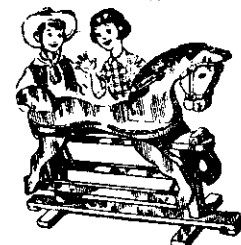
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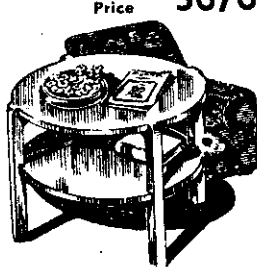
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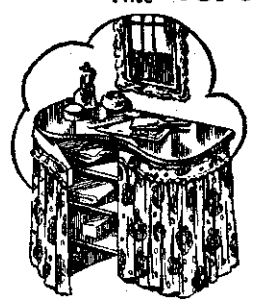
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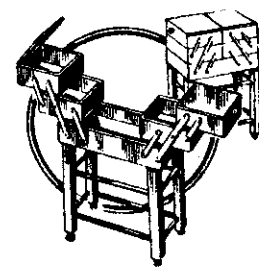
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