

BOOKS

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chance that they will ever succeed. Passive Resistance is a different matter altogether. However small its beginnings, and however signal the initial defeat, it may grow even in South Africa's unfertile soil. No one could have foreseen Gandhi's success, when he left that very country for his native India, only a generation ago. . .

—Anton Vogt

THE CONNOISSEURS

THE RISE OF THE HOUSE OF DUVEEN, by J. H. Duveen; Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., English price 18/-.

I REMEMBER reading the sparkling series of profiles on the late Lord Duveen by S. N. Behrman, which appeared in *The New Yorker* a few years ago, but I was quite unprepared for the intense pleasure I received from this book. For more than fifty years

prior to the Second World War, the Duveen family were the Rothschilds of the art and antique world. With the instincts of gamblers and the finesse of connoisseurs they moved in an atmosphere as exotic as that of the Arabian nights.

How lucky we are that J. H. Duveen, a nephew of the firm's founder and himself a recognised authority on art, has survived to set down, at the age of 83, his written notes and recollections; doubly fortunate that he has the gift of prose as simple and luminous as the priceless works of art he describes. He has charm, wit, humour and poignancy. Here are the plots of a dozen fascinating stories: frantic cross-Channel journeys, with hundreds of thousands of pounds at stake; covert treasure hunts in decayed mansions; psychological blitzes on millionaire tycoons and a secret rendezvous with cold-blooded killers. There is a portrait of the great J. P. Morgan which I shall always remember and, for good measure, the solution to the

baffling real-life mystery of Mayerling. The chronology of his stories is uncertain and Mr Duveen is vague about dates, but who cares?

The book ends with the deaths of Sir Joel and Henry Duveen, whose genius built a fantastic commercial empire. "It is my intention if I am spared," the author says, "to complete the saga in another volume describing the period when Joe (Lord Duveen) was the undisputed master." I sincerely hope to read it.

—Henry Walter

TWO WOMEN WRITERS

DINNER DOESN'T MATTER, by Mary Scott; Paul's Book Arcade, with Angus and Robertson, 12/6. *HARVEST OF DARING*, by Florence Preston; Cassell, English price 15/-.

THESE novels are by New Zealand women writers who have had some success with previous books. No effort of local patriotism is required to say that they are well constructed and very readable.

Dinner Doesn't Matter gives us a women's-eye view of modern New Zealand back-country life; with its "rehab" farmers, the essential postmistress-store-keeper, a shifty sheep-stealer and his dog, and so on. Needless to say, there is no real harm in any of them. Into this stronghold of common sense come two refugees from the city, both female, one flighty and blonde, the other brunette and plain, but with possibilities. The story then revolves around the relations of these two to the local bachelors, with entertaining diversions. It would be easy to treat this book as if it were a chronicle of back-country gossip, but it has two conspicuous virtues; a deft wit, and a complete lack of pretension. It deserves to be popular.

Miss Preston set herself a much more difficult task. Her story is also in the back country, but it takes us to the pioneering days of the Otago high country, and the fortunes of an early settler family. The writing of a successful historical novel demands much more in the way of literary skill than a "contemporary" work, where the writer can draw directly from her experience; and there are dangers of lapsing into an over-conscious effort to give authenticity. We find at first that Florence Preston seems determined to wreck the book by allowing herself about ten times the optimum number of adjectives; but fortunately the difficulties of the plot keep her busy enough to allow the characters to speak for themselves. Thereafter the skill of the author becomes increasingly evident. She is confident enough to introduce some eccentric, dialect-speaking characters without straining the reader's credulity; the plot has a slightly melodramatic flavour, but is handled well.

It is to be hoped that Florence Preston is planning more books, and that she will develop her obvious talents while suppressing some faults; the result may well be an outstanding novel.

—Edmond Malone

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

THINKING BY MACHINE, a study of cybernetics, by Pierre de Latil, translated by Y. M. Golla; Sidgwick and Jackson, English price 45/-. Quoting Blaise Pascal's dictum that "It is much more satisfactory to know something about everything than to know everything about one thing," Pierre de Latil endeavours to show through the concepts of cybernetics that a study of functional activity is of more importance than thinking in terms of causality about natural phenomena. "The logic of effects," he writes, "must be re-investigated from its very beginnings."

THOUGHT FOR FOOD, a cookery book for entertaining occasions, by Cecily Finn and Joan O'Connor; Museum Press, English price 15/-. Of ingenuity in the making of cookery books there is no end. This latest example has excellent recipes, selected for occasions which place some strain upon the hostess: "Luncheon given to grandparents before matinee," "Dinner for a charming stranger," "First dinner at home after the return from a honeymoon," "Dinner for an Angry Client," "Dinner given the night the pipes burst," etc., etc. The commentary is witty, and the book throughout is as entertaining as it is useful.

THE SUN, by Guido Abetti; Faber and Faber, English price 63/-. For more than 20 years this has been the recognised text on the sun, and for this translation the author has supplied much material not included in the revised Italian edition of six years ago. There are nearly 150 plates and many illustrations in the text.



the man who was too good

Maybe he's not as young as he used to be, but he'll show the youngsters how to swim out beyond the breakers. However, the waves seem a little higher than they were last season, the current a little stronger, the effort a little greater. Perhaps that's why his heart wouldn't take it, or why he got the cramp or simply became very, very tired. Perhaps that's why he's dead.