

jostle other amateur groups to tackle Whiting's work. However, I did feel that Mr White's talk did rather less than justice to his subject, in several ways—first, in giving no clear idea what Whiting has written about; secondly, in defining "poetic theatre" so oddly and vaguely (something about "a fusion of meaning and mystery") as to suggest a preciosity in Whiting which does not exist, but, most of all, by his references to "the critics"—not "some critics," mark you, nor "most critics," but "the critics." These ravaging cohorts, according to Mr White, all "howled for Whiting's throat." Yet I remember clearly the warm reception given to his work by several of them, and the later defence by others. Mr White's mass condemnation carried just a hint of making a "corner" in an interesting dramatist.

—J.C.R.

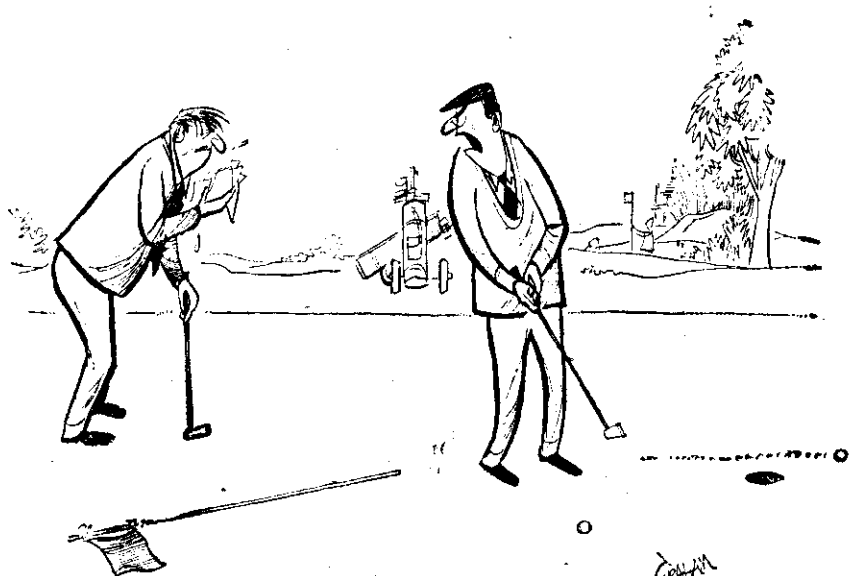
Steel True!

I HOPE the NZBS will record more portraits from memory like *Woman with a Sword*, a very real picture of the late Dr Doris Gordon. This portrait had the same vitality as Cecil Woodham-Smith's Florence Nightingale to whom, both in personality and method, Dr Doris seemed hauntingly alike. Forthrightly, with implied affection, her husband and colleagues recaptured her dynamic quality, revealing by inference her sense of dedication and the somewhat rueful devotion of her disciples. In

retrospect we felt them flinch a little as they faced those urgent directives from Stratford, the commands leaping from the oddly typewritten pages. A nice revelation of personality by typewriter! Attention flagged a little towards the close. I am seldom happy with our women narrators who, as in this portrait, so often assume too holy a tone, missing the true mood of the person or event described. Sentimentality (sworn foe surely to Dr Doris Gordon's steel) kept breaking in. No doubt the apposite Bunyan quotation offered a neat finish but a truer climax lay in Dr Bill's last quiet assertion, Mr Robb's epitome or, best of all, in the final speaker's review of what lay ahead. For a mission does not end, its course is merely deflected.

Nothing Did It Bear

TO someone with a lively interest in the playwright, Kenneth White's talk on John Whiting was disappointing, neither answering his own question Acorn or Oak Tree? nor bringing the writer into perspective. He would hardly kindle enthusiasm among the unknowing nor send the Whiting lover scurrying to his bookshelf. Calling him rightly a controversial figure, Mr White failed to reveal what qualities in Whiting provoked the controversy. With its contemporary glow, its brilliance cutting through obscurity, Whiting's work lends itself immensely to personal interpretation yet Mr White, while outlining all the facts, gave us very little opinion.



"Bless you!"

(C) Punch

What, for instance, does he find in *Saint's Day* that makes it "the nearest approach in recent years to poetry in the theatre"? Why has *Marching Song* won such favour on the Continent, particularly in Germany? I, who rate *Marching Song* higher than *Saint's Day*, am naturally curious to learn why an-

other does the reverse. But Mr White gave us none of this except an enthusiastic appraisal of *Penny for a Song* which he has had the good fortune to see performed by the Tauranga Repertory, whose valour in choosing an unknown play deserves a special salute.

—N.L.M.

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