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IN THE SPOTLIGHT

THE PLAYS OF J. B. PRIESTLEY, VOLUME II., 16/9 posted. This volume of plays by Britain's great playwright contains "Laburnum Grove," "Bees on the Boat Deck," "When We Are Married," "Good Night Children," "The Golden Fleece," "How Are They at Home," and "Ever Since Paradise."

27 WAGONS FULL OF COTTON, AND OTHER PLAYS, Tennessee Williams, 10/6 posted. In "A Streetcar Named Desire" and "The Glass Menagerie" Mr. Williams established himself as a playwright of deep perception and poetic imagination. This collection of eleven short plays shows the same qualities.

GAUGUIN, With introduction and notes by Herbert Read, 10/9 posted. Another Faber Gallery book, containing 16 superb colour plates of this most fascinating of the impressionists.

SHAW, C. E. M. Joad, 16/6 posted. G.B.S. has provoked numerous biographies. This one, by a figure of no little stature himself, aims less at being a factual study than at picturing the influence of Shaw the philosopher, and political thinker—the man who overthrew the shibboleths of an era.

WELLINGTON CO-OPERATIVE BOOK SOCIETY LIMITED.

MODERN BOOKS 48A MANNERS STREET,
WELLINGTON, C.1, N.Z.

NEW ZEALAND LISTENER

INCORPORATING N.Z. RADIO RECORD

Every Friday

Price Threepence

JANUARY 27, 1950

Editorial and Business Offices: 115 Lambton Quay, Wellington, C.1.

G.P.O. Box 1707

Telegraphic Address: "Listener," Wellington.

Telephone 41-470

Men of the Mountains

DAVID McLEOD'S talk, "High Country Shepherd," may not have been heard as widely as it deserved to be when it was first broadcast from Station 3YA; but a revised version will shortly go out from Radio New Zealand, so that people in other parts of the world will hear of men who are "just a little more than life size." Meanwhile we print the text of the broadcast, believing that others will like it as much as we do, and that they will find in it something to think and talk about with equal interest in town and country. Although in their working habits and special knowledge the high country shepherds are a separate group, they are not remote, except in space, from the rest of the community. If we see them from a distance, they are still our own people: we can recognise them, and feel something of their life on the clean uplands. For overseas listeners it will be harder. They will hear the details, but the images suggested to them will be filled out from their own experience, so that the picture will be different, and a little out of focus. Even among our own people the picture may be true only in outline. There is, for instance, the farmer from the plains who once asked Mr. McLeod what he and his fellow workers did throughout the year. If some farmers know so little of the high country shepherd's life and work, the rest of us may be excused for knowing less. Yet we know enough to be able to see what Mr. McLeod meant when he said that the high country has had "a very notable influence upon New Zealand life and character." It may be true that life in that inner region "has been set apart from the rest of the country"; but the frontiers can be crossed, and the differences are of degree rather than of kind. Thousands of men are working their sheep on farms among the foothills and on the plains. Many of the ewes from which they breed fat lambs come down to them from the mountains. Their dogs are of the breeds

which are used by musterers. And the men themselves have the same qualities and aptitudes as the shepherds "up the gorge." In high country, however, the type is at its best. To become notable in that community, said Mr. McLeod, is to be "a man in the full sense of the word." There are men of "courage, skill and endurance" on the plains as well as in the ranges, and in the cities as well as on the farms; but men who work on the mountains are tested more often: their standards become higher, so that hazards which some of us may face once or twice in a lifetime are for them the ordinary demands of their occupation. Most New Zealanders now live in cities and towns; but the mountain type is still the ideal. The resourcefulness of men who went overseas to the wars was in part a result of colonial experience; and some of us have wondered why toughness and self-reliance had survived when our way of life was changing. Yet we are a small community, and the country around us is large and wild enough to preserve the colonial attitude, even if it is expressed merely in the universal care of gardens, or in the labours of young men who dig themselves level places where homes may be built on the heights above Wellington. Always the land goes back to the hills. In the same way the New Zealand character goes back in type to men who cleared the wilderness, who went inland with sheep, and who left standards of strength and skill which are maintained today by high country shepherds. There may be no need to be doubtful of the future while these men are with us. But they are few in number, and perhaps it is significant that we already tend to see them as if they were legendary figures. We must make sure that, if they seem to have become "a little more than life size," it is not because the rest of us are falling too far below the standards laid upon us by a land in which it is easy and natural to look to the mountains.

N.Z. LISTENER, JANUARY 27, 1950.