

of age. A calculation as lightning as any arithmetical sum can ever be for me, makes him in his very early twenties when he wrote these plays. Perhaps this provides the answer to the query why do they not quite come off?

"The Tragedy of Good Intentions" has as its main character Peter the Hermit, and as its main theme the fanaticism and idealism of the Children's Crusade, placed in cynical contrast to the military intrigue and clerical chicanery which sponsored it. "The Indifferent Shepherd" is a modern discussion of moral values. "Blow Your Own Trumpet," according to the author, is "an idea, rather than a play in the ordinary sense." There is not space or time to reflect on what constitutes a play, and what does not, but all these three fall down, in my mind, at least, because they are plays of ideas rather than of people (this in spite of the title), and because the ideas are not new enough, not exciting or original enough to carry the story.

Most of the characters speak as mouth-pieces for the author. Very few come to life of their own accord. A stage character must have a life of its own. It must be able every now and then to take the bit between its teeth, to romp away from the author's initial image and become something in its own right. Not many of Mr. Ustinov's people do this, so that we are given a hermit whose fanaticism comes from a book rather than from the emotion of a tortured human soul; or we have a clergyman who speaks always as though from the pulpit. "Blow Your Own Trumpet" contains characters who come nearer to some sort of spontaneity. There are some very good acting parts, notably the conductor without an orchestra, the speechless grandmother, the psycho-analyst who finds himself the most interesting subject for examination. This piece has periods of hilarious comedy, excitement and extravagance which give it a glow the other two lack.

The preface, "On the Nature of Acting and its Effect on the Playwright," based



TWO BOOKS will be discussed by each reviewer in the ZB Book Review session on August 26. Mrs. Helen Garrett (above) will speak about "The Trouble in One House," by Brendan Gill, and "Ever Thine," by Hester Chapman. Other books for review are: "The Beast of the Haitian Hills," by Philippe-Thoby and Pierre Marcelin, and "The Mesh," by Lucie Marchal (Frank Sargeson); "The Dead Seagull," by G. Barker, and "The Peacock," by Jan Godden (Pat Macaskill); and "Cork on the Water," by MacDonald Hastings, and "The Case Against Myself," by Gregory Tree (John Morris)

on a lecture delivered to the University of London, I found extremely interesting.

—Isobel Andrews

THREE NOVELS

THE CASE OF COMRADE TULAYEV, by Victor Serge; Hamish Hamilton. English price, 12/6.

SHADOW OF THE BRIDGE, by Betsy Barton; Victor Gollancz. English price, 10/6.

A GROVE OF FEVER TREES, by Daphne Rooke; Jonathan Cape. English price, 10/6.

WITH the opening pages of *Comrade Tulayev*, we are momentarily back in the traditional half-world of the great Russian novelists—the shabby lodgings of poor Assistant Clerk Romachkin with their smell of boiled cabbage and naphthalene. But this is Soviet Russia, and when a high Party official is assassinated, the ugly machine of Soviet revenge begins to roll. One by one a number of individuals, none of them remotely connected with Tulayev's death, are liquidated; no one is big enough or politically pure enough to escape the purge for which it is made the excuse. The story of each victim is told in detail, and they include Erchov the High Commissar, Rublev the old Party stalwart, Makeyev the Regional Secretary—even some of the inquisitors who extort the familiar bogus confessions. They fight for a while and then accept death almost as if they regard it as their last service to Party solidarity. The book is not another *Darkness at Noon*, but is written with wisdom and compassion. The author has a deep understanding of the Russian mind, and his book is above all an instructive study on the theme of the corruption of unlimited power.

Shadow of the Bridge is the story of the revolt against authority of two girls at a rich girls' college in America. Alida, the heroine, is an ugly duckling, while her companion Dee is beautiful and poised, passes all her exams and has a "wonderful" boy-friend. When Dee jumps off a bridge Alida blames herself for her death, and develops an oversized neurosis before the headmistress is discomfited and her father's friendship is recovered. The book is far too emotional to be easy reading, but its setting is authentic, and the author has real insight into the psychology of young women and in their strange, mystical yearnings.

The Ashburns and the Eliots, neighbouring South African farmers in *A Grove of Fever Trees*, both have skeletons in the family closet. The Ashburn skeleton is insanity, which appears in their son Danny, a "half-mad giant" who is the hero of this book. Danny loves Prudence Eliot, but so does his brother Edward, who goes to Johannesburg to work, takes to the bottle, and is eventually killed by Danny in a fit of madness. Danny stays on at the farm, spending a good deal of his time among the Zulus, finally marrying an English girl and having a perfectly normal son. Despite its tragic theme this is a surprisingly lively story, full of vitality, warmth, and the colour of its exotic setting.

—P.J.W.

LIONS AND RABBITS

BEHIND THE STUMPS, by Godfrey Evans; Hodder and Stoughton. English price, 12/6. J. M. BARRIE'S ALLAHAKBARRIES, C.C. 1899, James Barrie Publishers Ltd. English price, 3/6.

SINCE there is only one wicketkeeper in a side (with occasional understudies), naturally fewer books on cricket have been written by "keepers" than by batsmen or bowlers. This is a pity, for the wicketkeeper sees more of the game

(continued on page 15)

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