

woven, and the sentiment is poignant without becoming cloying. For all that, I continue to look to Mr. Coward for an "important" play, which may be folly, like seeking apples on an apricot tree. *Quadrille* is probably not for New Zealand, however, and would be dynamite for amateurs.

Claude Evans has given us several plays, most of them so nearly good that some day he must surely bring out a winner. *That Man Hartington* does not quite make the grade, in spite of a felicity of invention and an interesting setting. The dénouement is contrived and reduces the intensity of the drama to a storm in a teacup; yet the play lacks the humour and subtlety of characterisation necessary for a cynical-philosophical treatment, which would probably have been the best way of dealing with the plot.



Noel Coward

The story is about a solicitor who misappropriates his clients' funds. Everything depends on the characterisation of Hartington, for the sub-plot and minor twists are not inspired. I do not think Hartington is a profound enough creation. In places the dialogue is stilted and does not flow easily and naturally; several of the characters are stock; there are faults galore. And yet . . . and yet . . .

I would like to acclaim this play; there is so much that is good and sound about it. Indeed, in the theatre it might just get by with a really brilliant performance in the lead. In the study it is difficult not to be ruthless, just when most anxious to praise and encourage.

—John V. Trevor

THE LEAGUE THAT FAILED

A HISTORY OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS, by F. P. Walters; Oxford University Press, two volumes. English price, 60/-.

IT is a pity that it is no longer fashionable to call nations "powers," for this word is one of the keys to understanding international affairs. Whatever the visions of people, whatever their ideals, they cannot plan to change the world unless they know they are dealing with power. The League of Nations Covenant itself could only be agreed upon after sordid diplomatic manoeuvres (for example, Japan got concessions in Shantung in exchange for support of Article 21, which concerned the Monroe doctrine); and the stronger powers (Britain and France) used the League as an extension of foreign policy, not, to quote Walters, as a "supreme arbiter of international affairs." How can it be otherwise? The League was an association of independent powers, each with its interests to protect. And though the League had a stronger binding clause (Article 16) on the preservation of peace than has the United Nations Charter, the article was not strong enough (nor could it be strong enough) to prevent aggression. When Japan invaded Manchuria in 1931, the interests of a majority of the powers were such as to make the League Covenant embarrassing, and when Italy attacked Abyssinia, says Walters, they "sacrificed the League to Mussolini."

On occasions the interests of the powers coincided with the principles of the Covenant, and then, of course, it was worth while to have this piece of inter-

national machinery. For the League had its achievements: it settled scores of disputes, stopped four wars, supervised mandates, did something towards the protection of minorities, administered Danzig and the Saar, and began work in social, economic, health and other fields which has made possible the most successful developments of the UN and its allied agencies. (Unhappily the UN has not developed a secretariat whose morale and independence are as great as the League Secretariat.)

Walters, formerly Deputy Secretary-General of the League of Nations, has written what is already a standard text in the universities of the United Kingdom. But unlike some standard texts this is readable.

—W. B. Sutch

LITTLE WORLDS

THE GRASS HARP, by Truman Capote; William Heinemann, N.Z. price, 10 6. A CRY OF CHILDREN, by John Horne Burns; Secker and Warburg, N.Z. price, 12 6. THE CLOSEST KIN THERE IS, by Clara Winston; Victor Gollancz, English price, 12 6. POKER AND I, by John Coates; Victor Gollancz, English price, 12 6.

IN *The Grass Harp*, Truman Capote evokes a South which is not a place so much as a way of looking at the world. He writes of children or, at least, his people have that air of children grown old in childhood and denied their kingdom. He breathes over them the sad cadence of his prose and with a careful oddity, a folksy wisdom, they seem delicately to come alive. The grass harp whispers with "gone voices," and without much place in the world these carefully strange characters take up their lives in a house built by forgotten children in a China tree. But they are not left in peace, though for a time they are lulled by natural things—in much the same way as we are lulled by this exotic, autumnal prose, which preserves, if it does nothing more, the very manner of beauty.

Love and passion and the decay of both; world of flesh and world of spirit; so might be described the burden of *A Cry of Children*. And though we may not accept the specific solution this novel offers we yet cannot deny that in the fierceness of observation Mr. Burns puts before us a picture of reality comparable with the best in contemporary American writing.

Clara Winston's America is outback and drear. She tells with some competence a story of *The Closest Kin There Is*, brother and sister, and their relationship, which is, if anything, even more bleak than the land around.

Poker and I is the story of Poker, eccentric peer, and his illegitimate daughter, Lesbia, who is the "I" of this long light tale. It is a story about lovers and babies, war and peace, and it has at its end, money and happiness—from which the reader will see that this is fiction.

—M.D.

FOR FARMERS

GREEN CROP DRYING, by R. O. Whyte and M. L. Yeo; Faber and Faber, English price, 42/-.

NEW ZEALAND farmers have not yet become even faintly interested in the artificial drying of grass or other fodder crops, but in Britain the process has, both economic and political importance, and great advances have been made both on the engineering side and in farm production and utilisation. It is significant that the Royal Agricultural Society of England has recently inaugurated a Dried Green Crop Competition in connection with the Royal Show. This book

(continued on next page)

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