

research to this period and who documents his work thoroughly. If there is disagreement with him at least one can find his sources and the reasons for his opinions.

I said Hubert de Burgh was his own ancestor. His posterity includes some of the greatest names of mediaeval England. And while on that subject it is interesting to note that his brother William married the daughter of Donal More O'Brien, a descendant of Brian Boru. From this alliance come the Burkes of Limerick and Tipperary and the Yorkist Kings of England. Her Majesty the Queen is thus herself a descendant.

—F. J. Foot

FAULTY, BUT BIG

OF US NOW LIVING, by Rex Ingamells; Halleratt Publishing Company, Melbourne. Australian price, 18/-.

WHEN the Englishman Neville Cardus wrote that there were no ghosts in Sydney, I commented that there were for Australians. This novel of 440 pages, written under a Commonwealth Literary Fund Fellowship, is a detailed reply. It is rich in ghosts of Australia's varied and often murky past. Rex Ingamells's ambitious and, I think, original plan, was to imagine a township in the backblocks of South Australia, and trace the threads of its history, through families, back to the convict days. His chief character, a schoolmistress who spends a long life in Quongdong, does most of the tracing. So the story shuttles backwards and forwards, between the township and district and modern cities, and the drama of transportation, where love and hate and ambition struggle in an environment of injustice, corruption and brutality. The tale is a reminder of the convict strain in Australian families, some of them prominent, and that this may be a matter of pride rather than the reverse. In any case, why worry?

Rex Ingamells is stronger in the sweep of his plan than in many of the details of construction. At times his corridors are too lengthy, and the carpentry rough. He has a keen but not always a true eye for character. I can accept the teacher, though in her lifelong self-torturing for her early slip from virtue she is as irritating as Trollope's jilted Lily Dale, but I gravely doubt the fidelity of the Australian who, having been refused by her, goes over to the Boers in the South African war. Most curious are the faults of style in one who has written so much and been a lecturer on Australian literature and a literary judge. He writes with zest and force, but immaturity. There are inflated words, such as "slumbers" for "sleep," and in dialogue a sentence like: "Whatever I am to learn about you, Miss Singwood, it cannot do anything but enhance still further the warm and affectionate regard with which I must always think of you." He seems at home in the talk of the illiterate, but his educated people too often speak in that supposed literary fashion from which "colonial" writing has been freeing itself. Nevertheless, there is something big and impressive about *Of Us Now Living*, something that reflects the growth of a nation.

—A.M.

MISS BANKHEAD

TALLULAH—MY AUTOBIOGRAPHY, by Tallulah Bankhead; Victor Gollancz. English price, 16/-.

READ Miss Bankhead's radio talk ridiculing Dewey when he stood against Truman for the Presidency and you may feel there is a soupçon of bias

N.Z. LISTENER, JUNE 19, 1953.



TALLULAH

Mr. Truman may have been biased

in Mr. Truman's tribute to Tallulah as "undoubtedly the most interesting book I've had in my hands since I have been President of the United States," but you will probably share his feelings when he declares: "I haven't been able to put it down." There is really only one Tallulah, and she is as much at home putting Senator McCarthy and Louis B. Mayer in their places, all in one page, as acting in a play or a film, drinking a slipperful of wine at the Ritz—or doing a cartwheel: and if her story includes a good deal of the sort of thing that can be found in any theatrical biography, it is sufficiently *her* story to make a vastly entertaining and extraordinarily outspoken and honest book. With all the energy she has tossed about off-stage (she suffers from anaemia, too), some people in this part of the world may not know that professionally she was very much more than the star of a few not very outstanding films. She was also in *Lifeboat* (remember?), and she had a big reputation on the London and New York stage.

—F.A.J.

FICTION LUCKY DIP

THE NEW TOWN, by Mervyn Jones; Jonathan Cape. English price, 15/-.

JEFFERSON SELLECK, by Carl Jonas; Jonathan Cape. English price, 15/-.

BURY ME IN LEAD, by I. Goodwin; Wingate. English price, 10/6.

THE modern novel is indeed a lucky dip, with one or two good prizes and many others not so good. Mervyn Jones has constructed, with both feeling and ability, a documentary novel illustrating a phase (a moment of pause, to be more accurate) in the postwar English revolution. Harry Peterson, the hero, is an earnest goodie, selflessly devoted to the ideal New Town, to whom all sorts of misfortunes happen. The frustrations, like Harry's virtue, are piled on a bit thick. Doctrinaire considerations do not altogether inhibit the author (like H. G. Wells) from writing good fiction.

The life and times of *Jefferson Selleck* are meant to be a satire on the typical mid-western businessman. We get the hatred of the New Deal, but many of the thrusts are so subtle they will escape us. Of course, one of the functions of caricature is that the caricaturist also delineates himself.

Bury Me in Lead gruesomely exploits the theme of Edinburgh medical students' body-snatching near the beginning

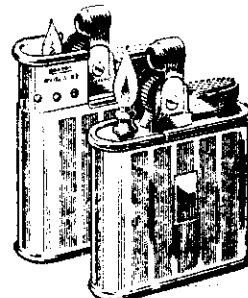
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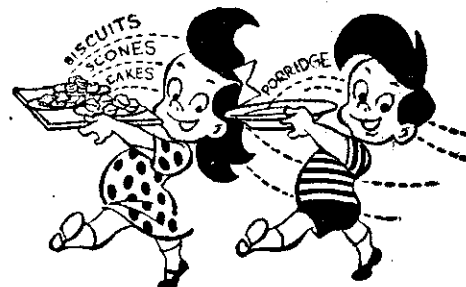
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