

the most severe variation of solitary confinement which men can endure for any period. If the sole result of Hamilton's book were the abolition of the solitary confinement cells, the book would have been worth writing. In any case, it is well worth reading.

—A.J.N.

BRITISH AGENT

APPOINTMENT IN CRETE, by A. M. Rendel; Allan Wingate, New Zealand price 15/-.

AN Oxford classics scholar who had "read ancient Greek" and could speak German, Major Rendel wangled his way into Crete as a British agent largely on the strength of his language qualifications. At first the Greeks exasperated him. They were unreliable and kept neither secrets nor promises; time meant nothing to them—there was always tomorrow to do the job or the day after; they were theatrical and full of their own importance. The difficulties and disappointments of the first months left him irritable and depressed.

Later his mood changes. He admits honestly his failures and limitations; he shows himself to be a sharp and human observer with a whimsical sense of humour; he finds the Cretans a hospitable, friendly and courageous people. Life in the mountains in the glorious Cretan climate makes him hardy and fit. He is chased by German patrols and has some narrow escapes. Disguised as a ragged and rather dirty shepherd, he leads a commando party which blows up a German petrol dump. He organises an intelligence service which reports German dispositions and moves to Cairo by wireless, and finally he slips into Heraklion, bribes German engineers not to blow up the harbour, and reports the enemy's evacuation plans on a hidden transmitter. He tells us all this in a dispassionate and scholarly way, but succeeds in conveying the suspense of the party's first air drop and the feeling of living from moment to moment in some narrow squeaks with German patrols.

—W.A.G.

NARRATIVE SHORT STORIES

AN AUSTRALIAN ROUND-UP, edited by Colin Roderick, illustrated by Broadhurst; Angus and Robertson, Australian price 21/-.

THE editorial preface to this collection of Australian short stories will be a pleasant aperitif for readers with old-fashioned ideas of what a short story should be, for it announces in slap-bang fashion that such a story should be a narrative, and perdition to writers who think one can be made out of "a mood, a passing cloud, a flower, or a mug of beer." That was the maxim on the *Bulletin* under Archibald we are told—"no story (in the old sense), no cheque," and this editor says that if *Bulletin* stories take up most of his space, that's because he holds Archibald was right.

Colin Roderick's collection, which ranges chronologically over the whole of Australian history, keeps almost entirely within this definition; classification of a few might be arguable. The tales have a beginning, a middle and an end; they move; action predominates, and often it is rapid and startling. There are gold-miners and pearl fishers; station owners and "cockatoos," aborigines, police troopers and South Sea Islanders. The writers include many well-known names, such as Henry Lawson (whose story is laid in New Zealand), Louis Becke, Randolph Bedford, Roderic Quinn, James Edmond, Katherine Susannah Prichard, Ion Idriess, and Vance Palmer. Some of the tales rank high. For example, Vance Palmer's treatment of the problem of the aboriginal half-caste in European society is well-nigh perfect. The

(continued on next page)

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