

# ... With ... BOOK and VERSE

By "John O'Dreams"

REPRINTED from contributions to "Punch" is a collection of witty articles, entitled "Things That Annoy Me," by "Evoo," which is certainly a volume to be added to the book-shelves of the elect. Concerning this publication, a misanthropic correspondent, an admirer of the brilliant Mr. Knox, writes to me suggesting compilation of a composite volume, by a syndicate of temperamentalists, reviling particular antipathies. He cites the applicability, for instance, of chapters on The Hauteur of the Highbrow, Nihilistic Anecdote, People Who Interrupt, Meaningless Merriment, The Dolours of Dentistry, Baby Talk (by grown-ups), and Pomeranian Dogs. Heartily I concur, for I also have my little list.

THE news that the famous English essayist and dramatic critic, Mr. James Agate, has made two records for His Master's Voice, causes one to register intention to disinter family gramophone, purchase the records in question, in order to hear spoken work of one who long has been a friend of the fireside, in those households where literature and the drama are matters of moment. Of a mordant wit, combined with delightful bonhomie that never fails to appeal, Mr. Agate's friends and followers are legion. So that one longs to listen to his exposition on "My Job" and "Great Nights at the Theatre," particularly as I am assured by one who has heard him over the wireless in London, that, in addition to his other attractive attributes, Mr. Agate is possessed of a voice of admirable inflections and timbre.

SPEAKING recently at the Festival of the Scottish Association for the Speaking of Verse, the Poet Laureate made valuable comment on the opportunities presented by wireless. Mr. Masfield said that broadcasting could be a very great asset in the dissemination of poetry, and expressed the belief that, if the broadcasting people would work with the poets, England might possess one of the most remarkable schools of poetry that we have had for centuries. These remarks by our brilliant Laureate will doubtless meet with warm response from the not inconsiderable number of lovers of poetry in this Dominion. There are many who would rejoice to hear over the air some majestic strophe of Greek drama or lilting cadences of the late Robert Bridges, interpreted, say, by Miss Mary Cooley; or on a hallowed anniversary listen to the melodious voice of a certain gifted speaker in our midst rendering vocal Rupert Brooke's lovely sonnets or the fairy song of some Irish poet.

## Our Fortnightly Book Review

### SOLO TO SYDNEY

By F. C. CHICHESTER

THE dull weeks come and go, day's work and day's play pursue their even course without haste and without pause, until of a sudden comes a bolt from the blue, tidings of a great deed or startling achievement, threading with colour of romance the warp of everyday weaving. Such, for example, was the news that flashed to us when Mr. Francis Chichester flung challenge to fate, took his life in his hands, and in his now famous Gypsy Moth, "Eli-jah," attempted solo flight from England to Australia, after extremely short and circumscribed study of the principles of aviation.

As the world knows, Mr. Chichester was successful in reaching the goal of his desire, and in a recently published book entitled "Solo to Sydney" he tells the story of that thrilling and hazardous journey, after a perusal of which the mundane world retreats into the shadows, and air and sea and space appear the fitting environment. As the great saga unfolds, one feels that, had the Great War not ended when Mr. Chichester was just eighteen years of age, another name would have been recorded on the roll of honour of that cataclysm; for in this youthful Englishman, who proclaims himself son by adoption of our own Dominion, are combined those qualities of grit, invincible determination and scouting of danger, coupled with a zest for adventure and blithe disregard of overwhelming odds, which we have learned from experience are characteristic of the finest of our race.

The story of Mr. Chichester's arrival in New Zealand, without money or friends, and subsequent steady forging ahead in backblocks, bushland and mining camp, are too well known to require recapitulation here. I recall, however, that twelve years ago, on a small matter of business, there strolled into my office a stranger lad of eighteen with an attractive manner and, as it transpired, a taste for literature. Poles

apart as we were in years and outlook, we "clicked" on a predilection for certain writers and an interest in the ramifications of journalism. For the space of a few months we held much converse together; but after a time this unusual youth, as yet "with no deeds done, but great deeds undone," passed from my knowledge, and I heard no more of him until news came of Mr. Chichester's trial flight over Europe, and I recognised in the daring aviator the ambitious youth of a decade ago, whom I had then picked as a winner, though in a different milieu.

"Solo to Sydney," with its interesting introduction by Baron von Zedlitz, is an enthralling chronicle to those possessed of imaginative vision and capacity to thrill in response to heroic endeavour and disdain of danger, and breathlessly we follow the noble story of this Ulysses-like wandering, told as it is in simple, terse language, with no trace of smug self-satisfaction, and interspersed occasionally with expressive schoolboy slang. Something of terror and splendour of the mighty trek is conveyed, and vicariously we participate in its thrills, triumphs and despair. Jugo-Slavia, Persia, Arabia, the mouths of the Ganges are passed by, savage races encountered, and hundreds of unforgettable incidents recorded, until the almost insuperable obstacles of the last stages of the historic journey are overcome. At this juncture the author of the book reflects: "I shall soon be a slave again to petty circumstance and petty officials. In the air—well, perhaps, one was a slave there as much. Yet how much greater the deities served: Father Time, as usual; Aurora, goddess of dawn; Vesper, goddess of night; Jupiter, god of thunder; and, lastly, Minerva."

Of one dreaded peril he writes: "I began to feel sleepy, and when the dirty grey storm clouds warned me of approaching daybreak, the sleepiness be-

MR. BERNARD SHAW, his morals, mind and manners, are of a perennial interest, so it is somewhat arresting to read of what captured the sage when he was a romantic, and, one guesses, an extremely difficult and obstinate boy. The books which from time immemorial have captured the vagrant fancy of youth inspired in him no enthusiasm whatever. Thus bluntly does he express himself in an English paper: "I loathed and despised children's books from the accursed 'Robinson Crusoe' onward. I hated them for their dishonesty, their hypocrisy, their sickly immorality and their damnable dullness. Even as a child, my penetrating literary judgment, as well as my moral sense, was sound." The literary giant names "The Arabian Nights" and "The Pilgrim's Progress" as the two great sensations of his childhood, finding in them as he did the authentic note of genius, and characteristically concludes: "This shows that I was as good a critic in my infancy as I am now, though I could not then bring such brilliant reasoning to support my opinion."

IN "Two Years" Mr. Liam O'Flaherty has presented his readers with a vigorous and revolting human document. In his pages, partly, it is judged, of an autobiographical character, we are brought into contact with men and manners of many climes and elastic code, the majority being of the down-and-out stratum of humanity. We are introduced to the seamy side of life as it exists in London, New York, stoke-hole of a dirty ocean tramp, Boston, Toronto, and the beach at Rio. Decadent types abound in a series of vivid thumbnail sketches, exploiting types that range from lovely Russian intellectual affinity to remarkable examples of senility, depravity and lust; wretched poverty and strange callings being depicted without fear or favour. Through it all we are aware of a brilliant, unstable, restless personality, with a mind at war with convention, law and order, and habitually "agin the government" in all its ramifications.

came an agony. If I jumped up, I was asleep before I leaned back in my seat. If I jerked my head forward, I was asleep before I could reverse the movement. Something inside me felt stark, elemental. As I looked out at black masses of towering mountains, at rugged precipices dropping sheer into the sea, and, on the other side, dull glazed surface of Mediterranean under threatening clouds, I felt myself a spectator at the very beginning of creation."

# FAMA

For Bathrooms, Lavatories,  
Sink-tops, etc.

FAMA STONEWOOD FLOORING CO., Wellington.