

The New Books

Belles Lettres

ESSAYS IN AUSTRALIAN FICTION.
By M. Barnard Eldershaw. Melbourne:
Melbourne University Press. 1938.

"M. Barnard Eldershaw" is two persons—Marjorie Barnard Eldershaw and Flora S. Eldershaw. In "Essays in Australian Fiction" they deal with eight writers who have helped their country out of "the dark ages of a few years ago." Colonial and even empire boundaries have already been crossed by Henry Handel Richardson and Katherine Prichard. A new book by Christina Stead is international news. Dawn is at hand in Australia. Yet the strength of the new writers lies largely in their memory of bleak yesterdays and their recognition of present problems in bush, paddock, and settlement. Their comfort is bravely found in the "unexploited charm of work" and the sober beauty of the land.

The Eldershaws' book is generous-toned but sane—a testament perhaps, but no panegyric. Its method is not scientific. Readers who must have statistics with their criticism will be puzzled by the quiet affirmations here set down. The authors' fine intuitions are carried by bold, figurative language which sometimes stumbles into awkwardness but more often proceeds swiftly to its objective. Critics prone to put too much trust in formal scholarly apparatus might well learn a lesson from these self-reliant writers.

A. C.

Fiction

THE DOOMSDAY MEN. By J. B. Priestley. Harpers. 1938. \$2.50.

This tale of adventure in the Mohave Desert was perhaps designed to enable Priestley to charge off some of his traveling expenses from his taxable income. An air of mild amiability suffuses it, even though it includes a murder and a kidnapping, and centers around the plan of a mad scientist to blow up the world; Priestley writes with such pleasure of homely good people that it is hard to believe him when he deals with the wicked and bizarre. But it is easy summer reading, with some discerning and amusing comments on Los Angeles, and descriptions of Southwestern scenery that communicate the author's excitement to the reader.

E. D.

THE MAN FROM COOK'S. By Polan Banks. Lee Furman. 1938. \$2.50.

Polan Banks has written several middling historical novels, but the latest of them, based upon the life of Thomas Cook and his travel agency during the years 1848-98, is impressive neither as history nor romance. Cook was a temperance zealot and an altruist who saw his business as a missionary enterprise for the promotion of international understanding, but his son John, dubbed by Kipling "the man with the iron mouth," saw in it only a means to personal power. The narrator, Chris, was John's best friend, for they had grown up together

with the common ambition of travel. Chris's first big job was as agent for the firm in the Paris office, where he fell in love with the lady Diana, a wealthy, mercenary wench who regarded him merely as "the man from Cook's," but Chris stuck by her when they were trapped during the ghastly siege of the Franco-Prussian war.

Paris was starving; rats and elephants from the zoo were eaten. It was all pretty romantic to Chris until his spoiled darling betrayed him and the Cook relief train arrived with the news that because of his infatuation he had lost his job. When he regained it twelve years later, John sent him as Special Agent to Egypt. Gordon was then being besieged at Khartoum, the Nile was Cook's chief travel route, and on it floated—by one of the many coincidences in the life of the hero; he called it Fate—the stepdaughter Vicky of the lost Diana. Cook's was empowered to transport the abortive relief expedition of the British, but Chris would have none of it, for his life was to be a typical MGM desert romance from that time on. The formula rarely varies: the heroine is captured by wild tribesmen, the hero pursues her in disguise, and blood stains the sand that had warmed the lovers' hearts but a while ago. The author seems to have run shy of dramatic material on Thomas Cook and Son, and so padded his book gratuitously. His scenes of siege are excellent and his portraits good, but they scarcely build to a novel.

H. D.

LET X EQUAL MARJORIE. By Edward Hope. Macrae-Smith. 1938. \$2.

Jimmy Hawtrey's father left him a fortune and directed that \$12,000 a year be paid to a girl Jimmy had never seen. Then the depression removed the fortune except for \$12,000 a year.

Because he wants to marry the woman he thinks he loves, Jimmy pursues his unknown dependent to the Riviera in the hope that she can spare him some of his own income. Complications are born of complications until Jimmy finds that his true love and his income are both enjoyed by the same person.

This is light fiction without pretenses and, if you don't mind nondescript char-

acters, enjoyable. The idea for the story is a trifle better than the treatment it gets, but the dialogue is consistently good and sometimes witty. When the dialogue lapses into dialect, however, it suffers.

M. S.

SECRET INFORMATION. By Robert Hichens. Doubleday, Doran. 1938. \$2.50.

Those who still think of Robert Hichens as a purveyor of lush romance in tropical settings may be surprised to find that his new book has no heroine,—indeed no women characters of any importance. The story is concerned with an Anglican residentiary Canon in a cathedral town who has a locked cupboard full of "rare and curious" books. One day in a sermon he incautiously quotes from Frank Harris; a shrewd lawyer happens to be in his congregation, recognizes the passage, and decides to amuse himself by probing the matter. Next the clergyman's butler stumbles on his master's secret, and the poor Canon has a hard time of it before he gets rid of his erotic books and squares his conscience. This plot is scarcely more than an anecdote taken by itself, but Mr. Hichens spins it out with astonishing virtuosity until in the end the Canon's dilemma takes on real ethical importance. Always an accomplished story-teller, the author gives us a stimulating initial situation, a dry but penetrating study of a man's divided nature, and an unexpectedly thought-provoking climax in the final interview between the Canon and his tormentor. The whole is one of the best products of this veteran novelist's later years. And lovers of his "Bella Donna" manner will be relieved to hear that he does manage to work in a camel or two at the end.

T. P., Jr.

BOOK OF KINGS. By Philip Freund. Pilgrim House. 1938. \$2.50.

It would be neither fair nor accurate to say, "just another family chronicle," for there is no reason why family chronicles couldn't be published one every week, with quality and interest in every one. This particular chronicle happens to be on the dull side, because Mr. Freund wrote it that way. The Lauers and the Zoltans might have been an engrossing set of characters if he had been more engrossed with them, jumped in and either released their emotions or communicated some of his own to the story. Since he did neither, and since we cannot generate interest without some sort of stimulus,

Advertisement? You bet.—And a damned good one!

The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title and Author	Crime, Place, Sleuth	Summing Up	Verdict
THE BEAST MUST DIE Nicholas Blake (C. Day Lewis) (Harpers: \$2.)	Crime novelist Felix Lane plots murder as revenge on hit-&-run driver, but it takes Nigel Strangeways to discover who really killed Gloucestershire road-hog.	Extremely ingenious plotting, with Felix Lane's diary leading reader by the nose, provides double surprise in excellent super-literate baffler.	Don't miss it

the results are dubious. There is a long, disconnected series of incidents in the family's history, with little apparent significance anywhere. Mr. Freund has written two other books that were well received, according to the dust jacket. This one, then, gives little indication of his capacities.

N. L. R.

Miscellaneous

EACH DAWN I DIE. By Jerome Odlum. Bobbs-Merrill. 1938. \$2.

THE BIG HOUSE OF MYSTERY. By Patrick H. Weeks, M.D. Dorrance & Co. 1938. \$2.

The author of the first of these books, a Minneapolis newspaperman, was probably not primarily interested in adding to the public's knowledge of prisons. His novel is the story of a reporter who was framed up by a political ring he had exposed, was sent to prison, and finally was exonerated and released after a series of hair-raising experiences. The novel has at least two good points: the leading characters talk like real prisoners and there is an occasional bit of description or action that is good reporting of authentic prison stuff.

But what Reporter Odlum has the hero, Reporter Ross, go through should have been printed on celluloid instead of wood-pulp. Only in the prison movies should the hero have all the experiences that anyone ever had, the heroine be so steadfast, the warden so brutal, the guards so sadistic, the "rats" so cunning and so ubiquitous, and the long arm of coincidence so certain to reach out and snatch the bandage from the eyes of Blind Justice. Hollywood might well be interested, for here is a script for another thin, super-claptrap prison movie.

Dr. Weeks' book, "The Big House of Mystery," is based on his experiences as physician and psychiatrist of the Indiana State Prison during the past eighteen years. It will be a great disappointment to sociologists and to prison officials and can satisfy only the most uninformed general reader. The book consists of a series of loosely joined stories about individual prisoners, many of them uninteresting or discussed without bringing out any information of value. Giving the text whatever thread of continuity it has are chapters on drug addiction, murder and capital punishment, sex offenders, and so on. These subjects are dealt with superficially and the chapters are sophomoric in style. The references to capital punishment are cautious in the extreme: in the final two paragraphs on this subject every sentence contains some such weak words as "perhaps," "possibly," "theoretically," "may be," "may have," and "seems."

The authors can, if they wish, comfort themselves with the thought that very few really good books have ever been written about prisons. The dramatic quality of prison life causes some authors to overwrite, while others write sloppily in the belief that the public will gobble up anything about prisons. Even "The Ballad of Reading Gaol" has its weak spots.

A. H. MacC.

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GENERAL

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By ELIZABETH S. KINGSLEY

				1-F	2-N	3-D	4-R	5-T	6-U		7-X	8-B		9-F	10-R	11-Q	
12-H	13-V		14-A	15-P	16-D	17-C		18-A	19-I	20-N		21-E	22-A		23-Y	24-X	25-B
	26-A	27-L		28-H	29-T	30-K	31-Q	32-G	33-J	34-A		35-O	36-C	37-W		38-P	39-J
40-F	41-I	42-V	43-N		44-Y		45-U	46-P	47-R	48-X	49-M		50-I	51-V	52-L	53-S	54-C
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155-K	156-Q	157-D	158-B		159-M	160-Y		161-S	162-D	163-R	164-L		165-E	166-L		167-U	168-B
169-C	170-X		171-Q	172-A	173-P		174-J	175-M	176-C	177-D	178-A						

DIRECTIONS	DEFINITIONS	WORDS
<p>To solve this puzzle, you must guess twenty-five words, the definitions of which are given in the column headed DEFINITIONS. The letters in each word to be guessed are numbered. These numbers appear under the dashes in the column headed WORDS. There is a dash for each letter in the required word. The key letters in the squares are for convenience, indicating to which word in the definitions each letter in the diagram belongs. When you have guessed a word, fill it in on the dashes; then write each letter in the correspondingly numbered square on the puzzle diagram. When the squares are all filled in you will find (by reading from left to right) a quotation from a famous author. Reading up and down the letters mean nothing. The black squares indicate ends of words; therefore words do not necessarily end at the right side of the diagram.</p> <p>When the column headed WORDS is filled in, the initial letters spell the name of the author and the title of the piece from which the quotation has been taken. Authority for spelling and definitions is Webster's New International Dictionary (second edition).</p>	A. Rich, sweet, aromatic wine.	14 172 178 18 34 22 26
	B. Angel of Death (Jew. and Moham.).	56 103 8 168 25 158
	C. King of Ostrogoths (454?-526).	17 68 54 36 62 143 131 176 169
	D. Formed of little mosaics.	63 83 16 58 60 177 157 128 124 162 3
	E. Dweller.	91 146 21 69 67 113 133 165
	F. Shelter closely.	138 1 107 100 9 110 40
	G. Shake as a signal.	121 61 112 32
	H. Cite as authority.	132 12 104 96 125 28
	I. Jewish New Year (2 wds.).	101 64 114 59 89 19 98 74 41 139 50
	J. Quality of being fresh.	33 29 111 105 127 134 174
	K. Like a simpleton.	78 30 155 87 106 109
	L. Eighteenth century English china.	126 166 144 27 85 153 52 120 164
	M. Individually distinct.	49 159 93 140 129 117 175 108
	N. Vex, disturb.	2 20 43 95 141
	O. Novel by Charlotte Brontë.	94 142 92 148 150 72 35
	P. Perverse.	15 173 115 46 76 136 38 81
	Q. Character in "Twelfth Night."	171 11 97 31 119 82 156 75
	R. Full of jollity.	4 147 47 90 99 163 79 10
	S. English diarist (1620-1706).	73 53 66 161 116 57
	T. Prices fixed according to standard.	137 5 152 29 84
	U. Author of "Methodus Fluxionum."	6 167 45 130 151 80
	V. Assimilate.	102 86 77 42 51 13
	W. Gallop and triumph (Lewis Carroll).	88 149 65 37 70 135 122
	X. Famous ship of Colonial times (2 wds.).	170 123 48 145 55 7 154 24
	Y. Author of "Jerusalem Delivered."	118 44 71 160 23