

Reproduced by kind permission of Evensford Productions Limited and  
Pollinger Limited. Copyright © Evensford Productions Limited, 1941.

of date in some of its facts, and the prose is liberally patched with purple. Much of the book covers the ground already traversed by Mr. Gardner and Mr. Monks, but the story is taken up to a somewhat later point in Air Force history. Like Mr. Monks' book, it was obviously written with the best of intentions; but its value, because it appears to have been written almost entirely at second-hand, is even more problematical.

DEREK VERSCHOYLE.

## Money up to Date

An Outline of Money. By Geoffrey Crowther. (Nelson. 10s.)

As editor of the *Economist* Mr. Crowther is exceptionally well placed for watching recent developments in theory and practice applied to money, and in this timely volume he has poured out the fruits of his knowledge and experience. Making no claim to writing a history of his subject, he has nevertheless traced the growth of money from some article of general acceptability, by means of which the inconveniences of barter were reduced or abolished, through the precious metals, to paper based upon them and finally to pieces of paper, such as the Bank of England note of today, which is nothing but a promise to pay "another £1 note, two 10s. notes or £1 worth of small change." For domestic purposes the question of a backing of gold, or of any other store of value, behind our legal tender-currency is as dead as Queen Anne; as Mr. Crowther says, "the value of a currency depends in the long run on the confidence people repose in it; and that confidence may be as great when the currency is inconvertible paper as when it is hard gold coin."

This historical survey necessarily covers a good deal of ground already traversed by many text-books, but Mr. Crowther, in the course of his closely packed 400 odd pages, throws new light for many readers on the recent development of the market in foreign exchange, now no longer chiefly busied with dealing in bills of exchange but in transferring, often by cablegram, bank-balances from one centre to another. By this exposition, added to his demonstration of the practical working of paper-money, as long as it commands public confidence, he has brought the story of money fully up to date and furnished trustworthy material for the many people who are trying to peer into its future. As to what that future will and should be, he disclaims any attempt to provide a programme. In fact, one of the most valuable features of his book is the emphasis it puts on the weaknesses of monetary manipulation as the cure for financial and industrial distresses and the need for reducing money "to its proper role as a lubricant for the economic mechanism which Man's ingenuity directs and his labour drives."

Some parts of his exposition may be puzzling to many of his readers, as, for instance, when he seems first to demonstrate that an excess of saving over investment (by which he means the production of durable goods) is the cause of business reaction; and then to prove that in fact saving and investment must always be equal. Again, when he first describes inflation as a state of things in which prices are rising, and then tells us that in the United States between 1922 and 1929 prices were, on the average, remarkably stable, if the prices of Stock Exchange securities (which surely do not affect the problem from the point of view of the man in the street) are excluded from the index number; but that nevertheless these same years witnessed an almost unparalleled inflation. Money, however, is almost necessarily a puzzling and confusing subject, and Mr. Crowther has at least put it in its right place and perspective. "Money," he says, "organised in the perfect banking system and controlled by the omniscient Central bank, could do no more than give effect to the wishes and emotions, the fears and hopes, the timidities and stupidities of Man. . . . If Man is determined to wage wars, Money cannot prevent economic loss from emerging. If Man is determined to place barriers and obstacles in the way of that free interchange of goods by which he has raised himself to his present high economic estate, Money cannot prevent chaos and suffering from resulting."

HARTLEY WITHERS.

## King Corn

Corn Country. By C. Henry Warren. (Batsford. 10s. 6d.)

The subject often makes the writer: so Mr. Warren's *Corn Country*, which discusses a thing of immemorial, eternal and yet typical importance, is a much abler book than its predecessor, *England is a Village*, which did little more than take a collection of rural antiquities out of moth-ball. Corn, of which there is no recorded beginning, is much more than a subject: it is the high symbol of prosperity which, from ancient Egypt to the stock markets of Chicago, has nurtured and rocked dynasties. From the cycle of its cultivation springs much of the most treasured pictorial life of the English rural calendar; take away corn and the gilt is heavily peeled from the poetry of country custom, festival and craft; the farming year with which these things are still obstinately associated is robbed of a touch of ripe splendour. Sowing, reaping, gleaning, stacking, threshing, winnow-

ing, milling, baking, malting, brewing, thatching, plaiting: corn governs most things from bread to beer, beer to straw-hats. On this powerful universality, which shakes governments and affects the lives of us all, Mr. Warren has eagerly seized, to write a book which extends in scope from the lyrical-historical, with some excellent chapters on water-mills, to an examination of corn-crafts, where a second exposition on straw-plaiting reads rather tediously, with an epilogue of controversial pleading and a well-ordered attack, supported largely by Lord Lymington's *Famine in England*, on the fumbling agricultural policy of the day. The chapters on corn-husbandry, the pictures of East Anglia, which is the specific corn-country of the title, make pleasant reading, and will be set by at least one reader on the shelf side by side with those patient rural research-workers, Hennell and Massingham. The rest is not pleasant: for the simple reason that, as Mr. Warren remarks of Lord Lymington's warning of the consequences of a policy of making "the land give more and take less," it is not meant to be pleasant. The hypothetical situation, "if we find ourselves at war," on which the warning arguments of *Famine in England* are based, is now a plain and painful reality.

So far as we know the most optimistic estimate of cereal food reserves now in Britain is a three months' supply. . . . Our own food reserves in England from home-grown wheat is enough for about six weeks. Our average day-to-day reserve of imported wheat is enough for about another six weeks, if we are lucky.

To one painful reality Mr. Warren adds another:

The basis of health is the land. If the land is rightly served, its produce . . . and we who live on that produce will therefore be the healthier. To take a single instance: In order to secure the degree of whiteness in bread that is now the fashion, the germ of the kernel, which would otherwise colour the flour, must first be milled away. . . . It is then left to some enterprising business concern to point out the discrepancy to us, manufacture a patent food from the abstracted germs, and alarm us into buying it in order to restore the balance of health.

The argument that between germless bread and germless politicians the country is slipping very fast into decadence is not new; but it is still highly controversial, still close to the truth, and it leavens the concluding pages of *Corn Country* with a constructive kind of zest entirely lacking in Mr. Warren's preceding book. If the banner-symbols for a rejuvenated English countryside are ever to mean anything, they must indeed have behind them some of this same energetic and positive zeal. If the day of victory by arms is not again to be followed by that old vicious rotation of subsidies, quotas and promises, but by the recognition, translated

## A GREAT EXPERIMENT

VISCOUNT CECIL OF CHELWOOD  
[LORD ROBERT CECIL]

An autobiography of childhood at Hatfield; of Eton, Oxford, the Inner Temple; and so on to Geneva.

'It is magnificent.' Geoffrey West in *Time and Tide*  
'A contribution to history of outstanding importance.'

G. P. Gooch  
'It is a characteristic piece of work, direct, plain-spoken, high-minded, and relieved every now and then by a streak of wry, disillusioned humour.'

Leonard Woolf in the *New Statesman*  
'This is an autobiography and not an autobiography, but something greater. Identified with a great international cause, Lord Cecil may be said to have stood, and to stand, alone among British statesmen of his age in a selfless impersonality. His book has the quality of himself. He has the gravity and the poise of the judicial mind; and there is nothing that he says which is not well weighed and does not deserve to be weighed well and carefully by all who study the history of the times.'

Dr. Ernest Barker in the *Observer*

The book has also been received with marked approval in the *Spectator*, the *Sunday Times*, the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Manchester Guardian*, and the *Times Lit. Supplement*

SECOND IMPRESSION 16s net



JONATHAN CAPE

into vital and working terms, of "the responsibility we owe to the land as the foundation of national health," then the sooner we begin to think along the lines of this book and those by Professor Stapledon, Lord Lymington and others of their kind, so much the better for the future of England. Meanwhile, towards the realisation of that day, if ever it comes, Mr. Warren can congratulate himself on having made, in *Corn Country*, a contribution of realistic significance.

H. E. BATES.

### Mr. MacNeice on Yeats

*The Poetry of Yeats.* By Louis MacNeice. (Oxford. 8s. 6d.)

THE poetry of Yeats, in its continuous development, its concern with the problems of politics, scientific materialism, and poetic inspiration, and in its persistent attempt to find a substitute for Christian imagery, offers endless themes for critical discussion; and Mr. MacNeice has written the most penetrating study since Dr. Richards' notes in *Science and Poetry*. Mr. MacNeice is an excellent technical critic, he understands the Irish background, he is familiar with the poetry of the past thirty or forty years, and in his own poetry he has been concerned with many of the problems tackled by the older poet.

His book is well worth reading, yet in one important aspect of criticism Mr. MacNeice is badly handicapped. In spite of the obvious approach of war in recent years, he confesses that he found himself bewildered and disoriented by its actual outbreak. "Galway and Yeats belong in a sense to a past order of things. The unreality which now overtook them was also overtaking in my mind modern London, modernist art, and Left Wing politics. If the war made nonsense of Yeats's poetry and of all works that are called 'escapist,' it also made nonsense of the poetry that professes to be 'realist.'" In consequence, Mr. MacNeice can annotate, elucidate and expound, but cannot judge. To overcome this disability he adopts a comparative method: he sets Yeats against Rilke, Lawrence and T. S. Eliot; he quotes Stephen Spender and W. H. Auden, and even allows himself to diverge into a discussion of minor "proletarian poets."

The results of these comparisons are interesting. Rilke and Lawrence were, like Yeats, poets trying to create a private religion, whereas Mr. Eliot, with greater humility, finds all the significance that he needs in the familiar Christian symbols. Perhaps it is for this reason that in Yeats, as in Rilke and Lawrence, there is a touch of the charlatan, an exaggerated sense of the writer's personal importance, as if he were the unique mouthpiece of supernatural voices, and yet needed a home-made "system," a private ritual and the company of admiring women to maintain his own belief in the objective reality of the voices.

What was it that made Yeats so impatient of criticism, so unwilling to recognise merit in any but his imitators, so willing to believe that all who opposed him were knaves as well as fools? Mr. MacNeice admits that these questions are well-founded, but he does not go far towards answering them. Time after time he condemns Yeats for his "reactionary" tendencies, his passion for aristocracy and violence, his dislike of all that is modern, "democratic," and vulgar; but he gives no convincing reason for this condemnation—he merely assumes that the absurdity and injustice of Yeats's attitude is self-evident. He tries to explain the personal and social reasons why Yeats should have adopted such an attitude, but he does not ask himself whether it is not, in some measure, based on a true and necessary

recognition of fact. Mr. MacNeice admits the weakness and inadequacy of a sentimental left-wing attitude, but he has no other standard to which he can refer, and in the end he shirks the issue: "Poetry gains body from beliefs, and the more suited the belief is to the poet, the healthier his poetry; one poet can thrive on pantheism and another on Christianity. . . . It is a gross over-simplification to maintain that a right belief makes a poem good and a wrong belief makes a poem bad." True, up to a point: but although verbal music and charming or impressive imagery can carry off a good deal of nonsense, the judgement of right and wrong is not wholly irrelevant to criticism. (Mr. MacNeice, for example, cannot stomach Roy Campbell's fascism, though he admits it is necessary to Roy Campbell.) Good poetry has certainly been built on some very odd beliefs, and the poetry of Yeats, with its phases of the moon, of history, and of human character, is an outstanding example; but in such poetry much depends on how deep the odd belief goes, on what new or forgotten elements of truth it reveals, and on what false simplification it entails within the poetry itself. Mr. MacNeice (a little presumptuously) professes to speak for poets of his own generation; but is his agnostic and relativistic attitude itself a belief that can give body to poetry?

MICHAEL ROBERTS.

### Circus-Fan

*The Circus Has No Home.* By Rupert Croft-Cooke. (Methuen. 12s. 6d.)

MUCH has been written about the circus, and Mr. Rupert Croft-Cooke has given us the latest contribution, a story of the Rosaire family, with the misleading title of *The Circus Has No Home*. Surely whatever a circus lacks it is not a home, for living and working in a unity that is not found in any other profession makes the family tie very strong; and whether a home has main drainage and a damp course or is on wheels, it can still be a home.

Mr. Croft-Cooke writes with the enthusiasm of someone who has seen his first circus: one can imagine him lying awake wide-eyed, wondering when the next one will be. There are pages on the past history of the Count, the father of the simple Rosaire family, but told as a dull newspaper report. One finds an interesting character now and then like Charles Lawrence, a bank clerk, who breaks away from the bank to spend a few days with the circus because he likes it; he is nice, and one reads on hopefully, but back we go to Mr. Croft-Cooke and the Count, sitting on the caravan steps in the brilliant sunshine (the weather conditions never change), and another long story of the Count's youth and his wife's. There is a parson's son, who kept mice and badgers when he was a boy and wistfully feels he would like to try lions—"or perhaps tigers"; we hope to read more of him; but no. Instead there are pages of description of circus acts, and it is impossible to describe the grace of a trapeze artiste or the humour of pouring water down a clown's pants through a funnel. The Rosaire family is a nice, united, hard-working one, but the sad truth is they make dull reading. It would be delightful to find them on a country fair-ground, but their family history—as Mr. Croft-Cooke tells it—is colourless. A keeper crushed to death by an elephant becomes an inquest report, and the tiresome stories of how some of the characters joined the circus remind one of men standing cap in hand reciting qualifications for a job.

There is good material in the book, but it is wasted in the telling. One finds charming little pictures: a young mother nursing her baby by the caravan stove and her husband comit