

**TOOM BYRES.** A Comedy of the Scottish Border in Three Acts. By Robert McLellan. (MacLellan, Glasgow; 5s.)

This play, first produced in 1936 by the Curtain Theatre, has since been produced by the Citizens' Theatre in Glasgow, and has also been broadcast. Since its first production the author has added to his reputation as a dramatist who joins good stage sense to a firm command of Scots. His plays use Scots language which is vigorous and natural throughout. The comedy is never dull, never simply 'pawky', and goes with a swing from start to finish. *Toom Byres* is concerned with border reivers in the days of James VI. A success on the stage, it holds attention almost as well when read, although the heroine's change of tune at the end may seem slightly out of character to some readers.

A. R.

**SCOTLAND'S RECORD.** Edited by W. M. Ballantine. (Edinburgh, The Albyn Press; 12s. 6d.)

The thirty-seven essays which make up this book were selected from material written for publication in American, Canadian and Russian journals during the war. Numerous illustrations are taken from documentary films made during the same period on the initiative of the Scottish Office. The general impression left by the volume is one of activity in every direction to a degree not known in Scotland between the wars; with much experiment likely to be of permanent value in industry, fishing, agriculture, education, literature, politics and religion. The essays on agricultural development are uniformly interesting. Essays by Joe Corrie on popular drama, by Norman Wilson on films, and one on the Highlands and Islands Medical Service by an anonymous woman doctor, are also noteworthy. About five of the essays are simply bad, the worst being a survey of art by the Director of the National Gallery which successfully avoids noticing anything of importance in modern Scottish painting. Two or three have a complacency reminiscent of Princes Street on Saturday morning. It is something of a shock to find Mr George Blake writing this: 'The new wealth of the industrial belt had the first effect of attracting people from the hard hilly regions into the new towns, and this had its obvious consequences—on the one hand a regrettable depopulation of the Highland counties especially and, on the other, the overcrowding of the industrial area.' What an ingenuous simplification! Mr Ivor Brown spells the late William Soutar's name wrongly in a tightly packed article on Scottish writing.

In spite of its wartime purpose and its occasional shortcomings this is a book of more than local or merely passing interest.

ANTHONY ROSS, O.P.

**FIRST LOVE AND OTHER STORIES.** By Viola Meynell. (Cape; 9s.)

The extraordinary skill with which Miss Viola Meynell beguiles you into concern for the 'closed shop' atmosphere of comfortably-off, inadequately-occupied people leaves you wondering what she could