

Mr Partridge, with the assistance of Albert Moe, Mr. Y. Mindel of Kfar Tabor, Lower Galilee, and others, has produced a list of catch phrases with some account of their origins. They are said to be 'British and American from the Sixteenth Century to the Present Day'; the fact that so many of them are neither British nor American but Australian is presumably to be accounted for by Mr. Partridge's own origins. Given this free and easy interpretation of his scope, what is really noticeable are the vast areas of omission. The author probes cheerfully into the lavatory humour of the out-back or the sayings of forgotten American comedians while ignoring the huge store of material (admittedly neither British nor American) on his own western doorstep. To have written such a dictionary at all without, apparently, having heard of the Myles na gCopaleen *Catechism of Cliche* is in itself a dreadful mark of provincialism, but even in the remoter regions of Hampstead you would expect them by now to have come across "When it was neither profitable nor popular" and "A pint of plain is your only man".

Happily the book has no inhibitions about bawdy, but some kind of clerical super-ego seems to have censored the thousands of available religious catch phrases: "Each and every one of us in his own way" does not occur, nor does "God rest his soul", and surely by now "Mine brother Esau is an hairy man" merits a mention. This last takes us to an even more surprising set of deficiencies: neither the *Goon Show* nor *Private Eye* is allowed to contribute. "You silly twisted boy" isn't there, neither are "Hello Sailor", "Phew, what a scorcher", or "Tired and emotional". The dreadful slang of advertising men is perhaps wisely left out, but one or two

phrases like "Run it round the block and see if the wheel comes off" and "Run it up the flagpole, see if anyone salutes it" should have been there.

Even allowing for the generally old-fashioned and restricted scope of the book it ought to have had "It is later than you think". "If I'd seen you coming I'd have baked a cake", "For real?", "Right as rain", "Some chicken, some neck", "It's all done by mirrors" and "Breaking the habit of a lifetime".

As the reader will have realised by now this is a most valuable and entertaining book; the entertainment consisting entirely of detecting, with an air of superiority, items that have been scandalously omitted—it is better still if you can find sociological, theological or political reasons for the omissions. It can be recommended as an adjunct to any slightly inebriated gathering (like the Post Office Guide, Crockford's Clerical Directory and the Guinness Book of Records, it should be available behind every Public Bar.)

On the positive side, in one of its few value judgements, the book does rightly condemn "the name of the game" as 'smug and knowing'. Alas that it does not take the opportunity of killing the flaccid and pointless "You can't have your cake and eat it"—of course you can; how else could you eat your cake unless you had it? The original and meaningful version is, of course, "You can't eat your cake and have it." The printers have invented a quite new phrase "Fish or cut bait" and, in my copy they provide an extra big splodge of ink in the margin of page 139, but if you have about £8 to spare give this book to someone.

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