helped to strengthen or deaden their nerves, is surely a final proof that one country is not intended by providence to rule another.

LONGFORD

BRITAIN AND NYASALAND, by Griff Jones; Allen & Unwin; 36s.

Nyasaland was one of the last colonial possessions to be acquired by Britain. Largely because of Portuguese threats, in 1891, this small land-locked territory with its warring tribes and battling Scots missionaries became a British Protectorate. In the summer of 1964, Nyasaland will attain its independence, even though it has no common language and virtually no economic resources other than an abundant supply of labour. In recent years this country has played a surprisingly important part in African affairs. It was Nyasaland's unswerving determination to secede from the Rhodesian Federation which was chiefly responsible for the break-up of this ill-fated and half-hearted experiment in black-white partnership. Much of the credit for this little country's remarkable influence has been due to the ability of Dr Hastings Banda who, in spite of only being able to speak English, has been accepted as its undisputed leader.

The history and development of Nyasaland is a fascinating subject. It would be delightful to say that Mr Griff Jones has written a minor masterpiece on this little-known country, but this is not the case. His book is frankly a very difficult one to read continuously. In a bewildering fashion, he dodges about in time and place. He has stuffed his book with long, and often repetitive, quotations. His own style is far from limpid and he has an aggravating habit of inserting ludicrous sociological platitudes such as: 'Social concepts take life from social context'. This remark opens a chapter.

Yet despite these failings Mr Jones' book repays dipping into. He spent ten years as a young District Officer in Nyasaland and clearly knows and loves the country. He holds refreshingly strong views and has a vast, if ill-digested, store of knowledge about this remote nation. If only he can discipline himself and try to write a coherent book on Nyasaland he may yet produce a work which is both readable and important. *Britain and Nyasaland* is unfortunately little more than a hotch-potch of ten chapters.

Mr Jones is at his best when discussing the problems which beset the Victorian missionaries in Nyasaland, faced as they were with the brutalities attendant on slave-trading and the endemic cruelties of tribal warfare. He writes of their choice: 'Their actions had commonly been motivated by an active sympathy for the unfortunate among their fellow-men; they were also convinced of the horror of violence. The potential conflict between these elements in their thinking had been suffocated in the comfortable societies from which they had sprung, and the moralisings appropriate in those societies seemed woolly in the sharp realities of disorder. There was no hope of evasion, no authority to appeal to, no Caesar to whom they might render inconvenient responsibility. The alternatives presented themselves, persistent and embarrassingly naked. One after another these

men, who sought to be holy men, found themselves in circumstances in which to be violent seemed the least of evils.' As Mr Jones rightly stresses, these missionaries could not 'ignore the customs of the people with whom they had to deal', and their response was to adopt flogging as the standard punishment. They turned to the Bible for guidance as to the amount, and Dr Laws of Livingstonia Mission lashed 'In accordance with Deuteronomy xxv: 3: he laid down forty lashes as the limit'.

EVERSLEY BELLFIELD

PRAISERS OF FOLLY: ERASMUS, RABELAIS, SHAKESPEARE, by Walter Kaiser; Gollancz; 42s.

This comparative treatment of the fool in Renaissance literature is published by a firm whose name is not usually associated with heavyweight works of scholarship. It is moreover written in a lively and engaging style, and seems to make a bid for the general reader's, as well as the scholar's, attention. But danger lurks in this. The ordinary reader, oppressed by excesssive erudition, and resentful at seeing great literature used as a kind of raw material to keep the wheels of scholarship endlessly turning, is apt to mutter sardonic remarks about 'the Shakespeare industry' or to recall, with horrid jubilation, the American professor who wrote several pages of brilliant exegesis based on a single phrase of Yeats, 'soldier Aristotle', blissfully unaware that this was a misprint in his edition, and that 'solider Aristotle' was what Yeats actually wrote.

This is not, of course, the kind of folly praised by Mr Kaiser. He makes great play with St Paul and 'fools for Christ's sake'; so much play, in fact, that one longs to remind him of how the word fool can also mean oaf, ass, dolt, slubberdegullion, clown, codface and imbecile; and this wasn't at all what St Paul meant. Also he seems to forget that although paradox is very fine in its way, it becomes pointless, not to say tedious, if overdone. After three hundred pages of Mr Kaiser on the Wisdom of Folly one begins to sympathise with the anti-Chestertonian who threatened to lecture on 'The Shallowness of the Profound'.

The most complete, and therefore the wisest fool, according to Mr Kaiser, is Stultitia, used by Erasmus as the mouthpiece of his *Moriae encomium*. The author has a lot to say about the enormous influence of Erasmus—'one of the seminal minds of the modern world'—on Renaissance literature; but he fails to convince us that *The Praise of Folly* is anything much more than a clever man's elaborately ironic *jeu d'esprit*. And when Mr Kaiser turns from this to discuss, without any change in attitude or tone of voice, masterworks of creative imagination such as those of Rabelais and Shakespeare, one begins to see what the war between criticism and scholarship is all about.

Panurge is also a fool, but not wise enough to persist in his folly; it is Pantagruel who points to the truly wise foolishness of the sage who 'rids all his Senses of Terrene Affections, and clears his Fancies of those plodding Studies, which har-