

**THE SKETCH
LONDON
11 MARCH 1953
(page 194)**

**OUR BOOKSHELF
by
Rupert Croft-Cooke**

Seven Friends. By Louis Marlow. (Richards Press; 10s. 6d.)

The publishers call Mr. Louis Marlow's *Seven Friends* a series of portraits, but the essays contained in this book do not attempt to portray so much as recollect discursively and kindly a septet of interesting men. Mr. Marlow never met Wilde, but corresponded with him during his last years, and now prints some unpublished letters of Wilde's to himself and another correspondent. Of Frank Harris, the subject of his second sketch, he says "he was the most remarkable literary blackguard of almost any century," a rather wild piece of exaggeration about a man as small and sordid as Harris, but he is more illuminating on another charlatan, Aleister Crowley, in whom he saw good and picturesque qualities unnoticed by other critics. It is when he comes to the three Powys brothers that Mr. Marlow is at his best, for he writes on them and their work. He opens with some facts about the amazing Powys family; in addition to the John Cowper, Theodore Francis and Llewelyn, another brother, A. R. Powys, wrote books on architecture, yet another, Littleton Powys, published an autobiography of much interest, a sister Gertrude is a painter, Philippa a poet, and Marian is a leading expert on lace and has written a book about it. Mr. Marlow's last essay is on Mr. Somerset Maugham, about whom he has some good and revealing stories. All these sketches, it must be remembered, are, as the title of the book proclaims, of the author's friends, but the view presented of them is not prejudiced or fawning; it is fraternal and honest.