

STORIES, MOSTLY SHORT

- Helen's Lovers.** By GERALD BULLETT. Heinemann. 7s. 6d.
- The Salutation.** By SYLVIA TOWNSEND WARNER. Chatto and Windus. 7s. 6d.
- A German Idyll.** By H. E. BATES. Illustrated by LYNTON LAMB. Golden Cockerel Press. 17s. 6d.
- Crotty Shankwin : The Beauty Spot.** By A. E. COPPARD. Illustrated by R. GIBBINGS. Golden Cockerel Press. 21s.
- Cheerful Weather for the Wedding.** By JULIA STRACHEY. Hogarth Press. 5s.
- The Heartless Land.** By JAMES STERN. Macmillan. 7s. 6d.
- The Best Short Stories of 1932.** English. Edited by E. J. O'BRIEN. Cope. 7s. 6d.
- Cold Comfort Farm.** By STELLA GIBBONS. Longmans. 7s. 6d.
- Black Magic.** By EVELYN WAUGH. Chapman and Hall. 7s. 6d.

The fascination of Mr. Bullett's art lies in his power to show us people not thinking, nor acting, nor, thank God! analysing, but in that state of pregnant dreaming wherein our poor humanity snatches at the reality so obscured by the drab deceitfulness of daily life. Herein his work is of far more importance than the large and pretentious pieces of more esteemed and more self-esteemed authors. Here is no hearty claim to normality—the one abnormal thing in life; here is a frank recognition of the quirks, the fancies, the sick nightmares and the sweet health-giving dreams in which men shyly and certainly find truth and safety. A boy, his head full of Marlowe's Helen, meets Helen and in the power of that evoked beauty sees a strange future; a man and a woman, led to a desolate inn in a deserted village by an old man, listen to the horror that kills love; three men alone together in a house fear something supernatural, yet suspect one another of trickery, so that one nurses himself into craziness; Mr. Tangent, watching a mouse, unexpectedly speaks the words that turn her into a lovely girl, and at the end is left looking again at the mouse. Even in his more realistic stories, as that of the old gentleman who escapes certification as a lunatic, Mr. Bullett's work has a pleasantly strange quality. He is not to be deceived by face

values, and he can, when one reads him, save his readers from that most dreary and degrading of deceptions. Yet his work is never self-consciously fantastic—he does not begin his dreams with a "let's pretend" catchword. Miss Townsend Warner, in her best work as good as Mr. Bullett, is not always quite free from that fault. Her subjects are less fanciful than his; but her approach to her people is occasionally rather archly visionary. There is in her work, especially when she is playing the disciple to Mr. T. F. Powys, a certain self-induced quaintness. This spoils the simplicity of such stories as *Early One Morning* and *The Maze*, and it is occasionally present in one of the best stories in the book, *The Salvation*. Still the tale of how Angustias Bailey, remembering her dead English husband, insists on sheltering the wandering Englishman is a fine piece of work, and is only just excelled by that fine study in mad justice, *Elinor Barley*. Miss Warner has exceptional gifts in the handling of uneasy subjects; there is suspense in *The Son* and *The Maze*, while there is rich, proper country humour in the laughter of *This Our Brother* and *A Parting Gift*, a delightful tale of the downfall of a would-be Don Juan.

A German Idyll is one of the tenderest, loveliest things Mr. Bates has written. He still has a slight tendency to flatten his style suddenly; a phrase awkwardly or sadly put will spoil a passage of lyrical beauty, but in this story he has done his best. It is a simple tale. Richardson goes to Germany, to Rhineland, with Karl, a London bookseller who has not been back for twenty years. They reach his village, Iben, are greeted tumultuously, and with much feasting, and they leave again. One girl, Anna, is fascinated by Richardson, who has no German but Ja, Ja. A kiss in the dark; another kiss or two and a walk in the forest; a vain effort of Anna's to tell Richardson she will not be able to see him off, as she has a music lesson; his bitter disappointment when she is absent at the end. Out of these slightnesses Mr. Bates has made a thing of quivering loveliness, a tale instinct with that German sentiment that has so natural and earth-bound a gaiety. This book, and Mr. Coppard's volume, are also splendid pieces of book-production, as fine as any the Golden Cockerel Press has done. Mr. Gibbins's title-page to *Crotty Shankwin* is a perfect delight. Mr. Coppard's stories are good Coppard, but not quite the best. The fantasticality of *Crotty Shankwin*, in which the anchor gets on to the church-steeple, is a shade too deliberate; and excellently drawn as is Fossett, in *The Beauty Spot*, the tale itself is rather too long. Fossett, who says truthfully of himself, "I've plenty to think about, but I can't always manage to think about it at the right moment," is deserted by his wife. Mr. Coppard gives us his dreams and his talks with his vulgar cronies, Barnes—and here he is at his best; when he somehow disappoints us rather is in the climax when Fossett and Eliza meet again. The situation demands then an imaginative treatment which Mr. Coppard could give, but seems too shy to do. The manner of Miss Compton-Rickett is a dangerous one even in her own skilful and sophisticated hands; it tends too easily to become the manner of *The Young Visitors*, and Miss Strachey, in her entertaining little description of a wedding-party, by no means escapes the danger. Her naïveté has not quite acquired the death-dealing precision of Miss Compton-Rickett's, and she has not that author's appearance of complete innocence in the devastating exposure of human frailty and stupidity. Shyness creeps in, and a shade of affectation—this is especially evident in the drawing of Dolly, the bride, and Joseph, the guest who thinks himself in love with her. There is plenty of fun in the book, of a rather wry-lipped kind, especially in the recurrent quarrels between Tom and his brother Robert, about Robert's green socks.

Tom . . . went over and joined his younger brother behind the sofa upon which Kitty and Owen were sitting. And these two soon heard an angry whispering behind them. "Robert! I beg you—I implore you!—I ask you for one moment to imagine something! Will you, Robert? Listen. You are kneeling there in the church, Robert! The ceremony is in full swing: the clergyman is praying, the church is full of flowers, everybody, everybody, is as smartly dressed as they can be, Robert. All of a sudden you glance up! You see a man from Rugby staring at you from across the aisle! He has a curious smile on his face, Robert. And he is staring, Staring. *Down at your socks*—!" There was a violent scuffle behind the sofa and Robert dashed suddenly through into the drawing-room. Tom followed upon his heels, colliding with Mrs. Thatcham as he rounded the corner.

The difficulty of such a manner as Miss Strachey's is that its intense economy of comment leaves the story with more than a suspicion of parody; and often the reader is left wondering whether the author is quite aware of some of the effects obtained.

In *The Heartless Land* Mr. Stern makes, though without any apparently propagandist method, a violent attack on the life forced upon English people in Rhodesia. He is at times a little brutal in his manner—both the character and incidents in *The Force*, a tale of a man's sexual hunger, are rather too typical; and the satire in *Charles Congreve, Esquire*, is effective rather than delicate. But how effective it is! Congreve living in a snobbish seclusion (he has left England after marrying a parlour-maid he seduced), lording it over the few other white people, rejoicing in making them socially uncomfortable and impressed as he was once made uneasy at home. Mr. Stern presents his picture boldly, savagely and with a finely uncontrolled indignation. The eight stories in his book have exceptional force, and are written without affectation and not unbeautifully: they are the best work about Africa we have had since Mr. Plomer's short stories. Mr. O'Brien's anthology is exceptionally good this year. Those who read the more enterprising magazines for their short stories will recognise several old friends—Miss Eiluned Lewis' *The Last Rose of Summer*, Mr. Graham Greene's *The End of the Party*, Mr. Pritchett's *Woolly Gloves*, Mr. Shanks' *The Fairy Hill* and Mr. John Collier's *Green Thoughts* are perhaps the pick of an extremely good choice.

The two novels in our list both show what a pity it is that the modern commercial demand is still set against the short story. Miss Gibbons' book is great fun; but it would have been greater had it been about a third of its length. It is a parody-novel—Miss Kaye-Smith, Mr. T. F. Powys, Mrs. Dudeney are all guyed merrily in the comic romance of Flora among the Starkadders. The Starkadders take in Cousin Flora, at her request, and she promptly proceeds to reform Cold Comfort Farm. She has the curtains cleaned, she tackles her relatives one by one, she lets the bull out, she takes her fairy-like cousin in hand and turns her into a society girl, she finally dares and reforms Aunt Ada Doom, who, when she was a little thing, "saw something ugly in the wood shed." Much of the parody is admirable; but Flora's own story seems unnecessary, and is rather commonplace. Mr. Waugh has the nicest way of dealing with nasty things. In this book his debt to Saki is more evident than before. Basil is a close relative of the great Clovis. The scene of the book moves from Basil's London to the Emperor Seth's Azania. Seth has been at Oxford with Basil, and Basil, hearing that his old acquaintance has become Emperor, borrows money from his mistress, steals a bracelet of his mother's and goes to Azania to modernise that country. So far the book is amusing; but Mr. Waugh's spirits seem to flag when he gets Basil out, though his accounts of life at the British Legation have a gay fertility that almost equals Saki's best. The end with its tragedy and the cannibal feast rather turns the stomach. No doubt the idle rich are cannibals; but Mr. Waugh's way of symbolising that fact is rather too unpleasant.

INDIA.

- India in 1930-31.** Government of India Publication. Rs. 3.
Years of Destiny. India 1926-32. By J. COATMAN. Cape. 10s. 6d.
The Indian Riddle. By J. COATMAN. Humphrey Toulmin. 2s. 6d.
Some Aspects of the Indian Problem. The Inaugural Massey Lecture. By LORD IRWIN. Oxford University Press. 1s.
The Indian Peasant. By the MARQUESS OF LINLITHGOW. Faber and Faber. 1s.
Truth About India. By VERRIER ELWIN. Allen and Unwin. 2s. 6d.

If there was really safety in the multitude of counsellors, India's future need cause little anxiety. The last five years must have seen nearly as many new books about Indian political questions as the preceding half century. Most of them have been, alas, sorry stuff, concentrating attention on the most superficial aspects of an extremely complicated situation. These six books form a valuable antidote to the popular habit of dramatising politics. The first five are thoughtful well-balanced works, illustrating the quiet determination to push on with the work of forming a responsible Federal government, which is so apparent in Lord Irwin's lecture. They make Father Elwin's naive and entirely uncritical defence of the Congress seem ridiculous, but the *Truth About India* illustrates, better than any critic can, the