

Books

appreciative people know, this is the third volume on the Quinn family, and Mr. O'Riordan presents his aged and impudent rake with such a perfection of skill that the first part of the book could hardly be bettered. There is point and precision in the writing, grace and dignity in the speech, while the supple wit is most excellent pastime. But then that blessed reprobate Sir Desmond dies and we are left with Sir David who might as well have been Sir Galahad. A man of fifty with the heart of an idealistic boy might be pleasant enough, but nobleness need not be pushed to the point of imbecility, and one is naturally aggrieved after having been charmed by the sins of Sir Desmond to be put off with the flavourless virtue of this man David. He has held Ruth Irwin in hallowed memory for twenty years and on his return he immediately falls in love with Ruth's stirring daughter. But does he know he loves her? Shame on the thought! She is half engaged to his unstable brother, and David, being too nice to look into his own mind busies himself with trying to make them marry. She has sense and knows that she loves David, and that he loves her. She is also keenly alive to conditions in Ireland and the street life in Dublin is so brilliantly described that it is a hundred pities the story is not permitted to develop with an Irish background. But Mr. O'Riordan packs all his people off for a Continental tour and for three-quarters of the book one is obliged to accompany them on their sight-seeing expeditions, while David uses every odd moment to try to get rid of the woman he wants. On the last page Ruth Irwin's bright blade of a daughter is driven to seducing David just by way of clearing his mind. One does not dare think what Sir Desmond's comment would have been.

Mr. H. E. Bates writes with such businesslike sobriety, saying so directly

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and capably what he has to say, that one wonders why *The Poacher* leaves one unmoved. It may be that the defiant, roystering figure who rebels against society to the extent of never working, but most consummately poaching, almost amounts to a reliable recipe. A rebel is the favourite hero of our inner hearts, especially if we do not have to follow his ways, and a really good poacher is likably near to natural man. The night raids on rabbits through capitially described country make enjoyable reading. The book begins with Buck Bishop, who was a great poacher, and continues with his son Luke who was rather a poor thing. There is something very disturbing in fiction's quick glance at these splendidly lawless fathers, now dreadfully vanished, only to dwell at great length on their conscience-ridden sons. (Have other generations cried 'Oh that we could sin with the valour of the past?') Buck Bishop having died, Luke finds that he drew his life from his father and without him is lost. For a while he drifts listlessly, then flying from the cries of his sister's confinement, he goes blindly into the countryside his father had taught him to know so well. Coming on the murdered body of a keeper his father had been heard to threaten he runs desperately, is seen, and, driven to panic, pushes on to an isolated farm where a friend of his father shelters him. He stays until the true culprit has been found and here he is married by a young woman who has an itch to get on in the world. There may not be many certainties in life, but novelists are convinced one of them is that woman plays a pitilessly predatory rôle in love. Marriage stirs Luke to hard work and on a small plot of land he wrests a living for his wife and child. The wife's ambitious gentility hardens her into a barb, the daughter marries a man of our modern, efficient, organized world, Luke returns to poaching and

again has no place in society. Mr Bates's descriptions of the countryside at night put us in his debt.

Mrs. Buck has once more written of the Wang family in *A House Divided*, as like all her other books, it is a careful, solid piece of work. The fact that Wang Yuan is of our times, spends six years in England and returns to face the new world that forming in China does make for a certain disenchantment. Mrs. Buck has by her calm and measured studies made us feel that we learned reliably from her of a fascinatingly different race. In the early chapters, when Wang Yuan breaks with his father Wang the Tiger, we have the same sense of seeing clearly a civilization we know too little and much whose wisdom is fast passing away. Wang Yuan declares that he belongs to himself, not to his family, and refuses to lend his body that his father may have grandchildren. This desperate avowal followed by his rushing from the home of his youth, and going to the learned land who is one of the wives of his father and who lives in a great coastal city. Here he is confronted with modernity. He becomes a revolutionist, though against his temperate nature; is almost battered in a love affair by a revolutionary maiden who resists, but on her arrest she betrays him to the authorities. His family eventually buy his release from prison and he leaves for an English University. The spell of Chinese manners and morals holds up here, though Mrs. Buck's style tends more and more to monotony, and much as one appreciates the care of her writing, the close-packed pages of hers are somewhat too burdened with detail and would be the better for elimination. When Wang Yuan arrives in England his impressions are still interesting, but he has the widely shared ill-fortune of viewing a new country from a boarding-house. The types he encounters are undoubtedly true, but they are not important. He is again mar-