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the Art Expert, not because they liked the Rembrandt better than the Victorian landscape but because (a) they knew it was worth more, and (b) they knew they *ought* to like it better, then the scene might have contained a flicker of satire. As it is, its grotesqueness effectively kills such humour as it might have had.

And this is largely true of the rest of the play, of the jibes directed against the press, the pulpit, the politician and the retired general, not to mention the public school system and the arms manufacturer. Only in these cases the jibes are not only poor but stale. One wonders what fun an audience not entirely composed of morons could conceivably extract from so much knocking about of battered Aunt-Sallies, and so much preaching to the converted. The play, incidentally, is to be produced in the autumn by the Group Theatre under the direction of Mr. Rupert Doone, to whom Mr. Eliot also acknowledges help. If the same ladies who at Canterbury so successfully ruined the Becket choruses by their drawing-room melodramatics are included in the caste of *The Dog Beneath the Skin*, a very good time should be had by all.

I. M. PARSONS.

## Primitive Societies

*Rubber Truncheon.* By Wolfgang Langhoff. (Constable. 7s. 6d.)  
*Waiting for Nothing.* By Tom Kroner. (Constable. 7s. 6d.)

THERE is a rather dispiriting uniformity about most books which proceed from present-day Germany. However much we may admire the motives of their authors, however deeply we may sympathize with their plight, the craving for variety in the human mind is such that when five or six of these tragic records have been read the reader inevitably responds less eagerly when the seventh sad variation on the theme is proffered. But I do not think that anyone, however many accounts of persecution and injustice in Nazi Germany he has read, will be able to remain unmoved by *Rubber Truncheon*. Herr Langhoff writes simply and well, he does not make appeals to emotion or prejudice, he gives the actual names of places and events instead of the conventional ciphers, he remains strictly objective (indeed at times indulgent) even when describing the most appalling instances of barbarity and bestial sadism, and he makes a sincere and unmalicious attempt to assess the curious theories and more curious fanaticism which inspired the conduct of his captors. It is of course impossible for anyone who was not an eye-witness of the events which he describes to assert dogmatically that everything which he records is true; one can only say that his book gives an impression of complete honesty and integrity. But even if it could be proved that three-quarters of his charges should be subtracted, the remaining fragment of the picture would still be devastating enough.

Herr Langhoff's narrative follows a more or less familiar sequence of events. He was a leading actor at the Düsseldorf Municipal Theatre, who had occasionally recited and produced amateur theatricals at workers' concerts. Shortly after the Reichstag fire he was arrested and thrown into prison. After a period of imprisonment in Düsseldorf, he was transferred to a concentration camp at Börgermoor, and later moved to the castle of Lichtenburg. Altogether he was under "protective arrest" for thirteen months, during the whole of which time he was never brought to trial, nor informed what was the charge against him; nor, when he was finally freed in March, 1934, was he given any reason for his release. Throughout the period of his interment he was the witness, and from time to time the victim, of systematic brutalities in comparison with which the recorded treatment of their political opponents by the Bolsheviks seems a model of humane behaviour. Men were regularly beaten senseless by their guards, in some cases until limbs were broken and even until they died, prisoners were forced to flog one another, swastikas were shaved on their heads, prisoners were shot when they had been tricked into positions in which it would appear that they were attempting to escape, and there were minor cruelties too numerous to recount. Herr Langhoff records the miseries of himself and his fellow-prisoners with scrupulous fairness. He is not content, as some of his predecessors have been, to explain the Nazis' treatment of their opponents merely by pointing to the bestial sadism innate in their kind; he considers them not as sadists by nature,

but as sadists through circumstances. He recognizes that many of them were obsessed by the wish to convert their prisoners to their own creed, and that the only method of persuasion which their hysterical fear and hatred of their opponents sanctioned was education by torture. One of the most determined of their tormentors, in a revealing moment, exclaimed: "I shouldn't wonder if it isn't possible to make decent German men out of you international criminals!" And it is worth noting that when, much later, they thought that they had eliminated every trace of determination and individuality from their victims, they relaxed their former methods and showed themselves ready and even eager to fraternize with them.

The difference between the situations of the author of *Rubber Truncheon* and the author of *Waiting for Nothing* is more one of degree than of kind. For it is surely not fanciful to recognize a similarity between Herr Langhoff and his fellow-prisoners purposelessly tormented and persecuted by their Nazi gaolers and Mr. Kroner and his fellow down-and-outers persecuted and assaulted by the police, cynically patronized by charity organizations, and spurned by their more fortunate fellow-countrymen when they asked for assistance: "You goddam bums give me a pain in the neck. Get the hell away from me before I call a cop"; "Buddy, do you know what I would do if I was down on my luck with no place to get in out of the rain? I would get me a job and go to work." Mr. Kroner is a member of the generation which has found that there is no work to be had now, and realizes that there may never be any in the future. He is a person of some education, having worked his way through college by proof-reading on newspapers and then spent two years teaching in schools in West Virginia. After this there was no work of any kind to be found, and he was compelled to move from town to town, living from hand to mouth on begging, charity institutions, and small misdemeanours. *Waiting for Nothing* is an appalling record of desperate poverty and hopeless degradation, written in an abrupt and laconic manner, and enlivened by a series of well drawn portraits and well described scenes. It is an extremely impressive book, which no one whose interest in either America or unemployment is more than merely academic should miss. It is profoundly to be hoped also that its success will satisfactorily settle the question of its author's future.

DEREK VERSCHOYLE.

## The Bathysphere

*Half Mile Down.* By William Beebe. (Bodley Head. 18s.)

It is six years since Dr. Beebe, with the help of Dr. Otis Barton, designed a curious and rather clumsy looking vehicle which he named almost in jest the bathysphere. Many men had invented deep-sea diving apparatus before him, from Alexander the Great who descended into the sea in a candle-lit barrel and had the good fortune to observe a record monster which took three days and nights to pass him, to the nineteenth-century inventor Kleingert, who produced a diving suit which seems to be a combination between a bathroom geyser and a pair of Edwardian bloomers. But the record for deep-sea diving still remained at 525 feet, and the record for endurance at that level at a good deal less than Alexander's mythical six days or so. And clearly there remained to be explored, and still remains in spite of Dr. Beebe's record achievements, an undersea world "of life almost as unknown as that of Mars or Venus," a world of colossal pressure and darkness, fantastically inhabited. With a view to exploring this world, Dr. Beebe and Dr. Barton invented the bathysphere. In design, compared with many historic diving machines, it was extremely simple: a steel sphere of a single casting, measuring only four feet nine inches in diameter, not quite so tall as an average man, walls a uniform one and a quarter inches thick, and weighing altogether five thousand four hundred pounds. There was a door, actually more like a rabbit-hole, and two windows of fused quartz through which observation could be made by the aid of a powerful arc light. There was room inside for two people, a telephone, oxygen tanks, various instruments and pressure gauges and a book or two. This sphere, which seems to bear a close relationship to the gondola of a stratosphere balloon, was to be lowered from a ship's deck into the sea off the coast of Nonsuch Island in Bermuda, suspended by a single non-twisting cable of steel, seven-eighths of an inch in diameter, and a breaking strain of

twenty-nine tons. For all its size and weight, it seems to have been, relatively, like an eggshell suspended from a reel of cotton.

However, in this bathysphere Dr. Beebe, accompanied except on one occasion by Dr. Barton, made thirty-five deep-sea dives during the years 1930-1934, without the slightest mishap. The record for helmet diving is 60 feet, for the diving suit 306 feet, for the submarine 383 feet, and for the armoured suit 525 feet. The bathysphere descended to 3,028 feet on a day in 1934. It was a descent into perpetual night. The spectrum ended at something like 1,500 feet, the sea becoming like a Stygian sky broken by no lights except the lights of the fish themselves. The air light was barely adequate. And across this absolute, sepulchral and terrifying darkness the passage of unknown and lovely fish was endless. It seemed to have been like a passage of delicate floating meteorites of every possible colour. Curiously, the deep sea monsters of Biblical allegories seemed hardly to exist. A doubtful twenty-feeter was the record. The rest were delicate creatures of altogether bewildering habit and shape and beauty: the five-lined constellation fish carrying along its flat sides five arcs of golden yellow lights, each partly or wholly surrounded by purple lamps; the rainbow gars sailing upright like sea-swallows of scarlet and blue and yellow; the brown avocet with turquoise eyes sinuously swimming with its transparent young like a creature of silken seaweed; the sinister deathly pallid Sailfin, toothless and lightless; strange lantern-fish and hatchet fish; the orange lighted finger squid with enormous eyes having luminous spots on the iris and orange bulls-eye lamps at the end of its longest arms; rainbow jellies and serpent dragons and viperfish and fish whose lights exploded like soundless fireworks on the quartz windows of the bathysphere—countless unknown and undreamed-of creatures, all observed and described by Dr. Beebe on the bathysphere telephone, to be carefully recorded on the ship's deck and in due course to form the characters of this book.

It is a book that to the uninitiated—of which I am one—can only be taken as a wonderful but almost terrifying fairy-tale. The mind is dazzled by this under-sea ballet played out in the eternal darkness of proverbial hell, and the heart chilled by this

strange corridor that Dr. Beebe has added to the maze of human knowledge. It is a long way from Alexander to the bathysphere, from the diver's sixty feet to the record half-mile, but it is farther still from the bathysphere's deepest dive to the last fathom of ocean. What lies there only Dr. Beebe and his associates can guess. The rest of us in turn can only read with open mouths and wonder.

H. E. BATES.

### Mr. Greene's New Novel

*England Made Me.* By Graham Greene. (Heinemann. 7s. 6d.)

IF there is one thing common to nearly all the best of the younger writers today it is that they seem to be engaged in a resolute indictment of the world they live in. This is no doubt always a habit with the young, otherwise progress in any direction would be slow, but naturally in an age like this of vast and rapid changes accepted values of all kinds are more often and more ruthlessly questioned. Among our novelists, unfortunately, there is far too easy an acceptance of conventional habits of thought, curiosity and imagination are rare, and their books, far from offering any useful or ornamental criticism of life, serve only too often as exposures of dull minds and weak sensibilities. Some of the younger writers, however, show an ability to attack their problems energetically and in their own way, and while some seem to be heading vaguely towards a reddish Utopia others no less gifted are busy trying to be honest and to understand their fellow creatures and the world beyond the narrow limits of their own environment, and are managing to practise the art of writing in a skillful and entertaining way: amongst them is Mr. Graham Greene. His new book, the best he has yet written, is very good indeed. It shows invention, imagination, atmosphere, freshness of eye, adroit character-drawing, and a very personal gift for metaphor and simile. The story is steered perfectly away from hardness on the one hand and sentimentality on the other, and it is hard to find fault with it, though some readers may instinctively dislike Mr. Greene's choice of subject or the way he treats it.

The scene is Stockholm, the action is centred about Erik Krogh, one of those international financiers whose operations are as dubious as they are vast, and with this exception the leading characters are English. In no foreign capital, on the