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## A Novel of the Week

By H. E. BATES

*Dangerous Lives*

THREE FEVERS. By LEO WALMSLEY. Cape. 7s. 6d.

IN a brief, but most admirable, preface to this novel Miss Storm Jameson remarks :

It is difficult to think of it as fiction, since it is the very bones of life as it is being lived at this moment, by the men of this grim, fascinating coast. The dangers faced by these men, not only in pursuit of their calling, but in the lifeboat service, are actual dangers, as commonplace as their lives, as their swift humour, their hardihood, their stubbornness, their fierce possessive grasp of what they hold.

There is, indeed, about this grim, salty book something uncannily authentic. It reeks of fish and sea ; it is as if it had been lashed by the bitter spray and the cold north-easters which beat and blow unceasingly through its pages.

*Three Fevers* is a novel of conflicts, the conflict between the Fosdycks and Lunnis, always striving to outfish each other, the conflict between life and danger, and, above all, the conflict between man and sea fills every page and gives the book a quick, restless air of life.

The Fosdycks and the Lunnis are rival fishing families ; they cannot move or fish or even live without each other ; if the Fosdycks put out on a dirty winter morning, the Lunnis, proud and jealous, must follow them ; if the Lunnis begin to fish for lobster in January, the Fosdycks must begin to weave their pots, too.

When the swell of a sudden storm carries away the whole fleet of pots that the Lunnis have set, the Fosdycks gloat cynically ; but when the Lunnis begin to catch the first early lobsters, the Fosdycks must catch lobsters, too, even though early lobster-fishing is against their every principle. Throughout the book this intense, unresting rivalry goes on.

The three fevers from which the book takes its name are lobster-fever, cod-fever and salmon-fever, all of which the Lunnis, and automatically the Fosdycks, catch in turn. The fever manifests itself in a rash of enthusiasm ; the Lunnis are impetuous men ; if they think of a thing they must do it, like children, at once.

During a spell of cod-fever in mid-winter they take an accidental lobster, and lobster-fever breaks out ; during lobster-fever they see a salmon in a pool, and salmon-fever is on them. They are swift, impetuous, fearless men and the story of their fevers is entrancing. One fishes side by side with them, watches the fall and rise of the market as feverishly as they do, wonders desperately if the lobster-pots have been borne away on the swell or if they can be recovered. Every instant of their lives is portrayed vividly, authentically and excitingly.

How Mr. Walmsley gets his effects I do not know. He writes in an unpretentious, almost ungraceful and humdrum, style, never making fine flourishes, never labouring his words, never using words for their own sake. He has something to say about the lives of his fellow-men and he says it, clearly, understandingly, without either cynicism or pity, making us believe in them as surely and clearly as he believes in them himself. His feeling for both character

and atmosphere is admirable. The storm which closes the book is a magnificent piece of writing. Conrad himself, also a master of atmosphere, would have appreciated the colour and intensity, the saltness and desperation of its every line. In the matter of economy he might even have learnt from Mr. Walmsley.\*\*\*\*

H. E. BATES

*Other Novels of the Week*

COUNTRY AIR. By Guy Rawlence. Constable. 7s. 6d. Mr. Rawlence's talent steadily matures. This is the story of a rather affected young author who takes a country vicarage for a month so that he may effectively "guy" the Victorians and all their works in so suitable an atmosphere. Things do not work out exactly as he expected them to do, and by means of some really excellent characterization Mr. Rawlence provides us with a sincere piece of fiction. It is to be hoped that its quiet merits will not detract from its chances of wide recognition.\*\*\*

MALADETTA. By J. B. Morton. Chapman and Hall. 7s. 6d. "Beachcomber" tells of two young people who fall in love on a mountain-top in the Pyrenees, to discover in everyday London that it was not love at all. The story is leisurely, humorous, wise, and tender.\*\*\*

THE LIFE AND ADVENTURES OF ALOYSIUS O'CALLAGHAN. Heinemann. 7s. 6d. An extravaganza of adventure—cannibal island, mining town, South American revolution—served up hot, and all probabilities sacrificed for the story. Good entertainment.\*\*\*

BARBALOOT. By Daphne Muir. Chatto and Windus. 7s. 6d. Mrs. Muir treats with delicate understanding the decline and fall of a Dutch pirate of the seventeenth century. A first-rate romantic tale.\*\*\*\*

MEMOIRS OF OTHER FRONTS. Putnam. This anonymous Proustian novel of the War and Paris is a record of spiritual and amatory experiences—"we were no good to anybody . . . least of all to ourselves." Cleverly and solidly written, it is typical of the period.\*\*\*

IN THE LINE. By Georg Bucher. Cape. 7s. 6d. A German infantryman's account of the front line from the opening of the War to the end. A terrific story. A thousand times better than *All Quiet*.\*\*\*\*

GOOD TIME. By James W. Drawbell. Collins. 7s. 6d. Two decent people in search of a good time. Hotels, theatres, liners, London and New York, the wail of the saxophone over all. They find their good time together when the dance is over. Good workmanship.\*\*\*

A FIGHTING MAN OF MARS. By Edgar Rice Burroughs. Lane. 7s. 6d. As fresh, vigorous and thrilling a yarn as ever Mr. Burroughs wrote.\*\*\*

SUNSET. By Frank Morison. Faber. 7s. 6d. A semi-scientific-philosophical melodrama. A scientist gets a message from another planet. Distinctly thrilling.\*\*\*

THE SILVER EAGLE. By W. R. Burnett. Heinemann. 7s. 6d. American business and gangster life by one who is a master of this form of romance.\*\*\*

To enable readers to judge the merits of novels at a glance, we add stars to these short notices. Five stars denotes a masterpiece, four stars a novel of outstanding quality, and so down to one star.