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## A Novel of the Week

H. E. BATES

*Goodbye, Spring!*

I'LL NEVER BE YOUNG AGAIN. By DAPHNE DU MAURIER. Heinemann. 7s. 6d.

IF I had never read Ernest Hemingway I should be inclined to regard Miss du Maurier as a writer of most unusual genius. Even so her talent is a forceful and arresting one. The influence of Hemingway is very strongly evident for the first hundred pages or so of *I'll Never be Young Again*, but as the book progresses it becomes less and less apparent, and is finally assimilated completely. To me this seems to indicate that Miss du Maurier's talent gathers its force from something more than mere robust imitation. Her book is by no means mere Hemingway and water, though there are certainly passages in her novel which recall *Fiesta* too forcibly, and there are occasions when she seems to be trying to reproduce the Hemingway atmosphere of ironic melancholy. It is significant to note that at these times her novel lacks real conviction.

Her story is told in the first person by the principal character, a youth named Richard, who in the first chapter is contemplating suicide and is dissuaded by Jake, a stranger just out of prison. Richard and Jake, personifying youth and disillusionment, hastiness and tolerance, egotism and unselfishness, work their passages to Norway, where they are involved in a saloon brawl. A man is stabbed and they run, taking ship for France. The brawl is magnificently done. The more masculine a situation the better Miss du Maurier seems to handle it. The storm in which Jake and the whole crew except Richard are lost off the coast of France, is most powerfully brought off also. Richard goes to Paris, works, takes a mistress and begins to write. The portrait of the girl Hesta, blossoming slowly from virginity to full passion and from passion to something approaching prostitution, is the best thing in the book, more arresting and powerful in its sureness and delicacy than even the best of Miss du Maurier's pictures of masculine character and situation. She is drawn firmly and tenderly and there is about her something poignant and touching, without a hint of sentimentality.

Sentimentality is, indeed, the last thing of which one could accuse Miss du Maurier. She seems to have taken very much to heart some most excellent advice of Tchehov's on the subject of objectivity. "Write coldly," wrote Tchehov to a woman novelist, "don't weep with your characters, and the effect will be more touching. Drop one tear and you ruin everything." Miss du Maurier never drops a tear. She regards the tragedy of the irrevocable passing of youth with supreme detachment. Hesta and Richard and Jake will never be young again, but she does not weep over their lost youth; the result is that she gets a touching and impressive effect, and we believe absolutely in her creations.

Her last chapter is a kind of epilogue, showing Richard no longer so young, the tragedy of Hesta and his unwanted novel no longer so tragic. I am not sure as to its effect, and I have a strong feeling that the book would have been better without it. But the point is debat-

able and the question of its rightness or wrongness would not seem to be so immediately important as the need for Miss du Maurier to break away from her influences and begin to write more and more out of her own strength.

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*Other Novels of the Week*

THE SOLDIER AND THE GENTLEWOMAN. By Hilda Vaughan. Gollancz. 7s. 6d. A Welsh domestic story of a strong-willed woman who married the man who became possessed of her father's house and estate, bore him children, and then killed him. The woman holds our sympathy. Unusual, and has some distinction.\*\*\*

THE MOON OF MUCH GLADNESS. By Ernest Bramah. Cassell. 7s. 6d. Another humorous story of an imaginary China by a "conscientious recorder of authentic facts," which will delight Mr. Bramah's admirers. There is a full apparatus of mystery. We liked the book better than anything Mr. Bramah has done since the first rapture of his Kai Lung.\*\*\*\*

MOONLIGHT IN UR. By E. L. Grant Watson. Douglas. 7s. 6d. This story breaks new ground by having its setting in ancient Chaldea. The remote past is brilliantly reconstructed. A tragedy of love and hate, eternal in its truth to life, mingled with adventurous action. Not a book for all tastes, but those who read it will not lightly forget it.\*\*\*\*

MAIDS AND MISTRESSES. By Beatrice Kean Seymour. Heinemann. 8s. 6d. Middle-class married life as a background to the development of a young servant girl who is one of the most charming and convincing characters in recent fiction. Her mistresses are not so charming. A book that should arouse controversy.\*\*\*\*

THE INFINITE LONGING. By Marie Schmitz. Harrap. 7s. 6d. Translated from the Dutch by Dr. G. J. Renier. How an egoist gains everything and loses it and so finds his soul. Well-conceived, and will interest some readers, but it is oversentimentally written.\*\*\*

FEUD OF CATTLE KINGS. By Robert Ames Bennett. RED RUSTLERS. By Frank C. Robertson. WINTER RANGE. By Alan Lemay. DESERT RANCH. By Charles Wesley Sanders. Collins. 7s. 6d. each. Four Wild West thrillers. The first a romance of the Sante Fe trail by a master of stirring adventure tales; the second is a skilful shooting story; the third a murder mystery of the ranges; and the fourth a love story of twins. Each author has a style of his own, but they all manage to be exciting.\*\*\*

THE MOSS ROAD. By Jean White. Murray. 7s. 6d. A first novel of the Buchan country. The author can create both character and atmosphere and tell a story. A most promising book.\*\*\*

ROSES AND PEACOCKS. By D. M. Locke. Grayson. 7s. 6d. Drama of passionate love against the background of India to-day. Vividly realistic.\*\*\*

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.