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Mr. Noel Godber has established a reputation as a humorist, but I think the strongest appeal of his new novel, *Miss Barelegs* (John Long, 7s. 6d.), may be the fact that the public love hearing of people doing unusual jobs from the inside. The advertising profession offers grand opportunities for burlesque, and Mr. Godber has made the most of them.

## PROVINCIAL ANTHOLOGY

Reviews by H. E. BATES

**M**R. MICHAEL HARRISON'S anthology of short stories, *Under Thirty* (Rich and Cowan, 8s. 6d.), might well have been called *Provincial Anthology*, for of its twenty-nine writers more than three-quarters are provincial writers, mostly without refinement of background, almost all disclaiming literary antecedents of the kind held by the Huxleys, the Waughs, the du Mauriers, the Garnetts, the Macaulays, and so on. In fact, judged by such distinguished standards, this is an undistinguished anthology. It smacks of the board school, and in some ways its twenty-nine biographical notes are more interesting than its twenty-nine stories. It so happens that I am one of this twenty-nine, and as one who graduated to literature via a warehouse I find myself happy in the company of such writers as Leslie Halward, Walter Allen, Douglas Boyd, W. J. Beamand, Arthur Calder Marshall, Walter Brierley, John Hampson, and others who have worked as colliers, bricklayers, commercial travellers, and other undistinguished occupations. The stories of these men have an authentic punch, colour, and sincerity that certain others lack. Mr. Rupert Croft-Cooke's contribution, for example, is a smart entertainment piece flipped off by a magazine writer who has really no place here. There are no women writers included, a fact I deplore very much, and a place might have been found for Mr. Manhood, Mr. C. F. Green, Mr. O'Connor, and Mr. O'Faolain. Their presence would have given further richness and weight to this already ample and unconventional collection.

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Some day someone with more time than he knows what to do with will compile an anthology of women short story writers of to-day, and will be astonished to find himself gathering a double-decker omnibus. In that collection the stories by *Miss Sally Benson—Love Thy Neighbour* (Constable, 7s. 6d.)—will be assured of a distinguished place. Placed on a birds-of-a-feather system Miss Benson would come very close to her fellow countrywoman, Dorothy Parker, to whose work her neatly satirical, finely malicious, and yet acutely sympathetic art bears close relation. She has been truthfully described as a writer "unusually guiltless of intellectual clichés," and is thus placed very far from an over-intellectualized writer like Miss Elizabeth Bowen. Her neat little stories, mostly of extremely trying types of American womanhood, are written with a pin point. Working with microscopic deliberation and exactitude, she scratches the lives of her people with detached and delicate malice, revealing but not wounding. Her method appears to be childishly simple, but its efficiency only convinces me of its extreme subtlety. This is a first-rate little collection.

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I find myself extremely suspicious of writers who preface their books with sentimental quotations from the poets and then, still not satisfied, add sentimental prefaces of their own and still more quotations. To this group belongs *Miss Cora Jarrett*, in whose *I Asked No Other Thing* (Heinemann, 7s. 6d.) there are twenty stories. The title is a quotation from Emily Dickinson. Miss Jarrett describes her

characters as "people with ruling passions": which is exactly the trouble. Miss Jarrett delights in taking situations already heavily pregnant with emotion and then over-writing them as hard as she possibly can. The general result, of which *The Man with Nine Fingers* is an appalling example, is something sticky, over-earnest, loosely directed. In short, an embarrassing volume.

## MEXICAN MEDLEY

Mexico has a strange and rich peasant folklore, highly ceremonial rites such as the Tarascan duck-hunt, the Yaqui Deer Dance, the pagan cults of the Otomi Indians, the Flying Game, the Texcoco Passion Play. In *Mexican Mosaic* (Faber, 15s.) Mr. Rodney Gallop describes these from personal observation and generally gives a picture of the country and its peoples remarkable for its range and detail. In the naïve Passion Play, the Captain of the Roman soldiers "wore a cocked hat, a black uniform tail coat with red and yellow epaulettes and braid, white riding breeches, and top boots." To bear the cross, Simon of Cyrene was not picked from the crowd, as the Gospel relates; he hid himself on a hillside above the Aztec village, and Jews, mounted Romans, and children had to scour the slope for him—a search which took nearly an hour. The book, illustrated with vivid photographs and drawings by the author's wife, teems with quaint customs of the kind which convince one that Mexico is still one of the most romantic lands on earth.

## LORD ROTHERMERE'S WARNINGS

Lord Rothermere describes his book, *Warnings and Predictions* (Eyre and Spottiswoode, 5s.), as "the inner history (including many letters never before published) of England's danger and Mr. Chamberlain's fight for security." This, one may be pardoned for observing, is pitching it rather high. There is no "inner history," and the "letters never before published" appear to consist mainly of communications which Lord Rothermere has felt moved from time to time to address to Cabinet Ministers, telling them what they ought to do. The purpose of the book is to prove from these epistles and copious extracts from articles in the *Daily Mail* that for the last twenty years Lord Rothermere has always been right. He opens by claiming that he was the first to urge the necessity for re-armament; but, as in the next breath he tells us what fine fellows Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini ("whose friendship also I enjoy") are, how much they and their peoples love England, and how much their feelings have been hurt by our lack of reciprocity, the average reader will be apt to wonder what, on Lord Rothermere's premises, we have to re-arm for. The book closes with a eulogy of the Prime Minister, whose outstanding merit is that "he sought from the first a new and closer intercourse with the leaders of the Totalitarian States, so that he and they might the better understand each other. We have had sufficient testimony of how highly both those leaders and their people have appreciated his sincere personality. His three visits to Germany and his recent visit to Rome drew such a spontaneity of welcome that in the mind of Europe he has become the very symbol of the pacificator."

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*They Rang Up the Police* (Gollancz, 7s. 6d.) is *Miss Joanna Cannan's* first detective novel, but she scatters and assembles her clues with a deftness that many practised exponents of this form will envy. In addition she brings to it her faculty for creating lifelike characters. Her story of a family of lonely women is engrossing as a novel, and the mystery introduced when one of them suddenly disappears makes a first-rate problem for amateur detectives.