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from the night her ladyship danced on a rock in the moonlight in all her silks and diamonds and Dennis mistook her for the queen of the fairies. Mona lives for a while with Dennis's people, then wanders the roads with the Joyce family of tinkers, and lastly is sent off to London to address envelopes in a huge advertising business. It is all told in that stately, accurate, romantic English which Lord Dunsany has the skill to apply to the most varied and incongruous subjects. Those who know his unique brand of fancy will not be disappointed here. It is a story spun of moonlight, and mist, and the gloaming of demesne woods, and the most far-fetched superstitions of the Irish hills.

## STORIES OF SPAIN

Reviews by H. E. BATES

**IN The Miraculous Horde** (Cape, 7s. 6d.),

Mr. Ralph Bates has once again laid his stories in Mexico and Spain, this time mostly the Spain of the Civil War, and once again he reveals that there was never a more exuberant, volatile, contradictory, and baffling writer. As a Communist Mr. Bates naturally fought on the Government side in Spain, spending much of his time in propaganda work in the United States, but the first thing I note about his book is that he has had the sense to remain a writer of fiction and let propaganda look after itself. Mr. Bates is a kind of poet-soldier-adventurer, passionately interested in humanity, justice, women, colour, never happy in one place for long together. He revels in action, is a remarkable and exhausting conversationalist, and has somehow been able to get under the skin of the Spanish character more deeply than any other English writer of his generation. All these characteristics come out in his work, inflaming it and damping it down by turns. His passionate evocation of colour and scene and movement, for example, is remarkable. On the other hand, he can talk the hind legs off all the dead donkeys in Spain and still leave the weary reader wondering what it is all about. The weakest point in his make-up is, I think, his power of selection: or rather, the lack of it. Each story contains material, imagery, colour and energy enough for half a dozen others. The beautiful brilliance of his phraseology is too often lost in a maze of ramping exuberance. It is clear that his highly restless and adventurous spirit never gives him time to look twice at a page, to pare the husk off the bright kernels of his words, or to fine down the finished shape of the tale. Yet the fact remains that these stories of Spain before, during, and after the Civil War are all deeply stamped with a kind of impassioned authenticity. They are hot with first-hand experience, overflowing with uncontrolled poetry: the work of a poet-musketeer who finds little time or use for any recollection in tranquillity.

When a writer has reached Mr. Noel Coward's level of reputation there is little chance that he will suddenly reveal a new side of himself in a new medium. Thus the seven short stories in **To Step Aside** (Heinemann, 7s. 6d.), although never before published, are typical of his clever, smart, superficially cynical, and overrated talent. There is a mixture of Maugham and water in many of them; Mr. Coward employs Maugham's great trick of artless simplicity with little of its devastating effect. His cynicisms flake off like thinnest enamel, and his technical ability with a piece of short fiction ends where Maugham's begins. All this is, however, doing Mr. Coward much less than justice. These stories would not be Coward if they were not, first and last, pieces of entertainment. If the sirens call you out, in fact, you could hardly do better than step aside with Mr. Coward.

Mrs. Elinor Mordaunt should need no introduction as a writer of fiction. The stories in **Death It Is** (Hutchinson, 7s. 6d.) preserve the same level of easy competence as she has kept for some years. The same well-tried, apparently well-loved situations are here, even to that incredible adventure of a woman kidnapped, taken off into the desert and married at last to the captor she loathed—all as neatly and attractively wrapped up as pieces of scented soap.

## ONE WOMAN, THREE MEN

Reviews by LILIAN ARNOLD

**CLING to Her, Waiting**, by Miss Elizabeth Burton (Andrew Dakers, 6s.), is an odd title for an odd book. It is the subjective analysis of an emotionally unbalanced woman cursed with sufficient intellect to realize her own futility. The pendulum swings for her between three men. First there is Michael, solid, respectable, born to be a husband and father and, in Judy's eye, deadly dull. He it is presumably to whom the adoration of the title is addressed. Then Shane, coldly sensual, ambitious, heartless, with a cynical understanding of women in general and of Judy's type in particular. Lastly, Timothy, endowed with a social genius which makes him a delightful companion but with a secret life of his own. Between these three men Judy's emotional life is frittered. Engaged to Michael, she makes drunkenness after a party the excuse to break the engagement. Shane at first engages her curiosity rather than her heart, while raising the hope that in him she may find the solution of her emotional unrest. Shane is clever. He understands her moods and reservations and, penetrating them, persuades her that he is indeed her complement. Having succeeded in rousing her passion, he makes it clear that any permanent association is out of the question. In her relations with Timothy, Judy scarcely proves herself the intuitive creature she believes herself to be. Even so, need the episode have been so tragic? This is by no means a cheerful book, but Miss Burton writes with a compelling rhythm which makes one re-read certain passages for the beauty of them.

**The Red Centaur**, by Miss Marjorie Mack (Faber and Faber, 7s. 6d.), is an exquisite book recalling the scents and sounds of holidays spent across the Channel. An English family named Maude are spending the summer in a villa in Brittany. Across the Bay, they can see the Château of a noble French family named des Ebihans. To Laurel, the eight-year-old daughter of the Maudes, Château and grounds seem enchanted territory. In front of the castle is a flagstaff whence there floats a white flag bearing a red Centaur, the emblem of the des Ebihans. The two families fraternize, with the result that every reader feels that he or she has been participating in an enjoyable holiday. This is one of those books which evoke delightful scenes and personalities. Laurel in particular is an excellent study of a natural, imaginative child.

**Stately Timber**, by Mr. Rupert Hughes (Jarrolds, 8s. 6d.), is a stirring story of a romantic Puritan adventurer who grew to manhood in the Massachusetts Bay Colony of 1650. Half history, half romance, the story of Seaborn Fleet shows him an instinctive rebel against the monstrous cruelties such as branding and boring of tongues and the indignities to which harmless women suspected of witchcraft were subjected. It is easy to believe that the research involved in this powerful reproduction of a period was enormous, and Mr. Hughes is to be congratulated upon a work which is at times almost too painfully convincing.