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Jocelyn Quentin, an extremely modern but likeable young girl, seems an altogether more suitable and less mercenary connection, but it peters out. His third victim, Mary Powell, who steals from her employer to provide him with what he deems the bare necessities of life, does not survive. This book is exceptionally clever in its dissection of human motives and character.

WEST AFRICAN STORIES

Reviews by H. E. BATES

THE *Graven Image*, by Mr. M. Yeulett (Bodley Head, 3s. 6d.), is a small book containing almost forty very short stories, the background of which is West Africa. The author's name is completely new to me. His stories, however, show remarkably fine technical competence, an uncommon gift of realizing people and atmosphere in a few lines, a sympathetic knowledge and insight into West African life. These gifts are used to sketch a series of bright, nervous pictures—a school-master with his native class; the wife of an English commissioner struggling to bear her boredom ("Let's pretend we're at Lord's; or would you rather be at Wimbledon?"); a native sea-man homesick for his young, dying wife; a half-caste and a white girl talking of their different ancestries in a café; a fevered priest travelling along a river. In each the action is undramatized. Such conflict as there is takes place beneath a rapidly-sketched surface of small events, talk, brief dashes of personality. Neither emotion nor moral is ever forced; yet the illusion is somehow created of poignancy, tragedy, misunderstanding, devotion, fear, courage, unhappiness. Deep behind each story lies something unspoken: the conflict between a remote civilization and a new, the terror of loneliness, the darkness and beauty of strange places. In their bright, melancholy brevity these stories are often reminiscent of poems from the Chinese. Mr. Yeulett rarely says a word too much, and yet has succeeded in realizing not merely a picture of isolated lives but the feeling of a civilization and a continent.

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Golden Grass, by Mr. Myles Bourke (Hutchinson, 10s. 6d.), also contains stories of African life—this time the Veld. They are the work of a man who is also closely acquainted with native life, but who attempts to get his effects on broader, heavier lines. Mr. Yeulett's stories are purely impressionistic—the reader himself must supply the unstated emotions, the unsketched detail. Mr. Bourke, who too realizes the problems of the half-educated native and the poor-white, the deep melancholy of the African background, the constant struggle between black and white, paints on a large canvas, with photographic and conventional technique. His stories generally are cumbersome, his effects confused by long and irrelevant disquisitions. Now and then the story gets through by sheer weight of sincerity, but the effect is generally that of a man unable to select and clarify the best of a mass of confused, even if authentic, material.

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Miss Dorothy L. Sayers, who continues to write religious dramas with one hand and dabble in blood and poison with the other, has collected various short stories, notably of Lord Peter Wimsey and Montague Egg, in a volume called *In the Teeth of the Evidence* (Gollancz, 7s. 6d.). Apart from the fact that she writes a little better than most writers of detective fiction, there appears to be little in her neat and horrid little stories that is not to be found in a hundred of her bloodthirsty contemporaries. Some day, I hope, someone will give us a treatise on the pathological and psychological significance of the detective story in modern life. Meanwhile, Sayers fans can smack their lips in the black-out.