sinks back into a calm—but they have, nearly all, profited by the effect of the "backwash," and the final note is one of general happiness. It is rather wearing to have to pick up each character in turn and develop a different set of interests and sympathies, and one cannot avoid the impression that the basic idea is slightly mechanical. Viola is the most interesting character—possibly because we see most of her; which is, in itself, in the nature of a measure of the felicity of the general technique.

I am confident that both Miss Crompton and Mr. Blaker have done much better in former work.

BUSY MR. SAROYAN

Reviews by H. E. BATES

AFTER beginning as a **William Saroyan** enthusiast and then temporarily withholding my bet for the simple reason that the horse seemed to be running too many races, I must confess to being a Saroyan enthusiast again. The horse is still running too many races, but what a horse it is! No literary animal ever cut quite such capers as this San Francisco colt, who makes his fifth appearance in **Love, Here is My Hat** (Faber and Faber, 7s. 6d.). The publishers claim that Mr. Saroyan is inexhaustible. They are over-modest. He is the secret of perpetual motion. In three or four years he has collected, in volume form, a hundred stories, and if there is any truth in the gossip of American editors he has written another thousand. "And," as one recently remarked, "bringing it off once in every ten or a dozen times." The ratio is pretty nearly correct and holds good for the present volume. Here, out of twenty stories, the winner is *Ever Fall in Love with a Midget?* This is a masterpiece. What is it about? I don't know. Not about midgets, certainly. What are the Marx Brothers about? Mr. Saroyan is a kind of fourth Marx Brother, part horse, part man, and he is a day at the races all by himself. To attempt to explain him would be futile. The only thing to do with this crazy, volatile, cheeky, exasperating, and untamed animal is to look at him yourself. If you don't like him you'll hate him.

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Saroyan is a born short story writer, and heaven forbid he should ever write a novel. The exact opposite is true of **Mr. Gerald Bullett,** who is a born novelist and should, I think, have resisted a temptation to have himself identified with the short story. He has just collected twenty-four of his stories under the title of **Twenty-Four Tales** (Dent, 7s. 6d.), and these stories, almost without exception, strike me as being the work of a man who is primarily a novelist. He is a writer who appears to feel no instinctive need for economy; gives the feeling, at the beginning of each story, that he has four hundred pages to go and what is a word more or less? The opening paragraph of *The Mousetrap*, for instance, might be used by schoolmasters, who might ask, "How could this piece be better written in half the number of words?" Because it could be better written, and the same is true of other stories. Mr. Bullett is too explanatory, and he should know that a short story writer cannot afford to be too explanatory. This is my primary criticism of him. I have nothing but praise for his industry and intelligence, his response to character, his sensitiveness, even though I maintain them all to be better suited, in his case, to the art of the novel.

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Sequels to famous books have always been held to be dangerous enterprises. Time has shown them to be, nearly always, colossal flops. **Mr. James Hilton** should have remembered this and, having achieved something very special in Mr. Chips, should have let well alone. The best thing in **To You, Mr. Chips** (Hodder and Stoughton, 5s.) is not about Mr. Chips, but about Mr. Hilton. It is an essay, in the form of a preface, on Mr. Hilton's schooldays. It is a clean, intelligent, unassuming piece of writing. It has charm and wit, is the real Mr. Hilton. Of Mr. Chips, on the other hand, let us not say too much.

LIFE ON THE LAGOON

Reviews by LILIAN ARNOLD

THE ORANGE LAGOON, by **Mr. Kenneth Champion Thomas** (Peter Davies, 7s. 6d.), is a novel of distinction. Its setting, to begin with, is unique, and the Waites, husband and wife, reveal all those inconsistencies of which characters in real life are made up. Their home is a disused pleasure steamer which, after plying the forty miles between Pleasure Bay and New York for fifty years, has been abandoned as not worth the cost of towing on the edge of a lagoon. It is Gerald Waite, rather too insistently labelled dull and worthy, who has the imagination to see its possibilities during his five years' separation from his wife. He furnishes it as a riverside sandwich bar for the excursionists who frequent that part of the river and converts its saloon into comfortable living quarters. But it is the lagoon itself, mirror of a thousand vivid colours during daylight and of an ineffable beauty under the moon, which persuades his wife, Edwyna, to return to him and enter upon a life which, if Bohemian, is infinitely peaceful until the usual human discord intrudes. Edwyna is very much alive and not a little hardened by her five years' experience of supporting herself and her daughter Ruth. She is avid for colour and Gerald is colourless. Conscious of her own integrity, she goes very much further than a less innocent woman would have ventured when an attractive young sportsman takes her out to dances and pays her all the little attentions due to an exceptionally attractive woman. The impartial attitude of the author to both his principal characters lifts both from the realms of fiction to reality. Edwyna especially is a real woman, a devoted mother, courageous in adversity, and completely callous towards the husband who has ceased to interest her sexually.

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Mock Star, by **"Sinbad"** (Stanley Paul, 8s. 6d.), is the life history of a young man who works his way up from very humble origins in an Oxford slum to literary success. Like most people who make personal happiness their avowed goal, Robbie Edwards is compelled to a certain ruthlessness, particularly in his relations with women. Anne, at all events, is far too good for him. One could argue at length against many of his conclusions—his expectation of an immediate revelation of God, for instance, on entering a church and his rejection of all creeds because no miracle is vouchsafed him on demand. But there is all the same something lovable about this boyishly inconsistent young man which will ensure, if I mistake not, lasting popularity for the story of his evolution.

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And To-morrow's Doomsday, by **Miss Edith Roberts** (Harrap, 7s. 6d.), is a short but vital novel of enormous topical interest. The story of Petar Montich, a Serbian student in America who returns home with the intention of helping his countrymen to attain something of the freedom he has learnt to admire in America, is infinitely moving. The whole book breathes hatred of tyranny and a passionate sympathy with the under-dog. It reveals, too, a painful comprehension of the position of minorities in Europe to-day.