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LET

l by E. B. Osborn

NEW FICTION

REGIME OF BA Of Aristocratic

Novels of London and New York

By H. E. BATES

- Two Thousand Million Man-Power. By G. E. Trevelyan. (Gollancz. 7s. 6d.)
The Sound of Running Feet. By Josephine Lawrence. (Harrap. 7s. 6d.)
Lols in Love, By Lewis Gibbs. (Dent. 7s. 6d.)
Testament of Stephen Fane. By Neil Bell. (Collins. 8s. 6d.)

THE honours are equally divided this week between Miss Trevelyan who is writing of London, and Miss Lawrence, who is an American writing of New York. These two books are, in the sprightliness of their writing, their ironic verve and their salutary intelligence in regard to the social problems of to-day, two of the year's best books to date.

What strikes me most about their authors is a complete absence of that gossiping mental sloppiness which characterises the work of too many women novelists. There is a masculine strength and detachment about their work which is at once stimulating and fascinating.

The method employed in "Two Thousand Million Man-Power" is worth more than momentary comment. Robert Thomas, an analytical chemist living in rooms in Ladbrooke-grove, and Katherine Bott, teacher at an L.C.C. Senior Mixed School in Wilberforce-street, S.W., and tells the story, briefly, of how they fell in love. Quite separately throughout the whole book a kind of running commentary on social, political, religious, and world affairs as they are happening at particular points in her story. Her constant popping up in this jack-in-the-box method might have produced ludicrous results. So well, actually, has Miss Trevelyan chosen her comments, and so well has she timed her delivery of them that in the book is a continual source of ironic and emotional enjoyment. Here is an example of Miss Trevelyan's method of commentary:

"Over in Ireland Cosgrave was fighting for England for independence and De Valera was fighting England for independence. A bit later Westminster was passing a treaty making the Irish Free State a self-governing dominion. Over in Ireland De Valera was fighting Cosgrave."

Throughout the book this highly dangerous game is played with an assured brilliance and a perfect sense of irony. There is never a false or cheap note. Miss Trevelyan appeals equally to the heart and the intelligence, and has given us a truly remarkable book.

A Deserving Best-Seller?

Many of these adjectives are appropriate to "THE SOUND OF RUNNING FEET." An assured brilliance, a sense of irony without falter or cheapness, an appeal to humanity and intelligence, are all characteristic of Miss Lawrence's story of the New York office of the Brothers Luth, in whose employes are wondering whether or not they dare petition for better rates of pay. They do, in the end, make this petition, led by a certain Gregory Marsh. Then we begin to see how that eternal question of pay increase (which may even turn out to be pay reduction for some) will affect both staff and employers. Another ten dollars a week and one man might get married, but ten dollars less—and what then? For another is a question of finding money for his wife's operation; another must have money for his daughter's education; another is old, and again—what then? The employers, too, have their difficulties: a son has made a foolish marriage which may make money for him; another has an invalid son for whom the world's best specialists are essential. And so on: all have their problems, all are pursued by the sound of running feet. Miss Lawrence is engrossed in her subject, and her delineation of every character, small or important, is so assured and deft that I don't wonder at all that she is a best-seller in her own country. She should be here, too.

Mr. Lewis Gibbs

In the past, taking up the novels of Mr. Lewis Gibbs I have had the depressing impression that I ought first to wash my hands, as though his work were rather too fine for mortal touch. This slightly repellent air of preciousness has completely vanished from "LOLS IN LOVE." In this story of a young girl who, very lonely in her job as a teacher at an orphanage, falls in love with a man much older than herself, preciousness has been replaced by humour. This quality, though never in danger of making the novel anything but a tragedy, has had the effect of accentuating all Mr. Gibbs' finer qualities, his irony and pungency, his sense of melancholy and beauty. It has rubbed off that too-fine, not-quite-of-this-world air, so that if "Lols in Love" is not quite so near to the angels it is at least much nearer to ourselves. Humour has also given to Mr. Gibbs' style a kind of salty sweetness that remains on the lips long after the book has been put aside. Indeed, the more I think of this novel the more I like it.

"THE TESTAMENT OF STEPHEN FANE" is a saga of love, and in using that word I mean, as Fane himself puts it, "sexual love. Green or ripe, potential or active, latent or openly displayed, suppressed or triumphantly proclaimed. It is the great motive force of life, and it is true to say of any man that his adventures in sexual love are his life—all the rest is no more than a framework, a setting, a background." Many people will feel impelled to challenge this. But I must, in fairness, point out that Mr. Bell's novel is not a piece of biological propaganda; it is a long, rich, full-blooded novel, written with simplicity and vigour.

ODYSSEY BOOKS

Messrs. Cape are starting a new library. "The Odyssey Library" of five shilling reprints of travel books. The first titles include the late L. M. Nesbit's "DREAMS AND FOREST," and Kingston Ward's delightful "PLANT HUNTER IN TIBET," a book which every gardener should know.

TO-DAY'S BOOKS

BRITAIN PACES GERMANY. By A. Kennedy. 5s. 6d.
CHIEFS OF THE QUARTER. By Russell G. 7s. 6d.
THE LIFE OF JOHN CURIE. 7s. 6d.
A PLAIN AND SIMPLE INTRODUCTION TO PRACTICAL HOMEWORK. 7s. 6d.
CHRISTIE THE LORD OF ALL LIFE. 1s. 6d.
THE PRINCE OF WYNDHAM. 7s. 6d.
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TO THE EDITOR OF THE NING POST:—In his appeal Aguirre, the so-called Bolshevik-cum-Sep Euzkadi, dares to what he terms the world, albeit only cent. of the Basque ideas.

In comparison with the ancient Basque appeared democracy so, however, the Spanish and other Middle Ages. Ace the old-time Basque cratic and oligarchic and from its political existence.

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United to Spain

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FARMERS' P

Possible Effect

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NING POST:—Will you upon the paragra Politics" and u contained in you dent's column or

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If I am right intend to act u away, it will b the effect is m by-section in B Should all the real interests of cide to abstain well show their of representation the lowest on n

SHAKESPE

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The country sprinkled with discussion of g ble for the edi books, eager tra English" the m Renaissance, S ample opportu ledge, which, as is the necessity. Moreover, Shi unlearns, where of the romantics

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