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ed by E. B. Osborn

FRESH FICTION

New York Scenario

By H. E. BATES

Neptune Beach. By Daniel Fuchs. (Constable, 7s. 6d.)

The Trial. By Franz Kafka. (Gollancz, 7s. 6d.)

The Revenging for Love. By Wyndham Lewis. (Cassell, 8s. 6d.)

The picture of a New York seaside suburb, as painted by Mr. Daniel Fuchs in "Neptune Beach," is not pleasant, but it is extraordinarily faithful and also very funny. This may seem curious to English readers, who are not accustomed to having sinister and tragic situations treated with comic vigour, but I myself find it salutary and entertaining. Painted with the least drop of sob-stuff, this story of tough break, tough guys, and tough frustrations might have been silly or melodramatic, or both. Mr. Fuchs' agile humour keeps it real and fresh.

The centre of the novel is the soda parlour owned by a Jew named Spitzbergen in the cheap, sand-ridden suburb of Neptune Beach. The soda parlour is terrible. Mrs. Spitzbergen has, maybe, got to have an operation, the cash-girl is going to get married, the weather is terrible, nobody comes in, Spitzbergen is losing money hand over fist. A beautifully drawn picture of Jew-A pessimism ("If anybody rings up, tell 'em I just dropped down dead") he owns properties in Neptune Beach and many of these properties are rented to one Shubrinka, who runs them as illicit houses. Shubrinka owes rent. This is bad enough, but soon there appear two gentlemen who indicate that it would be healthier if Shubrinka left town. Just to show their strength they smash up Spitzbergen's soda fountain. Then they try putting with the author of "More Than Somewhat" would call the old equaliser on Shubrinka, but they shoot too soon, and in the end it is poor pessimistic Spitzbergen who gets murdered.

All Alive-O!

Between these sketchy and now almost commonplace outlines, Mr. Fuchs has filled in a rich, humorously observed picture of a certain section of New York life. All the characters in and around Spitzbergen's soda-parlour palpitate with energy. Shorty, the soda-jerker, who is a great man with the ladies and is having a steaming romance with the caretress round the corner, Moe Katz, who is bitten with the horse-racing bug and foresees the dish-washing boy to rob the till for him; the cash-girl, the gangster, the gloomy Spitzbergen, and especially the gross, friendless, shady Shubrinka himself. They are all tremendously alive, speaking a language of swift wit, smart back-answers, and vigorous candour which is funny as well as authentic. Someone has complained that the book, good though it is, has no moral. This seems to me the kind of mind that, not satisfied with plum cake, also wants jam on it. Eaten alone, Mr. Fuchs' slice of life ought to be rich enough and satisfying enough for the most particular.

After this swift and sophisticated performance, "The Trial," seems, like many translations and more especially translations from the German, a little naive and stiff. The word "seems" is used advisedly, and this brings up the whole question of the fairness of judging a writer in a language not his own. The Tchekoff is reputed to be much better in translation than in the original Russian; Turgenyev on the other hand was for many years inconvertibly worse. "The Trial" has been described as one of the few really great novels of our time. On the other hand, Max Brod, a friend of Kafka, declares in a note that the book was really never finished, and that Kafka himself regarded it as unfinished. This strange trial, beginning with the arrest at his lodging one fine morning of Joseph K., a bank clerk, "without having done anything wrong," and ending in his death by a piece of brutal knifing, and revealing as it goes on all the futile and yet tragic ramifications of the ways of treating strikes me as belonging more to the world of literature than to life.

Rather Damp Squibs

There was a time when I wondered how Mr. Wyndham Lewis acquired his reputation; now I wonder how he sustains it. "The Revenging for Love" is in the now a well-known vein of filibustering cynicism, slightly comic, slightly crazy, with a lot of satirical squibs scuttling off, and the good deal of poorish writing. The tale alternates between Spain, when Mr. Perce Hardcastle, a Communist, is in a very good as the result of scintillating activities, and Bloomsbury, where, as usual a lot of Mr. Lewis's squibs are let off. The rest of the story, much entangled with amours and arts and seditions of one kind and another, is too long to detail, and is all treated by Mr. Lewis giving his best nasty guffaw, in a style that is, I suppose, meant to be very deadly and very blisterous. I myself find it hard, as Mr. Fuchs would say, to get steamed up about it. Saitre is generally supposed to be unpopular here. And sometimes, considering who and what some of our foremost satirists satirise, I don't wonder.

"WE"

These Foreigners. The English People's Opinion on Foreign Affairs as reflected in their Newspapers since Waterloo. By Raymond Postgate and Aylmer Vallance. (Harrap, 10s. 6d.)

To show by well-chosen extracts from English journals the Englishman's changing opinion of foreign countries—what a happy thought! As happily carried out, it would have saved historians a vast deal of trouble. But, especially when arrived at the 1914-1917 section, we are compelled to doubt the political disinterestedness of the compilers. They must have tried, we are sure, to forget their prejudices, but when dealing with flaming or still smouldering controversies, such forgetfulness is impossible. So it comes about that the "Morning Post" is accused of cynicism ("as usual") whenever it recalls the attention of the public to discomfortable facts.

The compilation, however, has its interesting features. It shows, for example, that tolerance for the unfortunate foreigner's un-English ideas has become much more effective in the last hundred years, and with it the sympathetic knowledge of his outlook in world-politics. It is refreshing, moreover, to come across such examples of whole-hearted invective as the lines on O'Connell published in "The Times," beginning:

Scum condensed of Irish bog, Ruffian, coward, demagogue, Boundless liar, base detractor, Nurse of murder, treason's factor, Or the attack of the "Saturday Review" on the policy of the North in regard to the negroes at the end of the Civil War. "We" are less rousing but more reasonable to-day than fifty years ago.

The King's Holyroodhouse Particula standing feet the whole in draped dress. Lovely je Below an

The March gown of silk, lacquered bro design of sp lace draped e with rose of diamonds and lace and brace

Jeon Goun gown in deep lime woven corsage having the décolleté sleeves. Train velvet lined w

Dauntess H brodered dress of soft peaco gold, had a wre of gold. Fests (Beta, 20, Kn

The Counts lamé dress, w with a flounce Ornaments; pendant and c

Viscountess satin gown; silver embroid (Harvey Nich bridge)

Lady Head satin couple, tiny puffed al old lace moun dress. (Beta)

The Hon. H sical gown of the bodice bej manté and pai material embro (Bradley's Ch

The Hon. M angel skin gow entirely embro Train to mate with the same white georg Ltd, 47-48, Ne

Lady Meuti presented Mrs pastel-blue sa Train of silver blue organza.

Mrs. Oliver gown of jade-cut on classic bodice. Train o chiffon. Jewel and Freebody

Mrs. James sical gown in lamé embroidered flower design, with chiffon. Wigmore-street

Mrs. G. A. Di old gold triple with a softly i the same lamé satin. (Debe

Mrs. G. E. G ochre-coloured the same lined tissue. (Vidla square, W.)

Mrs. Erskine silver and gold lined cream tu feather fan pendant. (Se

Miss Erskine coloured satin i of white garde Melville-crescent

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Mrs. Maitland and gold lamé, c of blue velvet i Blue feather f groove. Vere-st

Mrs. Alan So Mrs. Alexander mering oyster-brodered with lined with silv mouth)

Mrs. Ewen M Ewan McLean General, Scotti by Lady Sybil ( ivory duchesse

somely embrod brodered to fastened on the and tassels. Iv

Mrs. Collins in blue and silv the same materi forming a cowli back. (Callot S gate, S.W.)

Miss Collins forming pleated waist with a all trimmed with pl dress. (Callot S gate, S.W.)

Mrs. John Ball Horn)—Princes satin. Train of k with chiffon. W Ornaments: Dia

Mrs. Addison tenant-Colonel Smith, C.B.E. T—Elegant gown c with an overdr Train of satin ex

Ornaments: Di bracelet and peg

Mrs. Neel Pat silver brocade c the full skirt ha of copper tinted hem also outlin of brocade. (E street, W.)

Mrs. Melville silver brocade g lines, the corag manté. Train il chiffon. Turqu match. (Handl New Bond-street

Miss Nan Mel set gown, the square décolleté, panels of net an taffeta and net. 47, 48, New Bon

Miss Margaret gown, with a roe sleeves and a ful belt. Cloth of s white chiffon; shooers. (Han 48, New Bond-st