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LIGHTER THAN DAY, by Desmond Hawkins. *Longmans*. 7s. 6d.

TWILIGHT IN DELHI, by Ahmed Ali. *Hogarth Press*. 7s. 6d.

THE LAST HUNT, by Maurice Genevoix. *Allen & Unwin*. 7s. 6d.

Mr. Desmond Hawkins' performance in *Lighter Than Day* is interesting; but more interesting, I should say, to a fellow worker than perhaps it can be to the general reader. The whole performance is that of the intellectual mind probing with a gentle stylish stiletto at the living tissues, at the anatomy and nerves of a group of characters who give the impression of having been captured rather than created; it has in it some of the inquisitive (as opposed to inquisitorial) cruelty of a boy who removes one by one the wings, legs and antennæ of an insect, and observes its reactions under a microscope. The novel is set in a south of England country town; the social strata is that of the "comfortable classes, in a pattern of days predictable with great accuracy"; the main characters, two brothers, represent that unwanted generation that was too young for one war and too old for another. Their life, a life of "latent restlessness and revolutionary temper", does not need piecing together; we know it too well—the family tennis parties, the family friction, the life of the local road-house, the girls, the frantic struggle not to be bored; it is a life that essentially asks to be pulled apart. Thus the book is, it seems to me, an expression of a destructive element; in the fire which forms the anti-climax much more than the Hawtrey's house is burned, much more than "all our little world" has fallen

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to pieces. The fire, and a great many more things in this book are symbolical; the world between the wars has been destroyed, the tissues on which Mr. Hawkins works with such brilliant analytical conceits are in reality already mummified. What goes into their place? "I do have horrible fears, sometimes, Maud," writes the dear mother at the very last, "that the world will never be quite the *same* again for us."

In India Mr. Ahmed Ali depicts a life more warmly created than Mr. Hawkins', and to us more touched with poetry because of its unfamiliarity, but once again a life that is part of a world that in the end is seen to have "fallen to pieces . . . smothered by indifference and death". During the last few years there has sprung up a school of Indian literature, written by native writers in English, which has great distinction. Such works as these make me feel that we have never known India before. Mr. Ahmed Ali's book, tender, delicate, subtly flavoured with the aroma of jasmine garlands and gutters, shows us the life of a Delhi family, with its problems of marriage, tradition and progress, in such an intimate way and with such beauty of feeling that beside it almost all the work of Anglo-Indian writers looks meretricious and false.

The difficulties of the animal story, in which events are seen emotionally, through the victimized animal eyes, are endless. It is very rarely that such stories escape a heavy bias of sentimentalism, pity or a subjective, naïve poetry. Mr. Maurice Genevoix's story of a stricken deer has perhaps suffered in translation, but to me it appears overcharged with some rather woolly

emotion expressed by means of stereotyped poetry. The descriptions of the countryside are, however, excellent; the woods of France in which the red deer is born, hunted and befriended by the hunter who finally kills it are drawn by an eye keenly sensitive to every sight, sound, mood and colour.

H. E. BATES.

THE INTERNMENT OF ALIENS, by

F. Lafitte. *Penguin Books*. 6d.

Here is the whole horrible tale in full. The details are revolting, but it is not the details that matter. It is the principle of wholesale internment of those who had sought sanctuary in Great Britain only to find that their haven, peopled in 1938 and 1939 by humanitarian John Bulls and sisters of mercy, was, in 1940, yet another home of oppression. The public are much to blame. In the years preceding the outbreak of war they poured out their sympathy and money, speaking their horror in the name of Christ and every moral precept, yet in 1940 their sympathy was exhausted by other causes and their cash flowed in new directions. Nor can we gain the smallest consolation from recent releases. That some innocent should be let out is good, but the mainspring of release is not justice but ill-health and usefulness; the healthy rank and file of no particular merit are left to languish.

Mr. Lafitte does not spare us. He rubs salt into the open wound and leaves us smarting. Yet if he succeeds in making half of his many readers ashamed he will have done good service. His book is both to the point and accurate.

J.A.