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who defied society, as she thought, for Weston's sake. She is a courageous, intelligent, sensitive and spirited young woman who is made to see that she has really gone against her own essentially conventional nature. There is sometimes a suggestion that Miss Wnarton is making a case; but her case is always that of the satirist who, by ironical and sympathetic dissection, exposes the comedy that ensues when frail human natures try to live to plan. The only dull things in the book are her literary circles.

Griffith Tregaron of *The House Under the Water* is a genius of another kind. He is a romantic figure in a romantic book, but he holds the romance down to earth by the convincing vehemence of his personality. He has good Welsh and peasant Provençal blood in his veins, and the blend has made him a flamboyant gambler and sensualist, a man of theatrical disappearances, and a domestic tyrant. On the negative side—and in making due use of this Mr. Brett Young shows his shrewdness and accomplishment in building up character—Griffith Tregaron has one fatal characteristic: he is short. From this defect springs his sense of inferiority, making him conscious of his peasant blood, twisting his judgment, so that he morbidly suspects those whom he should trust and trusts those of whom he should be suspicious. He is therefore a fore-ordained loser of his vast winnings. At the beginning of the story he sets up romantically as a country squire in the Welsh mountains, quarrelling with his neighbours, and by the end he has gone through two fortunes. His wife is a no less notable creation. A Neapolitan of noble family and once beautiful, she is resigned to her lot, but as the years advance, she falls back upon her race's absorption in cynical intrigue, on behalf of her son

and daughters. With one possible exception the whole family are finished characters. The author has not withheld justice nor mercy. This glamorous book is, however, captivated by its own glamour. We have seen a number of brilliant pictures but not one burns itself deeply into the mind. Mr. Brett Young is a novelist with a lot to tell, and has the mastery of how to tell it—but he has little to say.

In a sense the dominating and insatiable character is the theme of Miss G. B. Stern's three novels, *Tents of Israel*, *A Deputy was King*, and *Mosaic*, here reprinted as trilogy. For it can be called a trilogy in spite of certain irregularities in family tree. What grandeurs and miseries she recounts of these dominating creatures who feed on the lives of others as genius does and die alone. Perhaps none of the three novelists goes into the very depths of these problems as, for example, Thomas Mann has done, but they offer to the reader a surface of remarkable richness.

V. S. PRITCHETT.

"TRINC!" by Francis Watson.
Loval Dickson. 7s. 6d. net.

QUEER STREET, by Edward Shanks.
Macmillan. 10s. 6d. net.

HELEN'S LOVERS, by Gerald Bullett.
Heinemann. 7s. 6d. net

THERE is really little to connect these three books, for one is a volume of short stories, one a very long novel, and one a curious creation, half-realistic, half-fantastic, in which a modern English youth and an even more modern American girl find themselves back in the Rabelaisian world in the forest of Chinon. The contrast between a world of cocktail bars and lip-stick and the world of Panurge and Pantagruel, between a life in which the unspoken

watchword is "Do what the Hell you like. What does it matter?" and one in which the established motto is "Fay ce que voudra," affords Mr. Watson some excellent material for fun and satire, realism and fantasy, and a good deal of modern as well as Rabelaisian wit. It is not often that anyone attempts a book like *Trinc!* in which the atmosphere of both a mediæval and a modern world and the balance between realism and fantasy have to be carefully sustained and in which wit has to be blended with seriousness and flippancy with a good deal of knowledge. It is not easy to create conversations between Pantagruel and a modern American girl, even though she has read *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and can be taught nothing. It is perhaps even more difficult to change in a twinkling, with conviction, the modern scene for a Rabelaisian world on the banks of the Loire, to jump from the cocktail bar and bright discussions on sex to the old fairyland of Zenomanes and Friar John and long talks on Plato and the Book of Job, and to combine with all the satire and romance some humanity and understanding of modern everyday life. Such books must be done with brilliance and assurance, without the slightest dullness or faltering, if they are to be done at all. Done badly, they can belong only to the limbos of the bastard arts.

Trinc! is well done; there is no faltering. From the moment when Jo and Martin lose themselves in the underground passage and find themselves in front of Mrs. Barbus's house and the motto over its doorway "Fay ce que voudra" there is scarcely a moment which is not either brilliant or delicious. The satire is neat and sharp, the Rabelaisian scenes break off at tantalising moments.

Mr. Shanks has succumbed to the

fashion for fat long novels. There was a time when novels, like ladies, had to be slim. Why? It was the fashion—it was done—it was the thing; and for a long time slimness became a synonym for beauty. As a result there were many spurious beauties and many spurious masterpieces. But the fashion has changed and now ladies, like novels, must be plumper, and plumpness becomes the synonym for beauty and only long novels are masterpieces. Again, much spuriousness in both flesh and fiction.

Queer Street is not spurious, but like many very long novels it might have been shorter. Poets learn very early the need and meaning of strict economy—in words; in becoming novelists they often forget their lesson and expand themselves, as though with relief, over too many pages. *Queer Street*,

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which describes a modern Bohemia and in particular a Soho night-club and its inhabitants, is like a tree which needs pruning. It has too many branches; it lacks shape. Its very subject demanded a quicker, lighter, bolder treatment. Instead it is written in a leisurely, careful, and almost academic style; the conversations have a literary flavour; and there are many unnecessary—and sometimes ludicrous little tags—all of which needed pruning sternly. "And smiling, he walked out on his very long legs." On what else, indeed? The conversations are too often shallow and boring, leading one nowhere.

"Have a cigarette," Phyllis offered. "I wonder where they are. Oh! yes!" She found a crumpled packet and peered into it with a dubious look. "Only three left," she said. "Never mind; George is sure to have some when he comes in." She lit Bab's cigarette and her own, and sat in the armchair, curling her long legs under her. "What have I been doing? I went for a walk this afternoon, till it was worse than staying at home."

True, people do talk like this; indeed, exactly like this. But mere fidelity to observation is not enough. What Mr. Shanks does not display is fidelity to imagination: an unexpected defect in a poet.

Nearly all the virtues that Mr. Shanks lacks belong to Mr. Bullett. Like him he is a poet, but he has not forgotten the lessons that poetry has taught him. He gets his effects with a minimum of words and effort; he never sprawls, wanders or digresses; yet his stories are finished and satisfying: and they say in a few pages more than Mr. Shanks says in hundreds. "Cry sake stop that sniveling, Alfie, or I'll skin the bloody back of yer!" says one of his characters, and though this again is

exactly how people talk one feels that this is not merely reported stuff; it is not merely *like* life; it *is* life. There is precious little of the academic or literary air about Mr. Bullett. His stories very often resemble the lives he portrays, as though they had taken their very colour and atmosphere from them: humble, quiet, undramatic, grey little stories of old men, children and unhappy women. Occasionally there is a change of tone, atmosphere, style, and the result is a story like *Fiddler's Luck*, a fairy tale as delicate and sweet as some of Hans Anderson's. Even if there were any doubt about Mr. Bullett's being a poet at heart this story would dispel it.

H. E. BATES.

BLACK MISCHIEF, by Evelyn Waugh. *Chapman and Hall.* 7s. 6d.

POOR TOM, by Edwin Muir. *Dent.* 7s. 6d.

WRIT IN SAND, by R. B. Cunningham-Graham. *Heinemann.* 6s.

A NEW island has been put on the satirist's map. You will seek as vainly for Azania in your atlas as for the Island of Lilliput, but Mr. Waugh assures us—and has provided a frontispiece map to prove it—that his island is of considerable dimensions and situate off the coast of Italian Somaliland. Be that as it may, Basil Seal had heard of it; and, finding it increasingly difficult to keep the dun from the door, he took his leave of Sonia and Alastair—"Shall I come to dinner?" "Yes, do. We're in bed."—and Lady Metroland, pinched his mother's emeralds and set forth. At the time of his arrival Azania was in a state of unrest, consequent on the recent accession to the throne—not unaccompanied by much graft and bloodshed—of Seth, "Emperor of Azania, Chief of the Chiefs of