AMONG THE NEW BOOKS

A NOVELIST ON NOVELS

East and West and Underground

The Title and the Tale

By PHYLLIS BENTLEY

"The Clown and His Daughter." By Halidé Edib. (Allen and Unwin, 7s. 6d.)
"Fires in May." By Ruth Feiner. (Harrap, 7s. 6d.)
"Fate Cannot Harm Me." By J. C. Masterman. (Gollancz, 7s. 6d.)
"Last Cage Down." By Harold Heslop. (Wishart, 7s. 6d.)

ONE of these days I think I shall start a correspondence course for novelists on the choice of titles for their works. The principles I should inculcate would be the same as the whole truth; attractiveness as well as truth. A title should be relevant to the subject of the novel, and should indicate the scope of the novel, as well as provoking curiosity, being a phrase to remember and so on. For my part I feel that attractiveness is apt to be overdone nowadays at the expense of the title's other functions, not to the real advantage of the novel.

Turkey in Revolt

"The Clown and His Daughter," for example, is in a way a striking title, and a title revelant to Halidé Edib's novel, which certainly has a Turkish mime and his daughter Rabia as its main characters. But that title does not at all indicate the breadth of interest in this study of life in Istanbul under Abdul the Damned, any more than "clown" itself indicates the remarkable talent of that true actor, Tewfik.

Halidé Edib's association with the Young Turkish revolution of 1908 has provided much of the material for her novel, her position as inspector-general of Mosque schools much too; the scene ranges from the palaces of the Sultan's nephew and the Minister of Public Security to Tewfik's fly-haunted grocery in a back street. Selim Pasha's son is involved in the smuggling of seditious literature, and so is Tewfik; but the serene Rabia, who when eleven years old can chant the whole Koran and is in great request at festivals because of her lovely voice, devotes herself to religion and music, and eventually finds her happiness through these. For myself, I found the revolution more exciting than the rhapsodies, and I hope Halidé Edib will draw further on her wide experience and give us another novel on this political theme.

As Others See Us

"Fires in May" again dissatisfied me as a title. To Fraulein Feiner it evidently signifies the chilly but hospitable character of this country, but to the English it sounds altogether too impassioned for England.

Vera Hansen is a German refugee from the Nazi terror. Her first reactions to the odd phenomena of our country are told with considerable freshness and zest; she discovers the amenities and horrors of English family life, enjoys coal fires and Hyde Park on Sunday morning, and decides that the distance from the Continent to England is greater by thousands of miles than the distance from one end of the world to the other. We green ourselves—but revive a shoot when the young and inexperienced Vera is seduced by an Englishman whom I can only describe as a Dad with a capital letter. The bitter consequences of Vera's liaison with Peter, her struggles to escape them, her true love for the rich John Ashley, and her final acquisition of the intensely desired British passport are presented on conventional lines.

HALIDE EDIB

Miss Phyllis Bentley contributes to this page a regular fortnightly review of current fiction.
Her next review will appear on Wednesday, November 27.

FICTION MINIATURES

By ALICE HERBERT

"No Mean City." By Alexander McArthur and H. Kingsley Long. (Longmans, 7s. 6d.)

AFTER hearing that the reading of such a chronicle as this would bring on the kind of futile misery that keeps the helpless sympathiser awake at nights, it is almost a relief to be able to feel a certain healthy disgust instead. This is not by any means to say that the housing conditions described from experience by Mr. McArthur are not a pitiful disgrace and an excuse for much that follows in the Glasgow slums. It is the deliberate settling down to avoid decent work as a mug's game, the reckless overbreeding that takes away considerably from the grievance of the want of space, the sheer shiftlessness of those in good work, the disgusting and idiotic vanity of the young women who encourage their men to go about slashing people in the face with razors to feed their own notoriety as the chosen of heroes—it is all these things that prevent the reader from melting into the expected mush of conscience-stricken sympathy.

Mr. McArthur and his literary mouthpiece Mr. Long, hold the scales very fairly. They show, for instance, that a self-respecting man can and does make his escape from slum-conditions. The young husband who is egged on by strikers to make good some careless (really half-academic) subversive opinions and loses his job by it is the one deservedly pathetic figure in the story, except for the silent members of the violent lads. They indeed are the heroines of a very striking book.

"Good Morning! Good Morning!" By Ian Rankine. (Macmillan, 7s. 6d.)

It is a relief to turn to Mr. Rankine's diplomats. His work is like the best kind of cake: just out of the oven. It is not sweet enough to clog; it is fresh; it has a delicate flavour; and there are hidden currents (if a pun so almost atrocious as to pass the classic test for puns may be allowed). Miss Rose Macaulay's "Potterism" is the only book that rivals it in its own light line. The wit is sparkling and the humour is pawky. You chuckle delightedly at least one chuckle to a page.

The story is actually and audaciously, the story of the young Briton who marries the Hurrianian princess. One would think that plot had long been beyond Hope for any novelist. Mr. Rankine's treatment seems to show that you can tackle the plot of the earl and the governess—so long as you have the brains to tackle it in the right new way.

"When Sorrows Come." By Bernice Annesley Vachell. (Cassell, 7s. 6d.)

Half this very readable novel is taken up with the gradual disintegration of one of the charming, prosperous landed owning families of England, so far as its finances are concerned; the people are all too good for anything more fundamental about them to disintegrate. The second half turns unexpectedly occult. A woman comes back virtually from the dead, with the added spiritual powers of her supernatural condition.

Her deepened sympathies and clarified understanding make her able to succour many of the difficulties of her household, after which her mission is over. It is a slightly awkward construction for any book, but there is no great sense of incoherence, while the sincerity is always obvious and the heavy note is avoided altogether.

"Fresh Furrows." By Marion Temple. (Hutchinson, 7s. 6d.)

In one sense this very human little story, the first novel of a travelled and socially experienced woman, is a study of friends. The really attractive and sympathetic girl who is the centre of it has a veneer of perfect manners which have been drilled into her by the mother, herself a nonentity, who is ambitious for a beautiful daughter. The plot succeeds and so does Lilla. She makes a rich and quite distinguished marriage, caring nothing for the man, and for a time seems to play her new role as to the manner born. Then comes her far more truly fitting mate, and the whole decorous scheme totters.

The author knows her world and understands men and women; it would have been a pity if she had never turned novelist.

A Scottish Doctor on His Rounds

By RUPERT JARDINE

"Leaves from the Life of a Country Doctor." Edited by Rutherford Crockett. (The Moray Press, 5s.)

I am glad," writes Lord Tweedsmuir in a foreword to this book, "that my old friend, Dr. Clement Gunn, has left these reminiscences behind him, for they provide a record of a fast-disappearing Scotland and a picture of a most vigorous, idiomatic and endearing character." One of the first impressions this book gives is of a man who spent his life profitably in a world, as many would have it, of better values than we know to-day. Dr. Gunn entered the medical profession more or less by chance; and one feels after reading his reminiscences that he would have led an equally useful life in any other calling.

Miss Rutherford Crockett, who is the daughter of S. R. Crockett, the famous novelist, and now lives in York, has arranged the book—half in the form of autobiographical narrative, half in the form of a journal. Only five months old at the time of his father's death, Clement Gunn had to decide on his career directly he left school, at the age of 14. As a student, he met James Barrie, who had just published "An Edinburgh Eleven"; S. R. Crockett; Arthur Conan Doyle; and Joseph Bell, the original of Sherlock Holmes. And he often saw Robert Louis Stevenson, nicknamed "The Pirate" because of "his lanky black hair, hectic cheekbones, and bizarre velvet jacket."

First Patient

After a short time as doctor's assistant at Newburgh-on-Tay, Dr. Gunn started on his own in Peebles; and "after six weary weeks" the first patient appeared—"a person by no means universally respected," but one who made a beginning that led to better things. Thus he began a practice over a wide area, the demands made upon him being at times such as to make it quite plain why Hobson Park said, "I would rather go back to Africa than practise again in Peebles."

Dr. Gunn met, with all types of character on his rounds—from the hypochondriac to examples of hardly credible stoicism. At Newburgh he had to visit every other day an old patient of his who never failed to send an urgent summons in the evening if, through pressure of work, the visit was omitted. The routine of these visits never varied:—

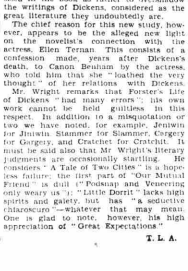
> Fastening the mare to a convenient ring near the cottage door, I would enter, and hellow into his ear (he was stone-deaf): "How are you to-day?" To which his invariable answer, shouted at the pitch of his voice, was "Ten thousand times weary!" "Right, go on as you are doing!" I would yell, and ride off again. For eighteen months this routine continued without, till eventually the aged pessimist passed on.

Stoicism

At the other end of the scale was the incident following the Doctor's encounter with a gig driven furiously towards him when on his way to a case some distance out:—

> "Hey, man, seeking you, Doctor!" shouted the newcomer. "Tam here has got his arm aff i' the threshing mill!" "His arm off! Surely not!" I ejaculated, with a hasty glance at the lad of fifteen sitting beside him, wrapped in a shepherd's plaid. To my amazement the boy shouted indignantly: "No aff, dae ye say? I'll sune show ye." Here he stood—and with that he held up in one hand his other arm, completely severed close to the shoulder, and brandished it in our faces.

The Doctor's literary output seems all the more remarkable when one considers the small amount of leisure he enjoyed. He produced a history of Peebleshire, books of poems, and several studies bearing on local antiquities. He avows to having been "healthiest in mind and body when fully occupied," and his writing was his recreation. We should be especially grateful to him for having left behind these reminiscences; perhaps the most remarkable thing about them is the personality which comes through their pages.



Jacket Design by Osmond Bissell, the York Artist

From "Leaves from the Life of a Country Doctor."

DICKENS—A NEW STUDY

"The Life of Charles Dickens." By Thomas Wright. (Herbert Jenkins, 18s.)

Mr. Wright brings to his task the fruits of over forty years' research in the byways of Dickensiana. His enthusiasm for Dickens is unquestionable; but he has a passion for origins and parallels, some of which will seem to the average student of Dickens slightly strained, and which are so emphasised in the book as rather to overshadow the writings of Dickens, considered as the great literature they undoubtedly are.

The chief reason for this new study, however, appears to be the alleged new light on the novelist's connection with the actress, Ellen Ternan. This consists of a confession made years after Dickens's death, to Canon Benham by the actress, who told him that she "loathed the very thought" of her relations with Dickens.

Mr. Wright remarks that Forster's Life of Dickens "had many errors"; his own will cannot be held guiltless in this respect. In addition, to a misquotation or two we have noted, for example, Jemmin for Jinwin, Slammer for Slammer, Gregory for Gorgery, and Cratchet for Cratchit. It must be said also that Mr. Wright's literary judgments are occasionally startling. He considers "A Tale of Two Cities" is a hopeless failure, the first parts of "Our Mutual Friend" is dull ("Podsnap and Veneering only weary us"); "Little Dorrit" lacks high spirits and gaiety, but has "a seductive chiaroscuro"—whatever that may mean (one is inclined to note, however, his high appreciation of "Great Expectations").

T. L. A.

BOOKS & WRITERS

Mr. Fisher's History—A Naval Family—George Moore

ON Monday week Mr. H. A. L. Fisher, the Warden of New College, Oxford, brings out with Eyre and Spottiswoode the third and last volume of his general History of Europe—one of the most important histories of our generation.

From the French Revolution he carries the tale down to the present day; such writing with a wide view but always as the friend of Liberty, calls his new volume "The Liberal Experiment," because it describes the rise and establishment of the system of civil, political and religious freedom which prevails now, at any rate, in Great Britain and the Dominions, as well as among the French, the Dutch, the Scandinavian and the American peoples.

Dr. Benes' Speech

Twice in our leading articles lately allusion has been made to Dr. Benes' remarkable speech in the Czecho-Slovakian Chamber on Nov. 5 on "The Struggle for Collective Security in Europe and the Italo-Abyssinian War." I see that it has now been translated—and excellently translated into English, and is obtainable for a shilling from the Czecho-Slovakian Legation in London.

Greenland Trek

The literature of Arctic exploration grows apace. The latest arrival, "Sledge," an account of the British Trans-Greenland Expedition of 1934 (Cassell, Monday), will have its special appeal for Yorkshire readers, as the author (and leader of the expedition), Mr. Martin Lindsay, is well known in the county and lives now at Richmond.

In 1931 Mr. Lindsay was one of the party that accompanied Gino Watkins in his attempt to discover an Arctic air route to Canada. The 1934 expedition, in which only three men took part, had as its object the crossing of Greenland from West to East at a higher point than before, and the exploring of the great ice cap that crowns the whole of that island continent.

The King-Hall Saga

On Monday, too, just a week after the publication of Sir Roger Keyes' book, comes another naval history—the family record of Commander Stephen King-Hall, who was Sir Roger's Intelligence Officer after the War.

This "Sea Saga" of the King-Halls should make good reading. Naval men are not always so ready with the pen as was James Hall, the son of a Yorkshire weaver, who started in 1805 as a surgeon in the Royal Navy, was appointed to Lord Collingwood's flagship in the Peninsular War and saw an extraordinary variety of service. On William, his son, who began as a midshipman in 1829 and ended in 1879 as Admiral Sir William King-Hall, was Commander-in-Chief at the Nore. Or as William's eldest son, who rose to be Admiral Sir George King-Hall, last Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Navy in Australia; or as Stephen King-Hall, his son, who carries on the story during the Great War.

Apart from their interest as a lively picture of the times, the diaries, which have been edited by Miss Louise King-Hall, and will be published by Gollancz, give a panorama, unsurpassed in its detail, of naval warfare from Trafalgar to Jutland, and of life at sea for over a century.

Irish Masters

On November 22 we may expect from Macmillan's a new book by Mr. W. B. Yeats, called "A Full Moon in March." Apart from the five plays in verse, with a number of poems, make up the volume.

Macmillan's will also be issuing on that day Charles Morgan's "Epitaph on George Moore." The author of "The Fountain" and of "Portrait in a Mirror" was invited by George Moore to be his biographer, and worked with him for several years to that end. It ultimately the project had to be abandoned, Mr. Morgan still possesses an unrivalled knowledge of his subject, and the present volume—an essay on certain aspects of Moore's life and genius—is intended by its author as a tribute to his friend, and as an indication of the manner in which that biography might have followed.

Public Opinion

Sir Philip Gibbs, following a lead already given by Sir Arnold Wilson, has been going about in town and country asking all sorts and conditions of men and women what they think about affairs in general.

Half a reporter's task lies in getting people to talk, and Sir Philip, who has always had a passion for the study of his fellows, was once one of Fleet Street's most successful reporters. So here, in "England Speaks" (Heinemann, Monday), are conversations with barbers, cab-drivers, Major-Generals, Cabinet Ministers, shopkeepers, farm labourers, young gentlemen and pretty ladies, the old aristocracy and the new, the working-class and the down-and-outs—all those different entities who in the mass make up the population of England. And even in the mass Mr. Gibbs still finds us a nation of individualists.

H. W.

DRIVING FROM MOSCOW WITH NAPOLEON

Intimate Portrait and a Grim Story

By LESLIE AKED

"The Memoirs of Caulincourt, Duke of Vicenza." Translated by Hamish Miles. (Cassell, 30s.)

THIS is as impressive a close-up of Napoleon as we are likely ever to get—a portrait painted by one who was by the Emperor's side at the height of his fame, and during the disastrous retreat from Moscow. To him Napoleon opened his heart, as fully as ever he did to any man, what they shared sledge and carriage during the flight back to Paris.

Caulincourt was France's Ambassador to Russia from 1807 to 1809. His Memoirs have lain hidden in manuscript, for no clear reason, over a hundred years, but they bear every mark of authenticity; and they bathe Napoleon in a clear, cold light that lays bare his character and illuminates the misapprings of his policy. To humiliate Britain was his objective—Britain, the one State he had never cowed, "the most powerful and the most constant of my enemies." Justifying his series of campaigns he said:—

> "If the English had let me I would have lived in peace. They say I abuse my power. I admit it; but I do it for the sake of the Continent at large. Now England thoroughly abuses her strength, the power that comes from distance isolated among the tempests. And she does so for her own good alone. The merchants of London would sacrifice every State in Europe, even the whole world, to further one of their speculations."

Astonishing Belief

The Continental System was his weapon against England, and when Russia broke the cordon he turned on his ally. It is astonishing how Napoleon continued to believe, in face of the persistent Fabian tactics of the Russians, that he could force the Emperor to come to terms, while all the time his armies were being drawn further into a barren wilderness.

Caulincourt tells us that before the war the Tsar had declared what Russia's policy would be in the event of hostilities:

> "We have plenty of room," he had said. "I should retire to Kamtchatka rather than cede provinces and sign treaties in my capital, that were really only truces. Our climate, our Winter will fight for us."

The Emperor raged like a spoiled child when the Russians refuse to stand at bay and put the issue to battle. He had implicit faith in his good star. "He could not admit to himself," says Caulincourt, "that fortune, which had so often smiled on him, had quite abandoned his cause just when he required miracles of her."

Death in the Frost

The picture Caulincourt draws of the retreat is heartrending. Thousands of men, stricken by frostbite, begged to be allowed to sleep by the camp-fires, though they knew it meant death; and the roads became covered with their corpses.

> Every heart was closed to pity by the fear of starving. . . . I still shudder when I say that I have seen men deliberately drive their horses at speed over rough ground, so as to get rid of the unfortunates with whom they were overweighted; and although they knew that horses would mutilate them or wheels would crush them, they would smile triumphantly when a jolt freed them of one of these wretches. . . . The men lived on grilled horseflesh. The horses that collapsed on the march were torn in pieces before they had time to die.

There are other vivid cameos in the book—chief among them that of the heroic Ney, whose fighting retreat across the Dniepr with the rearguard is among the glorious features of Napoleonic annals. But the Emperor dominates the lurid scene. A hundred little touches bring him sharply before us in all his genius, all his courage, all his duplicity.

Stamping on His Hat

We see him stamping on his hat with rage in his study at Erfurt, while the Tsar looked phlegmatically on; we see him denouncing his Ministers as pro-Russian because they disagreed with his views, and then patting their cheeks and tweaking their ears when his good-humour had returned; we see him stalking coolly about on the field of battle, heedless of the bullets, and being once nearly captured, less than 500 yards from his headquarters, by a band of Cossacks.

We hear him denouncing his family as "insanely ambitious, ruinously extravagant, and devoid of talent."; we hear him professing his love for Josephine, in the same breath as he hints that he must marry an heir in order to get an heir. This is a sacrifice demanded of him, he says, for the sake of France.

Caulincourt says that Napoleon had a low opinion of men in general. It is made evident that this, combined with his overweening belief in his own infallibility, was why the Emperor refused to delegate any authority to his lieutenants. Gradually the issues, and the number of men involved, grew too large for one man to control the whole war machine; and there followed the successive disasters of Moscow, Leipzig and Waterloo.

THE KING SPEAKS

"The King to His People: 1911-1935." (Williams and Norgate, 5s.)

In 1911 there was published a volume of the King's public speeches and messages up to that date. The present volume, also published by permission, carries the record on to this year, concluding with His Majesty's thanks to the London police after the Silver Jubilee celebrations. Thus it embraces the events of three pre-War years—notably those of the Coronation Durbar tour—before it proceeds to the long and historic list of War-time utterances between 1914 and 1919. After this we follow the King's concern with many phases of the reconstruction—an important Empire section is included here—before passing on into a more atmosphere connected with the affairs of the Royal Family. This section closes with the King's three Christmas broadcasts from Sandringham, leaving the Silver Jubilee speeches to round off the volume.

No one may wish to read such a volume straight through, but very many will assuredly wish to possess it, not only as a permanent record of the King's words but as a summary of his reign and as a memorial of the relationship of unbroken harmony and affection that has united a British sovereign through a quarter of a century with his British subjects all over the world.

GERMAN CHURCH STRUGGLES

"Second Survey on the Affairs of the Continental Churches." (Press and Publications Board of the Church Assembly, 1s.)

PUBLISHED TO-DAY

This pamphlet has been prepared by the Church of England Council on Foreign Relations under the chairmanship of the Bishop of Gloucester, who himself contributes the section on Czechoslovakia. The main concern of the Survey, which covers the period March 1, 1934, to June 30, 1935, is with Church controversies in Germany. Here will be found an authoritative summary, the fullest available in English, of the dramatic course of the struggle between the German Evangelical Churches and the German State during the nine under review. The summaries issued by the Confessional Church, the events which led up to the Second Synod of Dahlem, the separation of Church and State on October 30, 1934, the negotiations with the German Christians, the Synod of Augsburg (June 4-6) are a few of the main events described. Sections are also devoted to German Paganism, the position of German youth, and to the writings of such men as Dr. Hauer, Professor Bergmann, and Dr. Rosenburg.

The other Churches whose affairs are dealt with include the Old Catholic Church and the Churches of Austria, Switzerland, Hungary, Roumania, and Czecho-Slovakia. In this last section the Bishop of Gloucester discusses the Czecho-Slovakian National Church, the Lutheran Church, the Czech Brethren and such topics as education in Church Schools, the progress of Church building, and public worship—all matters which the experience of the Churches in Czecho-Slovakia will be of particular interest to English Churchmen at the present time.

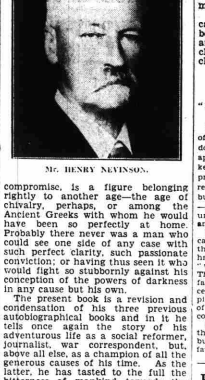
He Fought for Freedom

Henry Nevinson's Life of Adventure

By H. W. METCALFE

"Fire of Life." By Henry W. Nevinson. (Gollancz, 8s. 6d.)

THIS age can be—and, in fact, has been—described as an age of compromise; an age which chooses the lesser evil, and which allows the end to justify the means. And for this reason alone Mr. Henry Nevinson, who thoroughout his long life has most steadily refused to look on compromise, is a figure belonging rightly to another age—the age of chivalry, perhaps, or among the Ancient Greeks with whom he would have been so perfectly at home. Probably there never was a man who could see one side of any case with such perfect clarity, such passionate conviction; or having thus seen it he would fight, so stubbornly against his opposition of the powers of darkness in any cause but his own.



MR. HENRY NEVINSON.

The present book is a revision and condensation of his three previous autobiographical books and in it he tells once again the story of his adventurous life as a social reformer, journalist, war correspondent, but, above all else, as a champion of all the generous causes of his time. As the latter, he has tasted to the full the bitterness of mankind towards the supporters of minorities. "Probably few men," says Mr. Masefield in his introduction, "have had more chances of being knocked on the head in the cause of liberty."

Attacked by Mobs

He has been attacked by the London mob both as a "pro-Boer" and an upholder of Women's Suffrage; he was in danger of his life for his exposures of the Portuguese slave traffic before the War, and in Ireland, at the hands of the Black-and-Tans after the War; more than once he has accepted dismissal from his newspaper rather than keep silent on the truth as he saw it.

But though there is much bitterness in his book—particularly over the Irish question and the treatment of Germany by France after the War—there is much, too, of the milk of human kindness. Never was a man blessed with such a multitude of friends. But to him they were rather more than friends; they were comrades in arms;