

## New Novels by R. G. G. PRICE

**The Distant Horns of Summer** H. E. Bates

*Michael Joseph 25/-*

**Vanderlyn's Kingdom** J. I. M. Stewart

*Gollancz 25/-*

**Some Gorgeous Accident** James

*Kennaway Longmans 25/-*

**Ice Anna Kavan Peter Owen 30/-**

**Travel Notes Stanley Crawford Cape 21/-**

Even non-vintage Bates, like *The Distant Horns of Summer*, has at least the professional storyteller's ability to keep scenes of different shapes succeeding one another at a varying pace. The central situation, a five-year-old boy's half-grasp of an adult relationship, is incautiously compared by the blurb to L. P. Hartley's *The Go-Between*, but its potentialities are not realised: it remains a starting-point. His fun-loving parents fly off to Tangier, leaving him in the charge of a moody seventeen-year-old, who veers between nagging him for his endless questions and joining in his daydreams about two old men who visit him and talk like the local labourers. A short, broken love affair with an older man, very gay and arty, leaves her drained and helpless when the boy gets lost. His pretty fancies didn't convince me that I was being reminded what childhood was like. The landscape-painting is as precisely dithyrambic as usual and a great improvement on intoxication with urban squalour and the dead eyes of killers.

*Vanderlyn's Kingdom* has the old J. I. M. Stewart-Michael Innes verve, the Huxleyan donnish conversations, the tremendous initial invention and the tailing off; Mr. Stewart obviously finds finishing a book a chore when his mind is full of the next striking opening. Like a great journalist, he can fill a paragraph

with things never noticed before; but people and places lose substantiality as events unroll. In many ways he resembles Chesterton. There is the same self-relishing fecundity of bright ideas, the same concern with serious subjects that somehow never itself becomes quite serious, the same gaiety, the same theatricality of setting and characterisation, the same short-windedness, but also the same readability. This time he is back with patronage, a frequent pre-occupation. On a cultural holiday a rich American, a Presidential adviser, runs across a rather spiky English don and, visiting his college, meets an even spikier young poet. When the don meets Vanderlyn again, everything has changed. The government post has evaporated, the earnest first wife has been followed by an amorous Greek maiden, an Aegean island has been turned into a benevolent despotism filled with writers and artists, and the poet has become something between a protégé and an adopted son. Many interesting contemporary problems are raised while comedy darkens into melodrama; but there seemed to be more steam behind the eager generalisations of college talk than behind the grim deeds down south.

*Some Gorgeous Accident* is disappointing. In *Tunes of Glory*, Mr. Kennaway used a traditional type of novel for a very odd tale and the tension between the two gave it its extraordinary quality. Now his strangeness has burst its corsets and his new book sprawls self-indulgently. The fevered progress of a news photographer, a doctor in a wild London hospital and a mysterious girl as they move in and out of one another's milieux and erotic field is narrated in