

Other New Novels

BURMESE ROMANCE

SANDA MALA

By MAURICE COLLIS
Faber and Faber 7s. 6d.

"Considering the little time, you've got yourself nicely tangled up, I must say," said Dellahooke, the District Commissioner of Mergui to his guest Manghan, and he had justification for petulance. On his recommendation Manghan had come to Burma with a commission to paint the portraits of the Zalun Min, a prince of the old royal house of Mandalay, and his family. On the second day after his arrival he had become involved in an *affaire* with a minnowmer's wife, and on the fourth had found himself in love with the daughter of the Zalun Min.

Taking these characters and this setting, Mr. Maurice Collis has expressed one of the traditional Burmese dramas, *Maha Dipati*, in terms of modern life. It was a happy thought, and to this his first novel he has again brought the knowledge of Burma and its people he has displayed elsewhere. He has no illusions about Government Service in the Far East; he pokes fun at it, but never savagely. His portrait of Dellahooke as a kindly man of administrative integrity, intimidated by eighteen years' service under an autocratic régime from standing up to his superiors, is less dramatized than those of most officials in fiction. His artist—who turns out to be the prince in disguise of the play—is depicted less effectively and fails to emerge so vividly from the canvas, and the Zalun Min's daughter, with five years' education in England behind her, is made hardly distinguishable from an English girl until her self-sacrifice at the end; but her mother, Sanda Mala—the Garland of the Moon—a Shan princess, is a gorgeous character to whom Mr. Collis has done full justice. He is to be congratulated on having written an attractive story, with a meaning for those who look for it, against a background which gives full play for his power of lucid and arresting description.

TO TOWN

By RANDALL SWINGLER
Cresset Press 7s. 6d.

Mr. Swingler's book suffers, as so many books of similar type, from the outside observer's obsession with the sufferings of the poor. There are some scenes of almost unbearable pain and misery in this novel, especially as it deals with the lives of some wretched children growing to youth and manhood. But, in spite of some unforgettable evocations of scene and atmosphere, there is always the

so he informs us—is Labrador at the time when that name applied to all the country between Hudson's Bay and the Atlantic, may be more familiar to some readers as the Ungava of Ballantyne with Fort Chimo and all.

The framework he employs is the ten-year persecution of John Kendall—a young man of good family who out of enthusiasm for exploration has become "apprentice" to the Hudson's Bay Company—by the White Master, MacWhirter, who, as Chief Factor, is the local dictator. MacWhirter is furnished by the author with a genuine grievance, for the youngster proceeds to make free with a half-caste girl who had been brought from Albany for the delectation of the Chief. That the climax is a naive compromise between the demands of melodrama and those of the happy ending and, therefore, less convincing does not greatly affect the author's claims to attention, for it is soon clear that his imagination is primarily excited by the predicaments from which servants of the company and natives must extricate themselves to survive in a frozen wilderness and that the chief function of Master and apprentice is to provide material for illustrating them. This they do, and one day we may see the predicaments on the screen. Among those that should appeal to the producer are the escape of Kendall when the ice broke under his dog sledge, and a yet narrower escape when he and his half-caste attendant were canoeing easily down the river of the "Height of Land"—the great uncharted river which suddenly swirls downwards into a canyon.

NOT AT HOME

By PARR COOPER
Allen and Unwin 8s. 6d.

Novels of Indian life by Indian writers have of late been fairly frequent and have been welcome both for their realism and for the fact that they have counted in the balance against novels about that kind of English life in cantonments and hill stations which by

MY UNCLE SILAS

By H. E. BATES
Drawings by EDWARD ARDIZZONE
Cape 10s. 6d.

The lusty, coarse-grained Uncle Silas may seldom give us Mr. Bates at his very best but he is always excellent second-best, and his authenticity is no more in doubt than his popularity. This village Falstaff, this cottage Münchhausen, this hedgerow Don Juan—he is fundamentally real despite the occasional exaggerations living up his portrait. True, most of us see his kind as dirty old reprobates, which they are. It takes a child's eyes to see him with glamour, and through a child's eyes it was that Mr. Bates, as he tells us, first saw and, one feels, still sees him—his own great-uncle Joseph Betts, who told to the fascinated boy some of these tales almost as they are now set down.

There are fourteen of them here, of which eight at least have previously appeared else-



Drawing by Edward Ardizzone

where. "The Lily," "The Wedding," and "The Death of Uncle Silas" were among the earliest of these, and remain scarcely surpassed. The newer tales are not much more than pleasant footnotes to the legend, though "A Happy Man" stands out as showing us a Silas not always boisterous and conquering.

The volume is quite handsomely printed and produced—positively calling out that Christmas is only round the corner!—and the twenty-seven full-page and twenty other drawings by Mr. Ardizzone both admirably catch the spirit of the stories (as Mr. Bates acknowledges) and are of themselves fine pieces of craftsmanship.