

his book if Dame Una had not gone before. He makes a proper acknowledgement to Mr. Edmund Wilson; but his book is in the main the result of original—if sometimes somewhat odd—cerebration rather than of finicking research. The effect is sometimes refreshing and sometimes fatiguing.

Yet the book is not thereby to be condemned. I found Mr. Lindsay's constant deployment of the whole armour of the psychiatrist's consulting-room more than a little wearisome; but, strip his long rambling paragraphs of their top-hammer of jargon, their death-wish and their mother-surrogate, and there remains a great deal of sound, astringent thought.

Inevitably and rightly, Mr. Lindsay yokes Dickens's literary development to the course of his personal life; the complex family imbroglio makes dreary reading, but its effect on book after book is undoubted. The fantasy world of *David Copperfield*, of *Great Expectations*, of *Dombey and Son*, with its intensity of suffered humiliation and sudden joy, with its brooding symbolism, its violence and its pity, is a world created by a genius; yet it is related, at many planes, to the real world lived in by the boy who worked in Warren's Blacking Factory at Hungerford, the boy who was the son of the shiftless John Dickens, the energetic, unstable, dashing young author, and the tormented, demonic middle-aged man. Painstakingly, Mr. Lindsay traces the relationship through book after book; he has hunted down minor clues and minor characters in the story; he has sought, not quite successfully, to evoke the turgid sense of Dickens's epoch—but here his attempt does not stand comparison with Mr. R. J. Cruickshank's remarkable panorama of Dickensian England.

Mr. Lindsay makes some shrewd points, on which he will secure a measure of agreement from most modern students of Dickens: the eighteenth-century carry-over, the rural background, and—above all—the continuing, essential, phantasmal significance of the railways, in Dickens's life and books. He is right, I am sure, in pinning down the Staplehurst railway accident as a crucial experience in Dickens's life. Thenceforward the fantasy could no longer be sublimated in writing; it had to be lived and mimed. The closing years of Dickens's life, the ceaseless hithering and thithering, the macabre "readings" which were, in fact, a dramatic release of his own emotional and spiritual tensions—a loosing of the demon—of these Mr. Lindsay's account is forceful and just. The real comprehension atones for the wordiness, and Mr. Lindsay builds up a coherent and living portrait of his subject. His cannot be a source-book for Dickens's students; it is, however, a useful and provocative commentary.

JOHN CONNELL.

New Novels

- Secret Valleys*. By John Cousins. (Cape. 9s. 6d.)
The Hour of Truth. By David Davidson. (Falcon Press. 9s. 6d.)
Be Clean, Be Tidy. By Elizabeth Berridge. (Falcon Press. 8s. 6d.)
Final Night. By Robert Gaines. (Heinemann. 8s. 6d.)
The Feast. By Margaret Kennedy. (Cassell. 9s. 6d.)
Dear Life. By H. E. Bates. (Michael Joseph. 7s. 6d.)

DOROTHY PARKER once wrote a poem about those who seek monogamy "pursuing it from bed to bed." I am beginning to feel the same way about integrity. Mind you, as a determinedly escapist novel-reader, I am delighted to learn that integrity isn't one of those things that you can just pick up around the home; but as a house-bound woman I find it a little bit galling.

Angus Frazer, John Cousins's hero, had to go all the way to Crete to look for *his*. With Henri and Tom, two members of his war-time aircrew, he was compelled to search for the guerrilla fighter to whom they had dropped arms during the war, unreasonably convinced that when the search was concluded they would have also found themselves. As it turns out, only Angus is capable of understanding; Henri, the half-Frenchman, has already substituted cynicism and fellow-travelling for deep feeling, and Tom has for so long encased himself in his impersonation of an eighteenth-century squire that this masquerade has come to be a substitute for reality. After the guerrilla leader has been killed and the authorities are trying to discover where the arms-cache is hidden, Angus comes to the decision that is the moral of the book. Henri wants him to reveal the cache to Demetrias, the Communist leader, Tom, to the law. Angus says, "I couldn't make a choice for other people that I couldn't share in, that I had no responsibility for . . . I suppose everyone's got his own private test of integrity, his touchstone. Mine is this business of personal responsibility." And, again "I don't seem to be able to follow other people's rules. And I don't want

anyone to follow my rules, either, even if I'm sure they're the right rules. Everyone's got to work out their own."

And so *Secret Valleys* is a very satisfying book for a good liberal. It has an epic quality, and this includes, *de natura*, a certain flavour of Boy-Scoutism. This is not to denigrate the book, for I think very highly of it; it is only a sad comment on our times that the subject of integrity and the brotherhood of man inevitably smacks of the naïve.

William Harmon, in *The Hour of Truth*, is looking for more than integrity when he accepts the post of legal officer to an American good-neighbour mission to a decaying South American province. For he has, poor man, become impotent with his New York wife who symbolises dominant American womanhood, although he manages to recover this particular aspect of his manhood by killing a snake and sleeping with two other women. It seemed to me discouraging that he was unable to solve this particular problem at home, but, once it is disposed of, the other problem, that of maintaining personal integrity, again becomes of overpowering interest. Most of the characters are corrupt, the second-rate Americans who have joined the mission to taste a mastery and importance they couldn't rate at home, the local *conquistadores* wanting only money and power; even those who partake in the rite of integrity are, like the hero, in some way flawed. It would seem that Mr. Davidson has only one theme, since this is identical with that of his excellent first novel, *The Steeper Cliff*. But if he has other exotic locales in hand for it, he should do well.

These two novels deal with integrity and men. Integrity and women usually resolves itself into the answer that "East, West, home's best," and *Be Clean, Be Tidy* is no exception. American reviewers have, I see, compared Miss Berridge to Elizabeth Bowen and Elizabeth Taylor. They are wrong. At the moment Miss Berridge is writing above her station, but once she cuts out the rather trite sensitivity and sticks to straight stories about working girls looking for happiness, she should be very popular at the libraries. The same goes for Mr. Gaines. His first novel simultaneously shows that he has a good knack for thrillers and believes himself to be a Graham Greene—and oh, how tired we have all become of this literary world of derivative seediness!

I turn with relief—and you will, too—to Margaret Kennedy's *The Feast*. Don't read the blurb till you've finished the book, because it gives the show away. In the first chapter we learn that a rock-fall has killed nearly everyone in a small hotel and a priest is wondering whether there is any reason in the choice of the dead. Back we go to meet the people involved, to begin to care who should survive and who die. There is reason in the choice, but it spoils the story to know what it is beforehand, and it's too good a story to spoil; competent, unpretentious, exciting and reasonable, it's a model of a Book Society Choice.

If *Dear Life* had been Mr. Bates's first book instead of his thirty-fifth, it would have been hailed as a masterpiece. It is a little short of that. But this beautifully written study of a delinquent girl whose tragedy is sure because the conception of personal integrity has never done more than brush against her life and leave her for ever is a bitter commentary on the first two novels. There was no integrity for Laura at home, and she could leave home only to lose everything.

MARGHANITA LASKI.

SHORTER NOTICES

Self Portrait of an Artist. From the Diaries and Memoirs of Lady Kennet (Kathleen, Lady Scott). (Murray. 21s.)

BUT is it a *good* self-portrait? Only those who knew Lady Kennet can offer an opinion, but the ordinary reader may well ask the question, for this is at once an interesting and an irritating book. Interesting, for the events and people it mentions, and more especially for the complex character of Lady Kennet; irritating, because, with few obvious reticences, the writer succeeds in eluding the reader time and again. It is divided into two parts: an autobiography which begins at her childhood and terminates with the birth of her first son and the departure of her husband, Captain Scott, on the Antarctic expedition from which he never returned, and a series of extracts made by her second husband, Lord Kennet, from the diaries she kept from Captain Scott's departure until the close of her own life over thirty-five years later. The diaries in particular are very personal, and, as the editor points out, have been considerably cut and shortened for the present publication. Perhaps this is why they are, on the whole, unsatisfactory. A woman so outspoken and single-minded as Lady Kennet cannot be