

Reproduced by kind permission of Evensford Productions Limited and Pollinger Limited. Copyright c Evensford Productions Limited, 1936.

NEW WRITING, edited by John Lehmann. *Bodley Head. 6s.*

365 DAYS, edited by Kay Boyle, Laurence Vail and Nina Conarain. *Cape. 7s. 6d.*

THE WIND BLOWS OVER, by Walter de la Mare. *Faber & Faber. 7s. 6d.*

The purpose behind both *New Writing* and *365 Days* is much the same; the results, on the other hand, entirely different. Mr. John Lehmann and the editors of *365 Days* really aim to present a commentary, imaginative, critical or reported, on the contemporary scene. The editors, who are nothing if not earnest, describe how they invited all kinds of writers, during 1934, to send in "stories that dealt with or reflected the conditions, spiritual or factual, of that year." Mr. Lehmann is content merely with the sensible announcement that "*New Writing* is devoted to imaginative writing," though it is plain from the work he prints that it is contemporary life, in particular its political and social conflicts, which interests him most. This similarity of ideas is, as I say, in marked contrast to the results achieved in the two books. Having deliberately given every writer a foot rule and having said in effect, "No story must be a line longer than that," Miss Boyle and her friends must not be surprised if, here and there, to one reader and another, their 365 stories appear more or less like 365 plates, or matchsticks, or bricks, piled on top of each other. Odd though it may sound, 365 stories all of one page each can be very hard to read and even very boring to read. It is easy to get the impression, too, since these stories are not signed but merely dated, that they are the work of one man doing more or less the same trick, with a more or less different handkerchief, over and over again. Actually there are over a hundred authors here, and some very good authors—Mrs. Whitaker, Mr. Calder Marshall, Mr. William Saroyan, Mr. William March—among them. But none are quite seen at their best.

No doubt it was all very hard work and very great fun for the editors, but the outlet it offers to authors is not, really, worth talking about. Whereas Mr. Lehmann offers an outlet of very considerable importance to all those prose writers who, because they write too well, too honestly, too bitterly, too imaginatively or too lengthily, cannot place their work with conventionalized editors. Such an outlet was never more needed. The outspoken or imaginative author has, today, about as much chance of getting into the average editorial fortresses as a convict has of getting out of Parkhurst; and my only criticism of *New Writing* is that its appearances are absurdly infrequent. Such a book—in reality a periodical in disguise—ought to appear at least quarterly or, better still, monthly, though it is, I should say, in the hands of the public and not Mr. Lehmann that the means of effecting such a change exists. *New Writing* deserves the most generous support. No other periodical in this country can point, in one issue, to such an army of talent as appears here. Mr. V. S. Pritchett, Mr. Leslie Halward, Mr. Ralph Bates, Ignazio Silone, Louis Gouilloux, Mr. W. H. Auden and others, all contribute first-rate stuff; and Mr. Lehmann gets full marks for courage and enterprise.

Mr. de la Mare has, by rights, no place in such an article as this. His prose, though as fresh as paint, is not new writing; he has no commentary to make on the conditions, spiritual or factual, of the contemporary scene; he belongs to no sort of school of thought and has, in fact, never founded one. His work is the fruit rather than the seed of art. In *The Wind Blows Over* it remains of absolutely first quality: ripe, delicious, aromatic, a little mysterious, the product of a magical crossing between the world of fact and the world of dreams.

H. E. BATES.