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7s. 6d.), has just been published to want to read it. Sir Philip is as deft and as sure-footed as ever in this story of Commander Stephen Compton, widower, aged fifty-two, who returns from the tropics to find England in the throes of the Crisis, and his daughter (whom he has not seen for five years) in the throes of love-affairs. The author's sympathies are plainly with his middle-aged hero, and most of his readers will probably agree with him. Real Rally-Round-the-Empire stuff this, but done so slickly that one only admires the skill with which it is served up.

H. L. MORROW.

IN THE FIRST CENTURY.

IT is hardly likely that "Josephus," by Lion Feuchtwanger (Secker, 7s. 6d.) will repeat the success of "Jew Süß," though the later book re-asserts the author's hard-wearing excellences (the pattern being a trifle loud, of course), and has been as admirably translated by Willa and Edwin Muir. But the period is less approachable. No pictures or stage scenes have given us even a romanticized acquaintance with the first century A.D. Josephus is that very historian who knew both Rome and Jewry, and decided in favour of the former. Herr Feuchtwanger sticks pretty close to history, beginning with Joseph's journey to Rome to intercede for three Jewish friends imprisoned there, and ending with the destruction of Jerusalem and the start of the "History." If anyone can make the period approachable, it is the author of "Jew Süß." His management of crowds, his ability to mass the colour and movement of a festival or a battle, his ready production of character—persons who speak and act vivaciously and preserve their human differences—and his command of material provide a lively scene. There are happy glimpses of people at work: the architect, the tradesman, the glass-blower—even the art-furniture maker—to give solidity to a world so remote from ours. It is a fine piece of showmanship, a solid tower of a novel, in which action and character are kept in hand by a brilliant craftsman.

"Cheerful Weather for the Wedding," by Julia Strachey (Hogarth Press, 5s.), shows how elastic that word "novel" now is. Miss Strachey has written a light, slight, witty book reflecting the morning of a wedding day. Reflecting, I think, is the word, for all is seen as if in a very faintly distorting mirror. The frequent use of the word "seems" emphasizes this two-dimensional quality. Nothing quite *is*, but you get the delicately malicious personal impression of it. And after all, a mirror is pretty shrewd.

But the last of my three is the best—for me. "Kamongo," by Homer W. Smith (Cape, 5s.), cannot be called a novel, even in the most elastic use of the word. It is a discussion, on shipboard, in the heat of the Red Sea, between Joel, a young American scientist, and an Anglican priest. Joel has been to Africa in search of the Kamongo, a lung-breathing fish that was one of evolution's "blind alleys." "All evolution is not upward. It is only life flowing on through new forms." And Joel wonders if man, too, may turn out to be a blind-alley experiment, like the Kamongo. He talks of his conclusions on the beginning and the movement of life with a grave, imaginative vision that makes the book as exciting as good poetry: and I suppose it is good science. I have liked it so much that I am still lost in its afterglow. Mr. Smith is not only a scientist, but a writer of finely-tempered prose.

MARY CROSBIE.

MORE SHORT STORIES.

IN his first volume of stories, "Nightseed," Mr. H. A. Manhood brought a curious new technique to the short story, a manner more robust and flamboyant but less lyrical and certain than that of A. E. Coppard, the one modern writer of short stories to whom he might possibly be likened. "Apples by Night" (Cape, 7s. 6d.), his new book, gives us a dozen stories, principally stories of country life, all written in the same manner as the earlier tales, except that the language is less rich, the metaphors are slightly more under control, and the conversations in a more convincing idiom. In "Nightseed" the lush immaturity of the style was often tiresome, and the conversations were impossible, for whether a person was a duke or a chambermaid, a farmer or a parson, the speech was

in one idiom and one only, the author's. In "Apples by Night" these characteristics are still obvious, but less marked, and in "Lonely Camp," perhaps the best story of the twelve, the style has become less mannered and rich without losing its strength, and the conversations, though still strange, are more convincing. Mr. Manhood's virtues are also obvious: his extreme competence, his zest, his robust humour; he is, indeed, perhaps more competent and zestful and humorous than before. What has not changed is a certain meretricious falsity in his art; his stories are too obviously made up, the pattern of them too deliberately and meticulously woven. Mr. Manhood writes like a Cockney in the country for half a day, very high-spirited, slick and robust, intoxicated into a kind of rollicking ecstasy of admiration of its beasts, fields, and wenches, but without either depth of understanding or authentic feeling. There is something counterfeit about more than half these stories; they look like gold but they ring so often like brass.

Mr. Manhood is fond, like Mr. Eden Phillpotts, of "situations." It used to be thought that a short story, in order to have any value at all, had to have a "situation," until writers like Tchekov, Stephen Crane, Sherwood Anderson, Katherine Mansfield, and Malachi Whitaker triumphantly proved the theory to be nonsense. Mr. Phillpotts shows in "They Could Do No Other" (Hutchinson, 7s. 6d.) that he belongs to the "situation" school. He belongs also to the Beer-and-Clotted-Cream school, that school of writers who, it would seem, spend their lives tempting the natives of Devon with beer and sixpences to tell a tale of "a man and a maid," writing it down verbatim, polishing it up and publishing it. The result is something bad, false, illegitimate, true to neither art nor life.

Mr. John Gawsworth, a poet, has collected in "Strange Assembly" (Unicorn Press, 7s. 6d.) sixteen stories of past writers such as Hubert Crackanthorpe and Wilfred Ewart and of present writers such as Frederick Carter, M.P. Sheil, and Rhys Davies. It is a mixed collection and one which might appeal to many tastes, and it satisfies a high standard. It is interesting to see Hubert Crackanthorpe's name and also an excellent story by Mr. Rhys Davies, "The Journey," a fine, delicate bit of work, genuine in both colour and feeling.

H. E. BATES.

A BROADCAST BODY.

I CAN commend "Vain Fantasy," by Mr. B. G. Aston (Hurst and Blackett, 7s. 6d.), as a detective story with a new method of approach, though also with a silly and inexpressive title. I do not know who Mr. B. G. Aston may be: his publishers offer the curious reader no information about him. He does not appear to have written any other book. But this book shows signs if not of a practised hand then of one to which the craft of story-writing comes very easily. The characters are put with a sweet easiness before the reader—the mad vicar, the benevolent old art dealer, the sensual but intermittently inspired artist, and the mad vicar's charming daughter. The cleverness of the crime comes in almost as a sheer gift, so far is one disposed to enjoy and praise the book without any such aid. I should doubt whether Mr. Aston's future really lies in the field of the detective story, but there can be no doubt at all that he has a future. The presentation in one book of a credible religious maniac and a credible artist is no mean achievement.

Mr. Stuart Palmer's "Murder on Wheels" (Long, 7s. 6d.) is not as good as his "Penguin Pool Murder," but it is good. His detective, Inspector Piper, of the Homicide Squad (for this is an American tale), works in conjunction with a spinster school mistress whose acid exterior conceals a useful knowledge of human nature. In one respect the murder is a good one, the victim being one of a pair of "identical twins," so that no one can feel any perfect certainty as to which of the two has been murdered. But the corpse is provided by the throwing of a lariat from the top of a bus in a crowded New York street, and I am very much afraid that I don't believe it. I began by being incredulous when I understood what had been done, and when I discovered the identity of the murderer I felt frankly outraged.

"Madness Opens the Door," by Mr. C. F. Caunter (Thornton Butterworth, 7s. 6d.), is another book by a beginner who appears to have a considerable aptitude. Mr. Caunter's hero discovers a way of disintegrating the atoms of his body and projecting