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A Novel of the Week

By H. E. BATES

A Pattern in Glass

Edmund Vale whose novel *The Offing* is reviewed below

MARRIAGE IN HEAVEN. By RONALD FRASER. Cape. 7s. 6d.

ADRIAN DOUGLAS, the hero of Mr. Fraser's novel, is an artist in stained glass. The fact is significant, for his love-story, in its intricate pattern, rich brilliance, and passionate darkness and light, is very like one of his own windows. Had he tried to express his love for Linet Rockingham in glass he would almost certainly have depicted himself and Linet, naked and full of joyous passions, against a background of exotic purples and crimson, and tropical flowers and mountains. The figures, slender and lovely, would express eternal passion with its doubts and ecstasies, its egoism and generosity, its tragedy and beauty. The design would be gorgeous and classical.

Mr. Fraser himself uses words as his hero uses glass, and his novel is very like Adrian's window might have been. Linet and Adrian are the central figures, passionate and lovely; the backgrounds of flowers and mountains, rivers and gardens, are brilliant; the design, both of the sentences and of the whole, has a classical grace. But the life?—where is the life?

It was D. H. Lawrence, I think, who said that he had no use for novels which could be understood in one reading. He demanded of them an inner life, a locked-up emotional significance which would again and again defy and fascinate him. He demanded what his own novels possess supremely and what Mr. Fraser's lacks in spite of its grace and brilliance—life, spirit, soul, the flame—call it what you will.

Mr. Fraser's work is almost certain to pass as exquisite—and exquisite it undoubtedly is in form, but that very exquisiteness, repeated and unrelieved, is monotonous. Adrian and Linet love, and love, Mr. Fraser tells us, passionately. We are told this repeatedly, in scene after scene, but the thrill, the excitement of that passion never breaks through the hard and brilliant veil of words. We are told again and again that Linet is slender and lovely. We see her naked, but neither her nakedness nor her beauty moves us deeply. She suffers,

but we do not suffer with her. Her conversations, like Adrian's, are scintillating and clever, but somehow it does not matter whether we listen or not. The hidden emotional force that Lawrence demanded is lacking, and the book resembles more and more a bit of stained glass, brilliant and exquisite, but hard, static and lifeless.

"You put your work first," says Linet to Adrian, "and me second." In the same way Mr. Fraser puts form first and the spirit of his work second. To Linet's remark Adrian replies: "Really, I don't understand you. It's nonsense to say that."

"Do have a little imagination," says Linet. The remark is significant.***

H. E. BATES

Other Novels of the Week

SUGARED GRIEF. By Barbara Goolden. Chapman and Hall. 7s. 6d. The author's most brilliant, most deft, most perfectly finished piece of social comedy. Love as it comes to a man bereft of his adored daughter, and a dozen other people of different ages and station. But it is a touch too slick.***

TWO LIVING AND ONE DEAD. By Sigurd Christiansen. Gollancz. 7s. 6d. A Norwegian novel. A post-office is raided; one official is killed, a second wounded, the third escapes. The psychological state of the survivors provides ample interest for those who like introspective problems.***

THE OFFING. By Edmund Vale. Dent. 7s. 6d. Every lover of Wales will delight in this fine story, in which the atmosphere of sea and mountain is caught and the people are described with understanding. The story becomes melodramatic, but the author does not lose his grip upon it. Excellent holiday reading.***

APPIUS AND VIRGINIA. By G. E. Trevelyan. Secker. 7s. 6d. A woman buys a baby orang and brings it up as a child. She teaches it human manners and even to speak. Then she dies of fright. A really clever first novel.***

PARSON'S NINE. By Noel Streetfeild. Heinemann. 7s. 6d. There is much incidental charm and humour in this account of a parson's children, and the twins Baruch and Susanna are very much alive.***

THE BLACK SWAN. By Rafael Sabatini. Hutchinson. 7s. 6d. Life on the high seas in the time of Romance, with buccaneers and duels and a very fair lady as prize. Told in the author's most competent, rapid, and individual manner.***

WINDFALLS. By F. W. Thomas. Putnam. 7s. 6d. First-rate sketches of Cockney humour from the *Star*. Lively sense of fun and true grasp of character.***

A CHILD OF CHANCE. By S. L. Bensusan. Murray. 7s. 6d. A long novel of the English village. It has wit and sentiment and its heroine is delightful.***

HIS IMPORTED WIFE. By Beryl Clarke. Cape. 7s. 6d. She was imported from Wiltshire into the Middle-West. So we get the reaction of the real English to the real American. Entertaining.***

To enable readers to judge the merits of novels at a glance, we add stars to these short notices. Five stars denote a masterpiece, four stars a novel of outstanding quality, and so down to one star.