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**NEW NOVELS TO READ—**

(Continued from previous page)

German with a Nazi father—his mother was English—stays in a really nice English country house where everybody is charming, where there are lots of tennis and bathing and picnics, and cakes and cream for tea, and the only snags are new neighbours whose window curtains don't match! Franz, to his surprise, likes it all very much indeed, falls in love with the daughter of the house, and reports to his father than the English people are really charming. The idyllic existence comes to an end for him with his disillusionment at the news of Hitler's march into Prague. He returns to Germany to fight against the Nazi Government, and is restored to England, tea-time, and beauty to continue the good work. Miss Stevenson has a gift for writing about nice people, but she does not escape from the smugness attached to any story of conversion, and her English air is rather too exclusive to be used for propaganda on a large scale. Sophie, the owner of the house, is even glad to be spared the advent of evacuees!

**VIRILE SHORT STORIES**

Reviews by H. E. BATES

THE tendency to romanticize physical brutality and to exhibit, as someone has put it, "phoney biceps," has been a feature of American writing for the last ten years or more. Parodies of Erskine Caldwell, and the famous injunction to Hemingway "to come out from behind the hair on your chest" were signs that tough writing could be as unintentionally funny and might date as quickly as a Victorian melodrama. Newer American writers, without having the bones removed and the muscles deflated, pose far less as strong-armed men. Mr. Irwin Shaw is a case in point.

His *Sailor Off the Bremen* (Cape, 7s. 6d.) is remarkable not only for its virility but also for its long range of subject and mood. The prize-fighter who is nagged by his wife and cannot get enough sleep, the little Jewish tailor who is henpecked and feels he is the boss only at the moment of going mad, the man fascinated by the girls in their summer dresses—these are random stories from twenty stories with as many different subjects. *Sailor Off the Bremen* and *Weep in Years to Come* dramatize reaction to Nazi doctrine. The writing is spare, moving with trained ease, in athletic sentences. Strong without being consciously tough, it has two other exceptional merits. It is both humorous and compassionate. From between these pages, indeed, rises the warm, living smell of common people.

Miss Phyllis Bottome's stories in *Masks and Faces* (Faber and Faber, 8s. 6d.) are good examples of semi-phoney writing of a different kind from the biceps school. Their shaky construction is carefully covered by a jacket-blurb elaborately calling attention to "the inexorable workings of a moral law, his (the character's) place in the scale of human beings." What this means I cannot pretend to know; its exact relation to these rather elaborate, cosmopolitan, popular stories eludes me. Miss Bottome delights in laying her stories all over the globe, but her story of the parson tied to a vinegar-veined sister and driven to marry the district nurse still remains, for me, the prize-winner of the collection.

Mr. Roland Pertwee, too well known for description or criticism, offers a light collection of penny-in-the-slot entertainment in *May We Come Through?* (Peter Davies, 7s. 6d.). This, if you do not mind what book you are seen dead with, is the week's choice for the air-raid shelter.