

Reproduced by kind permission of Evensford Productions Limited and Pollinger Limited. Copyright c Evensford Productions Limited, 1937.

BOOKS OF THE WEEK
NEW FICTION

Guys and Dolls You'll Like

By H. E. BATES

More Than Somewhat. By Damon Runyon. (Constable, 7s. 6d.)
Sally Lunn. By Leo Walmaley. (Collins, 7s. 6d.)
The Swift Shadow. By L. A. G. Strong. (Collins, 7s. 6d.)
The Marsh. By Ernest Raymond. (Cassell, 8s. 6d.)

I HAVE NEVER been a guy to crack on a lot about the guys I know in the literary world, but I know Leo Walmaley and Mr. Strong and they are nice guys, and I like them more than somewhat; and the reason I am not putting their books at the top of this list is not because their books are bad books, because it might seem to many citizens as if I were trying to give them a big hello. I don't wish any citizens to think this, and I am sure indeed Mr. Walmaley and Mr. Strong don't wish any citizens to think it either. Indeed I wish to have no part in any such business. Furthermore, much as I like Mr. Walmaley and Mr. Strong, I like Mr. Runyon more than somewhat.

Good Americanese

Apart from being some indication of what I feel about this week's books, this is also a fair example of the style in "MORE THAN SOMEWHAT." But only fair. To be really good it ought to be, without exception, in the present tense, and it ought to contain much more about guys and almost as much about dolls. For, as Mr. E. C. Bentley points out in his admirable introduction: "In Runyon's world every male human being is a guy and every female a doll." In Runyon's world there are a lot of other words you wouldn't understand, but skip it; guys and dolls are the main thing; and I think, with Mr. Bentley, that unless you are a very dull guy indeed you will like these guys and dolls more than somewhat, or may be more than that. If by talking like this I seem to indicate that Mr. Runyon's book is light in tone, why, all right. The book is comic, very comic. Mr. Bentley says it is "one of the richest contributions to the comic literature of our time," and I think Mr. Bentley is near enough right, or may be nearer than that.

It is significant that Mr. Bentley's introduction to Mr. Runyon is rather long. There is much to say about this sports-writer journalist and his comic interpretation of New York's criminal life, and in a short review all that I can do, really, is to say go ahead and read this divinely comic stuff, written in a style that is an absurd but beautifully artistic mixture of slang and the academic, with its idiotic but also truthful pictures of the lives of such tough guys as Good Time Charley, Dan the Dude, Harry the Horse, Knife O'Halloran. If the story called "Blood Pressure" isn't a classic, I am, if you will pardon me, a rank sucker. Furthermore, these stories are superbly illustrated by Mr. Nicholas Bentley, and they are, furthermore, to be followed by a second volume called "Furthermore," and I hope many citizens will welcome that announcement, as I do, more than somewhat.

Fishing Village

Mr. Walmaley will be remembered, and I hope remembered for a long time, for his novels of North-East Coast inshore fishermen. No one is writing, and very few people have ever written, so well about this particular community of sea-going folk. In "SALLY LUNN" we are again in Bramblewick, which everyone can recognise as a well-known Yorkshire fishing village, and we are again caught up in the generations-old feud of the two fishing families of Lunn and Fosdyck. My one real criticism of Mr. Walmaley's story is that it is the same story, with slight alterations, as he has already told us once or twice before. The jealousy between Lunn and Fosdyck, the love of a Lunn daughter for a Fosdyck son, the salvaging of a ship-wrecked vessel, the struggle to catch enough fish to make a living, the fight to break with old traditions and adopt new methods—these are all familiar items to readers of Mr. Walmaley. This is a good story, but I hope that Mr. Walmaley, for his own sake, has told it for the last time. He is a man of far too intimate acquaintance with the lives of these fisher folk to waste his talent on repetitions. He is a man who could give us a fishing saga, and I look forward eagerly, in fact more than somewhat, to the day when he will do it.

"THE SWIFT SHADOW," like "SALLY LUNN," does not quite represent its author at his best. The book is a romance of the West Country and, reading it, I begin to understand more clearly Mr. Strong's admiration for the work of Mr. Eden Phillpotts. His novel is full of characters, among them a village idiot who hears voices and will not be separated from an old bucket, but Mr. Strong is concerned principally with the love affairs of Esther Nancarrow and the schemings of her mother, a masterful creature who would like her to marry a rich man named Jago. Esther, after a chapter of terrific incidents, chooses differently. Mr. Strong's treatment of this theme is more than semi-romantic and the book is a long way short of being so good a novel as, for instance, "THE BORMANS." A bout of service to the popular magazines has not improved Mr. Strong as a stylist, and I am looking forward to the day when he will move away from the tradition of Mr. Phillpotts and return to the uncompromising vigour of his earlier work.

East End Tragedy

Mr. Raymond recently surprised the critics by his "We, the Accused." I hope this was a better novel than "Tax Manas" or else my opinion of some critics goes down more than somewhat. Mr. Raymond has a first-rate theme here—the tragic life story of a boy brought up in the heart of the East End of London, that sprawling, filthy, over-populated area that was once a stretch of swamp and marsh. Here, in a world of saloon-bars, warehouses, Koher restaurants, fish-and-chip shops, wharves, and all the dirty cosmopolitan paraphernalia of a great city, Danny Counsel struggles to get work and make good, only to fail and become, in fact, a criminal. Mr. Raymond has been at great pains to make the details of this novel authentic, and many of its scenes of East End life, especially the police scenes, carry conviction. But he writes repeatedly with aloofness, much false sentiment, and a continual lack of economy that puts the book far below the class to which it should belong.

A Shern

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL REBEL

Coal-Miner. By With an Introduction by Mr. G. A. W. coal-miner, who "discovered" it Ashridge, where turned Conserva course. "He tol looking for book and, when I ask Shalley and Dyr Through Mr. B this interesting, book about times in Sherwood Forest and the chus childhood, his le schooling, and h in politics are as able simplicity. grimish days Tomlinson has d and regard for poem to tree—w well described on

At one time I cularly bad pa was undressing a pit surveyor up in that par in that par "are Wood?"

It had never there was any stone. "Yes," half a mile aw Clumber Wo a narrow black sweat. Clum beeches and b bowlers where without seeing But that kno me to think of love Clumber

Prose and Po

To go as far as say that the aut post with a post perience more in man" is to miss much. For the be analytic (as E and Mr. Tomlin feeling, simply analyse, his impr and his (often ter But that is not I read him is has to say about road how his bo food, read abo author is on the views on politics Conservative is enemy of an old you will underst and honourable a stood way of life trees of Sherwood and activities an this simple, straig will learn someth secrets of Edu Tomlinson is to Bryant thanked i set down this un

THE B

RECOR

BR

and t

Edited by Cl

FOR TWO

AT TE

THE BES

IN THE

this magi

in the Engl

has

125

of lib

editori

in 9

26 distingui

57 photogra

[Prospe

An Encyc

LON

Edited by

'This is a

valued

life.'—Dai

550,000 wt

Illustri

[Prospe

Clouds

THE NEW

John

An exciti

lovers whe

for a publi

fly round

opposite d

entertainm

cannot re

passed.'—

J. M. DENT

10 Bedford St