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*Courage* is patriotic too, and his poems reach a fairly high level of competence. If his lyrics lack intensity, I liked "Poet's Faith," where the Celtic note is present. There is some nice nature description in "Brown Eyes":

Brown as peat-pools, sun on fern magic.

He is at his best in the fragments of Welsh plays at the end of the book.

Mr. Godfrey Locker Lampson writes with the accomplishment, the wit and grace of a bygone age. Most of the *Poems to Baa* are sonnets Shakespearian in form and diction, meticulous in technique. There are one or two 'Cavalier' lyrics. His romantic song celebrates love, saddened by regret for the passing of youth.

JOSEPH BRADDOCK.

LOOK AT ALL THOSE ROSES, by Elizabeth Bowen. *Gollancz*. 7s. 6d.

TODAY AND FOREVER, by Pearl Buck. *Macmillan*. 8s. 6d.

THE LAND OF SPICES, by Kate O'Brien. *Heinemann*. 8s. 6d.

Miss Bowen's is the art of Katherine Mansfield in more sophisticated, more abrupt and on the whole less kindly hands. There is an air of acute and disjointed fretfulness about these rosy-intellectual stories, so few of which can be translated into neat anecdotal terms, they are on the whole disturbing rather than satisfying. They seem to spring from a sort of bizarre love of dissection, a dreamy and sometimes not a little malevolent interest in the odd entanglements of existence. "I love life," Katherine Mansfield once said, "but my experience of it is pretty terrible." One feels, on the other hand, that Miss Bowen might say "I hate life; but my experience of

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watching mankind disentangle itself from the mess is pretty interesting." Her short, sculptured sentences, in which an exquisite sensibility is constantly restrained by an almost harshly dispassionate intellect, are technically interesting but convey only rarely a sense of compassion. So one feels that sometimes Miss Bowen hates her people; the initial pity has curdled, even soured, to surly spinsterish contempt; the surface bloom of the style is charmingly iridescent, but the hands which polish it are cold. Yet sometimes I feel she does not intend it to be like this, that she would really like us to feel her own warm-hearted pity for the invalid girl and her mother in the rose-covered cottage, the strange couple in the derelict seashore hotel, the lovers walking on Sunday in the woods, but that intellect has defeated the courage needed for a more compassionate simplicity. Perhaps she demands a more emotional co-operation than at least one reader has found it possible to give to the cold, bright oblique beauty of these tales.

Miss Buck's stories are of modern China, mostly China at war: the generous untidy stories of a famous novelist writing for a large and perhaps rather comfortable public. Of pity and compassion there is plenty here, together with a simple eagerness to convey scenes and people that is sometimes naïve. But like all Western

novelists writing of China Miss Buck gives the impression of trying to depict that inscrutable country from an immeasurable distance, and I find these stories, even at their best, only a fraction above the best magazine category.

Miss O'Brien's story of the life of an English Reverend Mother as revealed by ten years in an Irish convent of a French order has also little of that action sequence and excitement that can be easily summarized in anecdotal terms. Its beauty lies almost solely in the method of its telling. The inspiration for that method is, as in so much modern Irish fiction, French: a certain formal delicacy, a smooth warm-veined marble surface of prose, an impression of coloured austerity. One gets the same impression from reading these pages as, in fact, from gazing at a piece of carefully chosen, carefully polished marble. The delicate cool veins of thought run hither and thither, changing colour, breaking, melting, creating an intricate and yet never disordered pattern; the calm bright surface reflects life rather than creates it. Passive, cool, explanatory, the colours of its pictures toned down, its light suffused, the book goes best perhaps into the category known as distinguished, and is, I feel without prejudice, for the very, very few.

H. E. BATES.

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