

a few exceptions, Mr. Rosner has decided to show how clever we are these days. Consequently we have a book which does not, alas, sustain Mr. Rosner's original intention. The 1851 examples were typical everyday printing jobs; the 1951 examples are esoteric displays of graphic design. Hence the book is disjointed and ill-balanced.

A comparison of the front page of *The Times* of 1851 would have been of interest placed against the front page (or a section) of today's issue; an 1851 palladium would have been of greater interest seen against last week's Palladium bill; the Great Exhibition's official letterhead could have been compared with the Festival of Britain's; the sheet-music cover presenting the *Great Exhibition Waltz of 1851* could have been placed against a similar cover for boogie-woogie; a macassar oil advertisement against a typical Horlick's strip; a Midland Railway ticket against a B.R. ticket. Instead, Mr. Rosner shows us a set of reproductions as untypical of the typographical ephemera of our time as they could well be: abstractions, montages, sophisticated labels for rare goods, six-colour jobs and so on. Looking at these examples nobody could think that nowadays printing also lives through days of austerity, with thinner paper, paler impressions and older machines. Mr. Rosner's extravagant items have a special interest, but they do not form an adequate or fair comparison with the printed work of 1851.

The book is well produced, although there is a certain flatness in the lithographic sections. Mr. Ellic Howe's scholarly touch is happily evident in the brief introductory notes.

ROBERT HARLING.

Fiction

The Complete Short Stories of W. Somerset Maugham. Volume I. (Heinemann. 12s. 6d.)

Twenty Tales. By H. E. Bates. (Cape. 10s. 6d.)

The Last Revolution. By Lord Dunsany. (Jarrolds. 9s. 6d.)

Morning Star. By J. L. Hodson. (Gollancz. 12s. 6d.)

MR. MAUGHAM has often and consistently reported what he holds to be essential in the technique of short-story writing. He has described how, as a boy of fifteen and upwards in Paris, he used to haunt the arcades of the Odéon where he could read de Maupassant "standing up and peering between the uncut pages" of volumes marked prohibitively at three francs fifty centimes. The test happened to be one which de Maupassant was better qualified to survive than anyone except perhaps the future Mr. Maugham, for both give priority to bold construction, to "a beginning, a middle and an end," in the words of the preface to this first volume of the collected stories. And if a vagrant reader of today—constrained by similar financial pressure—could glean rather less from this volume before being moved on by an attendant, it would be in part because of the opposing influence of Chekov. For although Mr. Maugham is far more remote from Chekov than he is from de Maupassant, although the cardinal sin is to end a story "with a

straggle of dots," he has at his best a humanity and a tolerance of the shabbier sides of life which lift him well above the level of de Maupassant.

We see, however, as these stories succeed one another in their parade, that the technical discussions of Mr. Maugham, craftsman, tell us little about what is fundamental in the artist. He writes as a spectator, cut off as if by an invisible sheet of glass from what he sees. His style has a corresponding neutrality which discourages quotation for its own sake. But within his subject-matter we notice a recurrent bias. In scenery of the greatest distinction (which is almost always foreign, but may be as meretricious as a restaurant or as idyllic as an atoll) a group of characters who are undistinguished except by their minor failings are led into tragedy by the enlargement of one of these failings and the character's ensuing breakdown. "We know our friends by their vices and not by their virtues," he writes in 1934; and a few years later, "We know our friends by their defects rather than their merits."

What is curious in so restrained an artist as Mr. Maugham is that the combination of beauty and the beast, of splendour and squalor, should be the condition of his finest work. It was to the South Seas that his intuition led him in search of that artistic "perfection" which he knew he had not achieved in the theatre, and his intuition did not lead him astray. "I was like a naturalist who comes into a country where the fauna are of an unimaginable variety," he says in *The Summing Up*. "These men had never had their jagged corners rubbed away."

So the first volume of the stories opens magnificently and fittingly with *Rain*, where a missionary breaks and kills himself almost as soon as he has disembarked. Among the three dozen tales which follow, there are two which discard neutrality in order to applaud characters who abandon the western centres of civilisation to "go native." There are a handful which suffer from the pernicious influence of O. Henry or deal with themes which are unworthy of Mr. Maugham's greatness. But after innumerable variations the volume closes as it began with a section of stories belonging to the South Seas. It is a quarter of a century later in the writer's life, but his genius flowers again in familiar soil as if he had woken to find himself at home again.

To follow Mr. Somerset Maugham in a review is not an enviable position, but it is one which Mr. H. E. Bates, working in more detail and on a less massive scale, can afford. By an odd chance his first subject is one which Mr. Maugham himself chooses in one of his unluckier moments when he lets his glance dwell morosely but without illumination on three fat women on the Riviera who are chained by preoccupation with their obesity. Mr. Bates, who never sets foot outside the country, has none of the splendours of *Eden Roc* in which to place his one miserable fat woman; he simply takes her into a London park and there lets her pour out her misery to the thinnest woman she can see—who is fainting from starvation. Mr. Bates works with a needle, and it is equally sharp whether his motive is love or a fatalistic despair. The love stories have a delicacy of touch which can deal with the passion of a circus midget or a sex-starved landlady without erring, and if he lacks something in solidity, he makes it up in imagination and variety. *Twenty Tales* is a remarkable interim statement of Mr. Bates's talent, which should only be ousted from its place on the bookshelf by his complete short stories.

In *The Last Revolution* Lord Dunsany has taken the very considerable risk of telling a Jorkens story without Jorkens to tell it. The substance is tall enough. An inventor creates a machine which looks like a cross between a dog and a crab except that it has a hundred hands. It breeds similar machines and tries to make off with Alicia, the hero's fiancée. "He had given Alicia a motor-bicycle, he told me, a thing I was glad to hear; for . . . I knew that while she had that she could always outpace the monster, if it should chance to come on her alone and ever try to pursue her." The monster almost procures Alicia in spite of the precaution, and without Jorkens to tell us about this, let alone the more extensive developments of the invention, I felt I was being asked to swallow too much.

Mr. Hodson is a novelist who can be relied on to hold our interest and admiration however heartily he may stride up and down his novel denouncing topical evils and fallacies. *Morning Star* is the title of a newspaper which escapes control by a Press lord on the one hand and the Labour Government on the other, and to those who need fortifying in their individualism it can be recommended as a stimulant in a dispiriting world.

TANGYE LEAN.

THE 'CAINE' MUTINY

- HERMAN WOUK'S superb sea story of the U.S. Navy in World War II is now at the top of all the American best-seller lists.
- Typical review (from the *N. Y. Herald Tribune*): 'Exceptionally adult and satisfying novel.'
- It combines wit, dramatic excitement, intellectual fascination and love interest, lacks only the usual elements of violence and obscenity.
- Published last Monday: sold out: reprint next week. 15s. net

● JONATHAN CAPE