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join, and that the words "Short story" are almost as variable in their meaning as the word "Art" itself. That, as Mr. Strong is careful to point out, is the short story's finest asset, since it is preventing it from becoming standardized and so ceasing to grow. And so, after much prodding in the bushes, Mr. Strong is convinced that what matters in a short story is not "plot" or, on the other hand, "the emotions and reflections it arouses in the reader." The only thing that matters is that "each piece of short prose fiction should have an aim worthy of an artist, and should succeed in hitting it." This, indeed, sounds vague enough, but if the young short-story-writer wishes for detail he should turn to Mr. Strong's analysis of two of his own short stories, and from them learn what (if any) is the chief trick of the trade. After that he must turn, though not for help, to the eighteen stories themselves and see what it is that writers like David Garnett, H. E. Bates, A. E. Coppard, James Hanley, Sylvia Townsend Warner, T. F. Powys, John Collier, H. A. Manhood, Stella Benson, and one or two others mean by short stories. This is as admirable a collection of modern short stories as could be found, whether one is in search of such strange fantasy as Mr. Collier's "Green Thoughts," the exquisite landscape-painting of Mr. Bates's "The Hessian Prisoner," the delicious whimsicality of Mr. Coppard's "The Man from Kilsheelan," or Mr. David Garnett's story of the prize and circumstantial bore, "A Terrible Day."

For eleven years now Mr. Edward J. O'Brien has been studying and reporting on the short story in English, and every year about this time he presents us with a brace of volumes of stories which have appeared in English and American magazines during the previous twelve months. This would be a laborious task, both for the compiler and the reviewer, but for the fact that Mr. O'Brien regards the short story as passionately as jewel-collectors regard precious stones, and by his introductory remarks and his, at times, oddly erratic selections manages to convey a good deal of his enthusiasms to his readers. In "The Best Short Stories of 1932" (English) (Cape, 7s. 6d.) he expresses, with what almost amounts to despair, the opinion that the English short story is "only too clearly marking time," and is lacking leaders. "The most fructifying influence on English fiction during the next ten years," he suspects, "will come from America." Criticism may be a matter simply of personal preference, but it was rash of Mr. O'Brien to make this last remark at the same time as the publication of his collection of "The Best Short Stories of 1932" (American) (Cape, 7s. 6d.), even though this does include such fine things as Bill Adams's "The Foreigner," William Faulkner's "Smoke," and Clifford Bragdon's "Love's So Many Things." For though the Americans may have the technique (and it is a surprisingly varied one), they do not seem to show us the roots and the soil of their people as the English writers do, and it is only from such roots and soil that really great art can spring. Does Mr. O'Brien really mean to tell us that he considers that such American magazines, such as Ira Morris's "The Kimono," Dudley Schnabel's "Load," or the pseudo-modernism of José Garcia Villa's "Untitled Story" is likely to give the lead to the writers of such exquisite pieces of craftsmanship as "The Fairy Hill" (Edward Shanks), "The Escape from Fairyland" (J. B. Morton), "The End of the Party" (Graham Greene), "Woolly Gloves" (V. S. Pritchett), or "The Last Rose of Summer" (Eiluned Lewis)?

H. L. MORROW.

FLIGHT ACROSS EUROPE.

THE publishers of "Orient Air Express," by Paul Morand (Cassell, 6s.) refer to the apathy with which the *nouvelle*, or long-short story, has been regarded in this country. They offer no explanation of that apathy, and it seems indeed inexplicable why the modern reader, so often short of time, should have disregarded both the long-short story and the short story itself—of all fictional or prose art forms the quickest and easiest to read. "Orient Air Express" is an excellent example of the *nouvelle*: it is vivid and sure, the effects are obtained with strict economy, its rhythm is quick and exciting, and at the end one retains the im-

pression of having read a much longer book, so deftly and significantly is everything related. Reading "Orient Air Express" makes the public's apathy even more difficult to understand, for apart from the book's charm as a piece of prose it is an engrossing bit of life and adventure. The long-distance air-flight holds exciting possibilities for the novelist of imagination, as we have already seen from Mr. David Garnett's "The Grasshoppers Come"; and here in "Orient Air Express" we have a Russian prince flying, as the result of a bet, from Paris to Budapest in one day in order to bring back a pot of caviare. He buys his caviare but does not choose to come back, and though there is no love-story, no hair-raising flight against time, no capture by bandits, the book is exciting. The flight from Paris by night, the journey across Central Europe in the sunshine, the early morning search for the caviare in Budapest, the fish-market, and finally the fishermen of the Danube Delta ripping open the still pulsating sturgeon for the eggs which will arrive in Paris as a delicacy of fantastic price—all this is enthralling. The final touch of Dmitri's decision not to return is just right.

After reading "Orient Air Express," which stands high not only as a work of art but as a piece of entertainment, I could not enjoy at all the stories in "This Last Bouquet," by Marjorie Bowen (Lane, 7s. 6d.). Here is a book which sets out deliberately to be exciting, to make the flesh creep: it even flaunts on the wrapper a sub-title, "Some Twilight Tales," and a sinister figure with black cloak and red hair. Yet the tales are flat and dull and are never even horrible or improbable enough to enable one to forgive or forget the old worn-out magazine devices and the poor writing.

In "Rugger Stories" (Putnam, 7s. 6d.) Mr. Howard Marshall has collected an odd assortment of tales, poems, and articles by such authors as Liam O'Flaherty, J. C. Squire, J. B. Priestley, John Buchan, P. G. Wodehouse, and the result is exactly the kind of book to give as a Christmas-box to any hero-worshipping boy of fourteen.

H. E. BATES.

AN EPIC OF A RIVER.

A RIVER as the chief character in a novel is a refreshment to the reader tired of inept human portraits and portraits of the human inept. "Pool and Rapid," by R. L. Haig-Brown (Black, 6s.), is the epic of the River Tashish that runs from Pinder's Mountain to the Pacific coast of Canada. I can't find it on the map, but surely it is a real river, for the author writes of it with a knowledge that seems to belong to the senses and affections as well as to the fancy. He tells the Indian legend of its origin: how in answer to the prayer of the Young Chief the gods sent great snows and rains that made this wide river, for the comfort of his poor tribe, and how salmon and trout, beavers and deer came to it. In our own century a white man built his cabin near the rapids, and the river became to him and his son, Redhead, something not altogether unlike the divinity that the Indians saw in it. But "progress" demands lumber camps and sawmills and the building of a dam; and although Mr. Haig-Brown, in the person of Redhead, will not barter his divinity, he seems to think that its strength and kindness must be put at the service of men. It is not only for the solitary farmer-trapper and the few Indians and the animals that centuries ago made their home near by. Progress has to progress—but Redhead (and the reader) get a thrill of primitive delight when the river gloriously shatters its first effort. This is simple and unaffected narrative. The persons are negligible, being subdued to the story of the River; but that is curiously pleasant. At least, I found it so. The book is blessedly limited in the range of its emotions, quiet as the gait of a long-stepping woodsman, peopled with natural things that are ruthless and—somehow—lovely and everlasting.

Perhaps I overrate their consoling ruthlessness because my next book ("Laura Seaborne," by Julian Hall Secker, 7s. 6d.) is concerned with people whom the river might drown very justly. Laura Seaborne and her friends represent a section of society that exists, though Heaven knows why a convenient thunderbolt doesn't wipe it out. They