

WHEN THE DALTONS RODE by *Emmett Dalton* (DOUBLEDAY, DORAN. \$2.50)

IN THE nineties the Dalton gang was figuring dramatically and realistically in the newspapers of the day. They were blamed for every bank robbery and train hold-up. Railroad companies offered rewards for them, dead or alive, and tried to ambush them with smoking cars filled with deputies armed to the teeth. Private detectives lurked on their trail hoping for the glory of their capture. False friends plotted to betray them for the rewards. They even ate their meals, except when in the safety of their dug-out, with their rifles across their knees, for they trusted no one but each other. They knew and avoided the fate of the James boys and the Youngers, who were related by blood as well as by the similarity of their exploits, and they survived because of their shrewdness and caution. They were aided by Eugenia Moore, Bob Dalton's sweetheart and a proficient telegrapher, who was able to loiter around railroad and telegraph stations and pick up messages dealing with shipments of gold and currency. Eventually they were shot down to a man in the famous Coffeyville street-fight, when they attempted to rob two banks simultaneously and an aroused citizenry showered them with lead. There were more casualties per shots fired in that exchange than in any battle of the Civil War, according to a veteran officer who was present. The title-page gives Mr. Jack Jungmeyer as collaborator with Emmett Dalton in *When the Daltons Rode*, and we suspect that it is to him that the reader owes consistent dramatization and a unified nar-

rative, as well as the restraint of the romantic love stories of Eugenia Moore and Julia Johnson, which, without detracting from the historic and picturesque value of this account of early gunmen, make it fit reading for those who merely seek entertainment. The old West really lives here as well in description of country as in characterization.

ROBERT L. ROE

THE GENTEEL FEMALE: AN ANTHOLOGY edited by *Clifton J. Furness* (KNOPF. \$3.50)

Now that we paste illustrations from *Godey's Lady's Book* on our lampshades, we might well review the times when those frail but exceedingly powerful females determined the social and literary trend of the whole country. This book of extracts from contemporary material discloses our ancestress as she was and as she wanted to be. Fainting, hoop-skirts, pathetic poems on tombstones, elocution methods with Lady Macbeth's sleep-walking scene, lap-dogs, the language of flowers, specimens of elegant letters: they are all here to be wondered at. The book in fact greatly resembles the *Keepsakes* and *Friendship's Annals* of the period. And though now we cannot clasp our hands and raise our eyes to heaven, these choice bits will be found just as alluring. Since however, this is a volume in the *Americana Deserta* series, there is a long and very excellent introduction by the editor as well as running comments on the excerpts. Undoubtedly it is a sociological work of some importance. Fortunately it is also overwhelmingly funny.

PAUL ALLEN

FLEDGLING FICTION

ADVANCE SPRING STYLES

THAT contradictory impulse which makes the British the most inveterate of colonists and wanderers and among the most nostalgic of peoples, is the theme of two of the first novels of the month. *Dark Heritage* by Shirland Quin (Little, Brown, \$2.50) is really a story of the dual aspects of the impulse at war with one another. It is the story of Mervyn Morgan, who runs away from his Welsh home to America, there to build a fortune. But always his passionate love for his childhood home stands in the way of any permanent settlement in the New World. He is an adventurer, an exile, and even though absorption in business and in marriage divert him, he lives in preparation for his return home. Eventually he does return, but meanwhile, America, which he has so casually tenanted, has shaped him to its own standards, so that he finds himself again an exile, cheated by years of illusory living of a contentment he might long ago have achieved.

Such, in brief, is the theme of this excellent novel; but I do it scant justice by merely baring its skeleton. In Miss Quin's hands it has achieved a rounded form, a satisfying fulness, which make it at once emotionally and intellectually satisfying. The chapters describing Mervyn's early life are particularly well done. The Morgan family is shown in living variety; the busy life of the farm, the conflicting natures of the younger Morgans, the almost worshipful immersion of the self in the family and the family property, are given full value. The long account of Mervyn's adventures in America is less successful, for it lacks the warmth that is found in

the prologue. Mervyn follows a not unfamiliar path; day-laborer, odd-job man, dining-car steward, farmer—and then, by a fluke, the successful advertising man: such a course parallels fact too closely to be incredible, yet always in fiction there is the ring of incredibility about it. But if Mervyn's material progress is unconvincing his spiritual unease is real enough. That hunger for his own country that animates his life is always evident although never over-stressed. So his marriage, unfortunate in itself, fails doubly in not assuaging his nostalgia. So business becomes a voluntary obsession, success is pursued as a substitute for contentment, and, after Mervyn's marriage ends in divorce, a more suitable love is consciously evaded lest it rival his more urgent passion for home.

It is inevitable that the home-coming, which in itself is an anti-climax, should be unsatisfying. Disillusionment, since it partakes of a weariness of spirit, can never be the stuff of active tragedy, and it is perhaps from the reader that comes that sense of flatness which characterizes the last section of the book. Yet I think that here the book itself fails to live up to its highest level. It is to this return that the whole story has been directed and now, when it should reach its peak, the discovery that Mervyn is himself a stranger, not only in the eyes of his old neighbors, but in those of his family and within himself, should be brought out with a poignancy that is not in the text. But that is a debatable point. Apart from it, there is good stuff in the book: the mark of careful thought and workmanship; a consistent grasp of character, and a narrative well handled.

The exiled spirit is dealt with in somewhat different fashion in John Fisher's *The Un-*