

THE MOOD OF THE HOUR

Friday's Business.

By Maurice Baring. (Heinemann.)

The Warrior Comes.

By W. Somerset Maugham. (Heinemann.)

Stephen Sherrin.

By Katherine Dunning. (Hodder & Stoughton.)

Five For Silver.

By Malachi Whitaker. (Jonathan Cape.)

The Furnival Book of Short Stories.

(Joiner & Steele.)

Still She Wished For Company.

By Margaret Irwin. 5s. (Chatto & Windus.)

by Barbara Maxwell

These six volumes cover a wide field of human activity, and it is difficult to assess or classify them fully in a short



From *The Birdikin Family*
By Archibald Marshall
(Dent).

**MR. BIRDIKIN'S FEELINGS
AMOUNTED WELLNIGH TO
ANGUISH.**

space. But one can definitely indicate that they are representative not merely of conditions in the world to-day, but of this generation's response to those conditions, and the effect of their response on methods of novel writing. There is a tendency to take for granted the recognition of unpleasant facts, and, starting from that basis, to narrate in unvarnished, uncomplaining language the consequences of the facts. There appears to be less analysis, less exposition, than was prevalent a few years ago. Thus Mr. Maurice Baring in "Friday's Business" wastes no time philosophising over the perversity and weakness of human nature, but takes us right away into a situation where those faults are operative. Briefly "Friday's Business" tells the story of a young man's love affair set amid the political disturbances of an imaginary kingdom located in Scandinavia. The difficulties and disadvantages of such a milieu are obvious, and it must be admitted that Mr. Baring is not always successful in overcoming the sensations of unreality and general staleness that are apt to beset the political novel. The tale is told with all Mr. Baring's rare charm, and yet, despite ingenious construction and light treatment, the situations lack interest and compulsion.



From *The Prince Who Hiccapped*
By Anthony Armstrong ("A. A." of *Punch*)
(Benn).

That however is probably inevitable in the present world situation, which makes fictional politics and violence correspond to the spectacle of a military tournament witnessed during the Great War.

Strongly contrasted with "Friday's Business" is Mr. Somerset Maugham's "The Narrow Corner." This plain tale of exotic surroundings immediately arouses interest and holds it throughout. Like all Mr. Maugham's work, it is well knit, and the treatment sure and unfaltering. The characters are vividly reported, and their idiosyncrasies described with a sprightly tolerance that tempers the essential bitterness of the narration. Both Mr. Maugham and Mr. Baring choose the simplest and starkest words in which to convey their meaning, but whereas with Mr. Baring the effect produced is one of tenderness and beneficence there is something ruthless as well as direct in Mr. Maugham's brevity. It is an honest and invigorating relentlessness, but it necessarily invalidates his portrayal of sentiment.

There is a marked indication among critics to say of every first novel that it is a remarkable achievement for an initial attempt, but Miss Dunning's "Stephen Sherrin" demands such a tribute. Her study of Sherrin and the Kennedy children is a sensitive and charming piece of work.

Despite a fearless and dispassionate view of life and great skill in presentment, there is something threadbare and derivative about Mrs. Malachi Whitaker's collection of stories "Five for Silver." Perhaps the episodes are too consciously vital or subtle, while the uniformly abrupt opening tends to become monotonous. Mrs. Whitaker is at her best in "The Man with the Harelip," a tale in which the incidents are worthy of her powers of incisive vivid



Jobbernowl said very clearly and distinctly "Whennisacakenorracake?"

From *The Prince who Hiccapped*
By Anthony Armstrong ("A. A." of *Punch*)
(Benn).

description and characteristic unexpected turns of phrase. Mrs. Whitaker is not among the writers contributing to "The Furnival Book," a very representative collection of short stories issued by Messrs. Joiner & Steele. All the tales are on a high level, and have been so chosen that taken together they combine to produce unity throughout every diversity of theme. Specially good are Mr. T. F. Powys's "The Key of the Field," Mr. H. E. Bates's "The Hessian Prisoner" and Mr. John Collier's "Green Thoughts."

Rereading Miss Irwin's "Still She Wished for Company" brings home to one still more clearly her exquisite certainty and grace of expression. Indeed in the form and structure of her writing, in her combination of inborn talent with a wide and highly wrought culture Miss Irwin is unique among present-day novelists. She is one of the few, either men or women, of whom it can be said that she is a master of her art.

MEN AND WOMEN IN LOVE

The Bridge.

By Naomi Royde-Smith. 7s. 6d. (Gollancz.)

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By Edith Olivier. 7s. 6d. (Faber & Faber.)

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By Ruth Manning-Sanders. 7s. 6d. (Cobden-Sanderson.)

Which Is Bitterness.

By Beatrice Henry. 7s. 6d. (Barker.)

The Triumph of Time.

By Storm Jameson. 8s. 6d. (Heinemann.)

by Norah Hoult

Most of these novels by women writers are concerned with the personal relationship between man and woman, an eternal theme which in modern fiction is viewed from more and more subtle and complicated angles. No longer is it that he or she loves, or he or she does not love: the question is how much and how little, in what way, and for how long. And so forth. In analysing such congenial complexities, women writers have come into their heritage.

Miss Royde-Smith is a peculiarly feminine artist, interested in details rather than outlines, in personalities rather than principles. Her story, like that of others on my list, is of a liaison, but a liaison hedged about with so many subtleties, and approached with so much delay that the word in its masculine straightforwardness seems out of place.

Andra is the young wife of a timid middle-aged parson. She nearly loses her life in childbirth at the age of nineteen, with the consequence that for many years she lives a cloistered life with her husband in their country rectory. When she is in the middle thirties she goes abroad for a holiday and becomes involved with people whose standards are completely removed from those native to her. This world is free from moral taboos and petty restrictions, and though Andra feels herself to be an outsider she also feels no disposition to be shocked. On her way home she encounters in a railway compartment a French officer who is returning to his birthplace after many years' service in Africa. A three days' idyll in Avignon results, but the

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