

## Dusky Stories

**T**ROPIC DEATH (Boni & Liveright, \$2.50) by Eric Walrond gives us a cross section of life below the Gulf Stream. It is a volume of ten short stories of the neglected and colorful people of the West Indies which could not have been ventured by one who did not have his knowledge from personal experience. True to the author's standard of realism, the pictures are not altogether pleasant. His stories are not relieved by joy and mirth. Walrond has simply fished out something as it is. We can take it or leave it.

In the best of these stories there is a hint of *vers libre*. The author is a better painter with words than a narrator of tales. In fact, his tales are brilliantly colored pictures: splashes of hot, blistering sun; the flash of sharks in turbulent waters; the stain of blood on dark bodies. The reader comes away from it feeling that he has experienced something new and strange.

JOHN P. FORT

## Hugo and Humanism

**P**ROFESSOR WILLIAM F. GIESE is not a gentle critic. He is particularly acid, in VICTOR HUGO, THE MAN AND THE POET (Dial Press, \$4.00), when he says that Hugo, the man, was so devoted to his home and family that he insisted on having two, and that nothing made him feel so close to God as the inspiring presence of a *grisette*. There is hardly less acerbity in his comments on Hugo as a poet. Without question this anger is an inverted loyalty. Mr. Giese rates Hugo as the high priest of a more than questionable romanticism, and both the nature of this romanticism and of the present reaction to it become evident as the book proceeds.

The reader is reminded of Stuart Sherman's generalization that the nineteenth century spent its energies in putting man into nature and that the twentieth century had better get him out again. With Hugo, man is in nature, — in deep. Mr. Giese, stressing the physical exuberance of the poet, is in fact writing in terms of a master faculty; there is close logic in his inferences as to the results of the Hugo temperament. Such animal spirits are

necessarily personal, Hugo's and no other's; and such a man is going to be exuberant over his own importance, as Hugo was. He will be eager for effects. If one may paraphrase Emerson, things carnal are in the saddle and ride this man.

To the robustious, details are vivid. But for Mr. Giese this is not enough; he is not satisfied with images dancing about nothing; he demands a centralizing power, but finds only "a tenebrous chaos". Sainte-Beuve objected to Hugo and to many of his contemporaries in such terms. For some time, says the great critic near the end of *Port-Royal*, details have been triumphant. This should not be. The wisdom of great art is not here; its treasure does not consist of a heap of splendid barbaric fragments. There must be a unifying principle; as Mr. Giese would say, not beauties but beauty. Racine, unlike Hugo, had a sense of this inner beauty, and with finely imaginative control subordinated to this all the parts. This quality is of the spirit; those whose talent deals only with the physical are not equal to this flight of the imagination which involves a sense of a something in human nature which transcends, as it organizes, nature. When these heights are reached (let us say it, remarks Sainte-Beuve, even though there be in this an element of human illusion), then man is sovereign over things.

It has been the practice to affirm that Sainte-Beuve was spiteful to a neighbor. Now we have the same fundamental charge against Hugo in a book which comes out of Wisconsin. With Mr. Giese we are soon discussing not poetry but the universe. This is one of the charms of the book, — its implications. To all who enjoy dexterity of language this will be either a delight or an irritation which is not without an agreeable tang. Mr. Giese takes honorable position among the American humanists of whom the distinguished senior members are Irving Babbitt and Paul Elmer More. His contribution may be placed in the library beside *Romance and Tragedy*, published several years ago by the discriminating Mr. P. H. Frye. It is a comfort to have in America still another critic who so successfully reaches the core of his subject.

HORATIO SMITH

## Writing and Selling

**T**HERE was a day when writing was considered the pastime of the rich, the indolent, and the sentimental. Some people still look upon the author as a lazy devil who sits at home wielding a submissive pen while his fellows are busy earning an honest penny in the market place. Such misguided folk have not spent an evening with *THE COMMERCIAL SIDE OF LITERATURE* (Harper's, \$2.50) or *THE FREE-LANCE WRITER'S HANDBOOK* (The Writer Publishing Co., \$5.00). Writing has become a scientific business, and those whose experience and labor has gone into the making of these two volumes are well aware that if one does not lay a secure foundation, no literary structure will attain great proportions.

Michael Joseph and Grant Overton, in *The Commercial Side of Literature*, adequately describe the purpose of the volume in their subtitle, "How to Sell the Things You Write". Here is a general discussion of the whole business of writing, editing, publishing, and producing, intended to reconcile and correlate the various demands of author, publisher, and literary agent, to say nothing of the scenario writer. Since Mr. Joseph and Mr. Overton have bought and sold literary wares themselves, the question is considered from both angles, and the value of the book is not limited to budding writers in search of a publisher.

*The Free-Lance Writer's Handbook* covers a wider field, and is therefore more diversified in application. Edited by William Dorsey Kennedy, editor of *The Writer*, the volume brings together forty closely related chapters, each the work of a specialist in some department of contemporary literature. Among the contributors are John Farrar, Frederick G. Melcher, A. Hamilton Gibbs, Augustus Thomas, Mary Roberts Rinehart, Henry Seidel Canby, Ivy Lee, Katharine Fullerton Gerould, and Robert E. Sherwood. As the title implies, it is a handbook for the literary free-lance, who may be a nondescript gentleman writing anything from historical novels to Christmas greeting cards.

This thorough, competent, helpful volume, so amazing in its scope, is a distinct advance over other volumes that

have attempted to give a bird's-eye view of the practical problems of writing for publication.

DALE WARREN

## Eating Through France

**U**NTIL Curnonsky and Rouff brought out their *EPICURE'S GUIDE TO FRANCE* (Harper's, \$4.00), publishers of traveler's manuals had overlooked an extremely fertile field. Baedekers by the score have set down the "points of interest" in Paris, London, Berlin, Rome, calling attention to names, dates, and statistics of all varieties, — except one. Apparently they have been unaware that the American's chief concern, after registering at some hostelry, is to learn where the best food is to be had.

Aside from mentioning a few widely advertised establishments, most guide-books are of little or no help in matters gastronomical. For that reason, the hordes of Americans who flock to France every year patronize but a few places, where, in truth, the cuisine is not very different from that of our own Park Avenue. But there are any number of restaurants, large and small, tucked away in odd corners of Paris, where the meals are so exquisite that the diner is almost led to believe he has died and gone to Brillat-Savarin's own private heaven. The difficulty is that these places are known to only a few persons of more or less adventurous frames of mind.

The new manual for Epicures lists the best places to eat in Paris, its suburbs, and in Normandy, and two volumes yet to come will cover the remainder of France, thus making the map of Epicurea complete. It is fitting that this series should commence with Paris, for that city is not only the capital of France, but the capital of the eating world. By means of this altogether admirable book we ought not to have any difficulty at all, in enjoying the best foods that France can offer. The specialties of the house are given, together with the approximate cost of the meal. The traveler contemplating a long holiday in France cannot do better than go provided with Brillat-Savarin's *Physiology of Taste* under one arm and *The Epicure's Guide to France* under the other.

THURSTON MACAULEY