

cated a form as the sonnet, inexperienced meters are especially jarring.

THE earliest poem in J. S. Wallace's, *Night Is Ended* is dated 1909, the latest 1942 when the author was fifty-two. Born to the middle class, Wallace gave up a profitable advertising business to devote his energies to the struggles of the Canadian working class. From 1940 to 1942 he was jailed for being a Communist. Wallace knows that "freedom is a hard-won thing."

The directness, simplicity and strength of this knowledge make one overlook his occasionally banal rhymes, archaic contractions and inversions. Often his lines have a sonorous ring, as when he describes the Russian working class moving "Through the iron gates of revolution/ Into the worldwide commonwealth"; and again in these lines from "Refugees": "The sun is scuttled and the stars are sold./ Draw close for comfort for the night grows cold." There is great tenderness and great love in Wallace's poems and the inevitable obverse—deep hatred for the assassins of democracy. Sometimes there is a compassion and a restraint that approach Wordsworth's Lucy poems, as in "Don't Weep For Doris":

*Don't weep for Doris,
She doesn't know she's dead.
Born in a basement
With no sky overhead,
Living in a city slum
Till she was seven . . .
Doris in a country grave
Thinks she's in heaven.*

Although *American Child* and *Night Is Ended* are uneven, they are worth reading, chiefly because the good in them is very good indeed.

SEYMOUR GREGORY.

Wizards and Riddles

THE WHITE DEER, by James Thurber. Harcourt, Brace. \$2.50.

STUART LITTLE, by E. B. White. Harper. \$2.

THURBER is no mystery. He can be added up to a simple, correct sum or divided to a very fair denominator. The answer, by whatever method it is arrived at, proves a writer of high talents.

The White Deer is described in its blurb as "James Thurber's new world . . . a Thurber world of kings and princes and enchanted deer, of Thurber wizards and dwarfs, of perilous labors, of dark enchantments, of rhymed riddles, of false love and true. His story is a fairy

tale for grownups." Largely, the blurb is accurate.

We can ignore the question of whether or not grownups need fairy tales. They certainly can get along without the variety seen daily in the capitalist press. As for the rest, it is a matter of taste and nostalgias. *The White Deer*, as a fairy story and fantasy, is good enough for anybody, though its characters are strictly stock and its plot exists purely by allowance of the reader. Its qualitative note is the marvelous Thurber style and treatment which is at par or better.

Enthusiasts of the genre will find in *The White Deer* a welcome touch of the Marxist *Land of Oz*. It is here, only fleetingly, however, that the stubbornly anti-capitalist L. Frank Baum and the laissez-faireish Mr. Thurber meet on common ground in their lampooning of the confusions of prophets and seers. The Thurber illustrations fall short for the reason that in a land of whimsy, whimsy itself is the norm, and cannot be kidded—at least in the Thurber technique.

THURBER's former collaborator, E. B. White, has also turned to fantasy. His is directed specifically at children. Fortunately, the average child is likely to experience in this story of a talking mouse, born to a normal woman in a Saroyanish American family, little of the dismay which it engenders in the adult. Unusually bright children may, however, find its incongruities a little too much to swallow.

White's style is awkwardly arch in some places and generally tedious.

KURT CONWAY.

Stories of the South

RED, WHITE AND BLACK, by Murrell Edmunds. Ackerman. \$2.

MR. EDMUNDS' volume of twelve short stories of the South is depressing and disheartening. Five are concerned with maladjusted radicals (in one story the subject kills himself, in another he is a mental patient) who generally make futile, individualistic and unsuccessful attempts to implement ideology by action. Four of the tales deal with the miseries of insecure and "unsuccessful" people, and the remaining three tell of the seduction or rape of socially and economically dependent Negro women.

The language frequently is sophomoric, the technique somewhat stereotyped, and few of the characters stand the critical

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test of having fastened themselves upon one's memory. Least unsuccessful in these respects is the last (and longest) story, "Home to Our Mountains," which secures and retains interest up to a rather lame ending.

Significant, however, and distinctly on the credit side of the collection, is the fact that the Virginia-born author (formerly Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney), at present living in Louisiana, paints scathing pictures of the discrimination and oppression of the Negro people, and of the greed and cruelty implicit in our type of class society.

This speaks well for his courage and discernment. One hopes that in future works these virtues will be mixed with greater artistry and a more positive affirmation of the strength and power to be found in the will and aspirations of the common people. Were they as weary, confused and frightened as here depicted one would expect the neurotic and the suicide to be typical. But, of course, they are not. It is the Tojos and Himmlers who are killing themselves these days. The rest of us have so much living to do—together.

HERBERT APTHEKER.

Brief Reviews

DESERT EPISODE, by George Greenfield. Macmillan. \$1.75.

THIS is less a novel than a series of descriptive and philosophical essays joined together by a loose thread of narrative. Insofar as the descriptive passages detail the maddening discomfords of the desert—sun, sand, and the ubiquitous flies, in ascending order of torment—they are sometimes very good; but in dealing with the preparation for and the tactical execution of the battle of El Alamein, they tend to be long-winded and technical. Such as there is of the plot poses the age-old question: what is bravery? Captain Harrison, a British Army Regular whose vivid imagination feeds his intense fears, deserted his men in a moment of panic at Dunkirk. Yet he had once earned the Military Cross in a single-handed encounter with a group of armed Arabs. Later, in the first phase of the El Alamein offensive, he is an inspiration to his badly battered company. In the end, refusing to expose a runner to the enemy's deadly fire, he is killed. Was his sacrifice an act of heroism or suicidal atonement?

The author leaves the question unanswered.

Had George Greenfield expounded

less and dramatized more, he might have pared *Desert Episode* down to a fine novelette.

THE FATES ARE LAUGHING, by W. P. Crozier. Harcourt Brace. \$3.

IT IS no news to anyone that the Caesars following Augustus were feared and hated by the people of Rome, nor that life in Rome was brutal and full of uncertainties for both citizens and slaves. When such a statement is unaccompanied by any analysis of why Rome lost her original republican virtues, or what causes led to the continuation of the tyranny under which she suffered, a great deal of very commendable scholarship can be lost on a novel such as this: a novel whose characters are lifeless, whose dialogue startlingly resembles informal orations, and whose situations are melodramatic. *The Fates Are Laughing* is a dull performance.

Worth Noting

LEO HUBERMAN, author of *We, The People, Man's Worldly Goods, The Labor Spy Racket* and other important books, has become the director of the interesting new publishing venture "Pamphlet Press," which is a division of the publishing firm of Reynal & Hitchcock. For the last three years Mr. Huberman was Educational Director of the National Maritime Union, whose pamphlets were considered a model.

ALBERT EINSTEIN is aiding the new campaign of the American Committee for Spanish Freedom, which is now gathering a million signatures on petitions calling upon Congress to break relations with Franco Spain and in support of the Coffee Resolution in the House of Representatives for such a break.

THE Spingarn Medal, awarded annually to call the "attention of the American people to the existence of distinguished merit and achievement among American Negroes," was awarded this year to Paul Robeson. Marshall Field made the award for the NAACP at a dinner on October 18.

AN INTERESTING lecture course is being given Sunday nights, at the Metropolitan Music School (111 West 88th St., New York): "The Negro and His Song." The lecturers are Dr. Alain Locke and Miss Ann Dodge.

Why a Veteran's Bonus

(Continued from page 12)

service, month for month, should be applied after a veteran obtains a job, even if he has never before held the job. Here is a broader protection, which covers eighty percent of the returning servicemen. However, veterans are not aware of labor's stand on this issue.

Trade unionists have underestimated the antagonism of veterans toward organized labor, stemming from the distorted press reports of strikes during the war. Trade unionists are also underestimating the attraction of "super-seniority" to job-hungry veterans during reconversion. With the notable exception of United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers-CIO, labor has been too slow in accepting wholeheartedly and informing servicemen of the stand of their Executive Councils on veterans' seniority. "Super-seniority" is a weapon in the hands of monopolist reaction to further estrange servicemen and trade unionists. The monopolies seek to exploit the veterans' misplaced anti-labor bias, to devise more ways of creating schisms between veterans and labor, to weaken both and ultimately to destroy the trade union movement and democracy.

The bonus question can become labor's lever to upset the reactionaries and attract the veterans into paths of active collaboration. When labor wins the veterans, together they will determine the destiny of our country.

There is another aspect to the bonus question. The downward economic swing during reconversion may deepen and spiral into the depths of prolonged cyclical crisis. It can be partially averted by increasing mass purchasing power. Bonus expenditures at this time, paid for by taxing the corporations and individuals whose profits fattened during the war, can be one of the means of maintaining and augmenting the people's buying power. Increasing the home market in this manner will be the assurance that the sufferings of the working people and servicemen will be eased and erased.

In this light the bonus for veterans is more than a veterans' issue. The veterans' bonus coincides with the interests of the people of our country generally. Our capitalist production mechanism is such that a bonus for veterans is rendered an economic necessity. The white collar worker, the small businessman, the professional, as well as the industrial worker, have a vital stake in the passage of the UAW bonus proposal.

October 30, 1945 NM