

After the Happy Ending

(Continued from page 4)

ess for two years and eight months. Here is one point where the most vociferous defenders of the American system would admit (just now, at any rate) that they do some things better in Europe. As Mr. Lippmann and others have pointed out, a British or French executive who was defeated on what was so purely a question of confidence as the Reorganization Bill would have to resign. They might have added that in that case the Opposition would have to be ready to take over at once—would have to have a man and a program, neither of which the Opposition has now. If this alternative program failed to work, then perhaps Premier Roosevelt could come back with something more practical. But only alien systems permit the government such flexibility. We seem to be stuck at dead center for the moment; "business" has no confidence in Roosevelt, and it was proved a year ago last November that sixty per cent of the voters of the country (including many business men) have

no confidence in those who call themselves business men. There is no reason to suppose that since then business has gained what Roosevelt has lost.

Agamemnon writhes in his net, crippled and helpless; Aegisthus can do nothing because the Argives don't like him and he doesn't know what to do anyway. And where is the young Orestes who may come in some day to clean things up and restore some sort of equilibrium? Maybe that is his voice that was lately raised in Wisconsin; but the big Recognition Scene cannot be written just yet. His program says that "we must stop at nothing short of the necessary steps"; perhaps that is not exactly what was meant, but it is where most political parties stop, after they have prospered enough to have something to lose if they offend any large bloc of voters.

Meanwhile you can find historical edification in these five volumes; and you could read them with pleasure as drama, if you didn't know how the story came out. Perhaps the sequel, in whose first act we all now function as spear bearers, may have a happier ending.

Formula Novel

THE TIME OF CHANGE. By Louis Grebenc. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co. 1938. \$2.

*They killed a cow, they killed a hen;
They killed three pigs within a pen;
They killed a horse, and pray, what
then?*

That was not taking Stonington.

SO runs an early and once popular ballad describing the bloodless bombardment of Stonington, Conn., by a British fleet during the War of 1812. The events form the key passage of this book. It is told from the point of view of the women who stayed home and heard the cannon growl along the horizon; and so far it is good, good dialect, good picture. But the story does not advance beyond this point. It is a formula novel, written for women according to the methods recently described by Mr. Uzzell in these pages, without any emotion deeper than that produced by the manufacture of a jar of apple-butter, and the heroine a willing subject of a forward pass from one dog-like faithful man to another.

Pulitzer Prize Winner

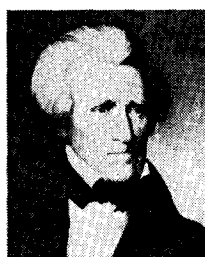
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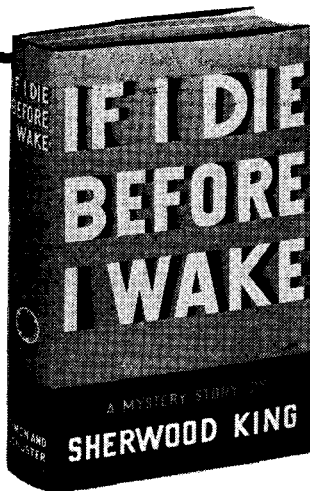


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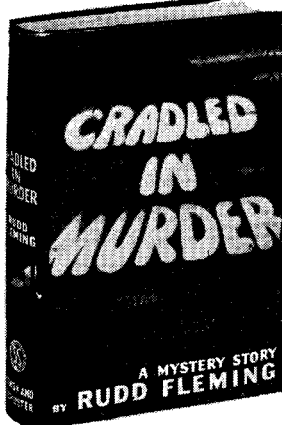
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Causes of Change

A PHILOSOPHY FOR A MODERN MAN. By H. Levy. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1938. \$2.50.

Reviewed by LEONARD BACON

THIS fascinating book was apparently written with several objects in view, one of which was to produce a maximum incidence of apoplexy in the Union League Club. At least it is perfectly adapted to the purpose. And the reviewer is not prepared to take up a quarrel on that ground.

Two-thirds of the work seem to him beyond praise, the rest as it may be. The analysis of the changing world and the exposition of the nature and cause of change will make anyone with an intellect more complex than an amoeba's pause and inquire. Clearness is a noble attribute, and Professor Levy is not only clear but fertile in illustration. A layman cannot pretend to point out where Professor Levy's thought departs from great originals. Most of the fundamental notions of the book are new to me. But I do know that his exposition of Hegelian dialectic, which most people only understand by guess or by God, is really lucid. William James's joke about fathoming Hegel only under the influence of nitrous oxide almost loses its point as the ideas are exhibited in the light of Professor Levy's deadly clarity.

His explanation of the generalized law of change is egregiously simple. Wherever change occurs the sequence will be

of this nature. An exterior force applied to a given situation produces an interior stress by which the situation is altered into a new one. Thus heat (an exterior force) is applied to water on the stove (a given situation) producing molecular agitation (an interior stress) which alters the situation into steam (a new situation). This really looks like a generalized law of change. At least anyone will sweat who can find any change which cannot be described in these terms. But it is respectfully submitted that the discovery of these factors in a complex situation is a task for Hercules. Nor am I disposed to take lying down Professor Levy's application of his dialectic to the large problems of society. It is hard to believe that the British Labor Party is necessarily the outcome of all history. As the man said, it is such a small rabbit to take out of such a large hat.

Also I wish he had not in passing taken the conventional crack at Darwin, whom for some reason Marxians feel it desirable to liquidate. It won't do to say that Darwin was wrong because he was a child of his time. As has been pointed out, Marx was a child of the same time.

Be that as it may, people ought to read the first four chapters of this book hard, particularly the fourth, "What Causes Change." But the remainder must be read with a full comprehension of the fact that the wishful thinking of a fine mathematician resembles the wishful thinking of persons whose minds are less delicately organized.

The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title and Author	Crime, Place, Sleuth	Summing Up	Verdict
THE CAIRO GARTER MURDERS Van Wyck Mason (Crime Club: \$2.)	Hugh North and Bruce Kilgour trail dangerous mass-killer from ocean liner to sandy wastes of Egyptian desert.	From sea-swept start through lush oriental high-jinks to fantastic finish on moon-lit Sahara, a swell succession of thrills.	Top-notch
THE SCARF ON THE SCARECROW Martin Joseph Freeman (Dutton: \$2.)	Mother and son sent under sod by slayer seeking "golden rod." Deducing done by Jerry Todd.	Lively, well-plotted yarn of double murder and hidden treasure with slick killer and slicker sleuth.	Better grade
MURDER IN WAITING Robert Murphy (Scribner's: \$2.)	Murder among hard-drinking set at country estate anticipated by wager of private investigator, who solves it.	Crowded incident, cryptic dialogue, and intricate solution leave reader as confused as the plot.	Exhausting
VALID OR FORGED? Lloyd L. Jones (Funk and Wagnalls: \$2.) (Non-fiction)	Practical hand-book for lawyers, bank-cashiers, and others who must keep eyes peeled for too-expert penmen.	Instructive text and revealing pictures show how science makes row of ambitious forger very hard to hoe.	Valuable
MURDERS IN SILK Mike Teagle (Hillman-Curl: \$2.)	One gent perishes in ladies' room of r. r. coach; flames consume another; shots riddle third as Pa Bixby solves puzzle.	Spry septuagenarian sleuth and raffish son star in sanguinary and slightly screwy salmagundi of silk, sex, and slaying.	Lurid