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FICTION

(Continued from page 21)

hero. That's the color, but the business of living is a struggle and a mad-cap gamble for Louis Caset and his ready-made family of wife and three stepchildren. They are homeless until they move in on a crazy woman in a rat-infested, ghost-ridden house. From then on things begin to happen at what Mr. Paul must hope is a farcical pace. It turns out all right, with love and joy and trust backed by money in the bank and the final spiritual security of the Catholic Church.

—CATHERINE MEREDITH BROWN.

THIS WAS TOMORROW. By Elswyth Thane. Duell, Sloan & Pearce. \$3. The sixth of Miss Thane's Williamsburg novels is as wholesome and nourishing as corn pone and sweet-potato pie. There is indigenous Southern flavor in the setting, although the action later switches to London and the English countryside. Young lovers are united, wicked plots foiled, villains unmasked. All's well in the worst of all possible worlds—or Europe during the four uneasy years prior to Chamberlain's visit to Munich and Hitler's rape of Prague.

This is not to damn Miss Thane's book with faint praise. It is heartening to meet a set of well-adjusted, intelligent, charming characters, fond of each other and of life. The Williamsburg Days and Spragues and their British cousins, the Campions, compose a tightly-knit clan. They enjoy big family gatherings, are fiercely loyal in times of stress, and coldly unresponsive to outsiders who threaten their solidarity. Their mutual admiration might seem narcissistic and their intermarriages eugenically unsound, were they not such nice people. You can't blame Jeff Day for loving cousin Sylvia, who is not only a great beauty but a musical comedy star. Nor can Sylvia be blamed for adoring Jeff, a gifted foreign correspondent and heir to his foster father's newspaper enterprises.

The secondary plot, which dominates the latter part of the novel, deals with the lovely but addled Evadne Campion's involvement in a crackpot religious movement. Not only does Evadne dedicate herself to saving her kith and kin but to spreading the gospel of absolute honesty, purity, and unselfishness to Nazi Germany. She wins a convert in the revolting Hermione, whose jealous possessiveness almost disrupts Evadne's romance with Stephen Sprague, Sylvia's

brother and dancing partner. Stephen's homely but likable face, talented feet, and popularity with matinee audiences remind one of Fred Astaire. His patient, forthright American wooing wins out only after Evadne has been chastened by a mad escapade in Berlin.

"This Was Tomorrow" is a sentimental novel. But it avoids stickiness by its humor, well-contrived plot, and attention to historic detail. Miss Thane's characters do not live in a vacuum. They are alert to the events of their time. We regretfully leave the Spragues fitting gasmasks in an ARP workroom, and the Days, standing by their British cousins

—RAY PIERRE.

NEITHER MAN NOR ANGEL. By Susan Seavy. Bobbs-Merrill. \$3. Miss Seavy in this novel explores the mind and career of a man who is plainly kin to the devil himself. The book is ostensibly a history of Andy Britten, through which idealistic and sensitive person we follow the narrative; but very soon it is his younger brother Paul who takes over, the book as well as the lives of those around him. Paul is the brother with no scruples, the conscious and calculating double-dealer. It is difficult most of the time to see just what it is he wants, as he scrambles over the bodies of his brother and sister and father. It may be power, or some kind of negative self-expression. In any case, he gets away with murder, quite literally, as well as such lesser crimes as seduction and perjury.

The cornerstone of all Paul's accomplishments is his ability to inspire trust, so that Andy, who is the only one to perceive the true horror of Paul's activities, must fight him alone and in the dark, able to touch him nowhere. Paul is invulnerable and the victor, for in the end it is Andy who is distrusted and rejected by the family, and who flees from the town mob which has been subtly incited against him by Paul. Certainly if this tale has any point at all it is that the serpent shall be believed, and the innocent shall flee in shame. Miss Seavy pursues her point with zeal and energy. There is life and agony in Andy, there is reality in the town and its people. But Paul—Paul fails us. In a tale like this, we want to know: what makes Paul run? We do not need to sympathize with him, but we do need to understand him. If Miss Seavy had taken some time from her devoted analysis of Andy—who does not need it—to make Paul plain, she would have made a finer and more credible novel of it. —NATHAN L. ROTHMAN.

On the Record

A Personal Choice by Edward Tatnall Canby

COMPOSITION, PERFORMER ALBUM NUMBER NUMBER OF RECORDS	Recording Technique, Surface	PERFORMANCE
	ENGINEERING	AND CONTENT

E P I C

VIVALDI: "JUDITHA TRIUMPHANS." Soloists, Chorus, Orch. Scuola Veneziana, Ephrikan. Period SPLP 533 (3)

► An excellent recording of its type, with good balance of many elements, great clarity of detail, good highs and fine drums. A typical LP-only venture — would take 15-18 of the old-style 78 discs!

More resurrected Vivaldi — an oratorio on classic lines, static, impressive, quite unlike the more dramatic Handel oratorios, more akin to Handelian opera. Absurd Latin text, little drama (Judith chops off a head), but a wealth of sturdy music, several fine voices, and a generally fine performance.

SCHUMAN: "JUDITH" (1949); "UNDERTOW" (1945). The Louisville Orch., Robt. Whitney. Mercury MG 10088

► Mercury's new U.S. recording. Technically good with excellent encompassing of terrific sounds in this music. Rather shallow liveliness, lacking perspective; miking could have been more effective.

Two big Schuman scores, both intense, ultra-taut, very serious, dramatically violent. Not easy to follow the logic of extreme dissonance here; much might be termed arbitrary, pitchwise. But emotional content is crystal-clear.

LISZT: "THE BATTLE OF THE HUNS" (SYMPHONIC POEM #11); "TASSO" (SYMPHONIC POEM #2). Munich Philharmonic, Eichhorn, Mennerich. Mercury MG 10083

► "Battle of the Huns" is a first-rate big-orch. recording, woodwinds nicely etched in clean highs, cymbals overwhelming, strings fine-spun. "Tasso," with same over-all sound, is technically weaker; cross-mod. "burble," plus apparent high cut-off. On most machines the two will be the same.

Mercury seems on way to doing all of these interesting monstrosities — an unlikely project except via LP (SRL June 5). Musical plan is about the same whatever the story: big quotas of clashing cymbals, lyric sweetness, etc. "Huns" has whopping battle music, amusing though not so intended. "Tasso," *re* mad poet, tears hair lustily.

LISZT: "A FAUST SYMPHONY." Paris Philharmonic, Alexis Vlassoff, Choir, Meyrowitz. Vox PL 6920

► A resurrected anomaly of the sort that tape and LP make common — this is the old Pathé recording (C M-272) transferred to LP, but the listed tenor is different. Label mistake? And last part (final 78 side) perhaps done in a different place. Deadish, dry acoustics (except last part), a carefully French performance. This music is far above the noisy symphonic poems, ranking surely as very greatest of this versatile composer; a piece that all Liszt-sniffers should study. Final chorus makes performances rare.

JANACEK: "TARAS BULBA" (1918). Vienna Symphony, Swoboda. JANACEK: SUITE FOR STRINGS (1877). Winterthur Symphony, Swoboda. Westminster WL 5071

► Janacek, early and late. "Taras," concerning blood-and-thunder 15th-c. Cossacks, is curiously placid, lyric in Czech manner; a colorful, loose-jointed piece, scored like later Strauss with a bare touch of modernism. Luminously if rather thinly recorded. The early String Suite is a lush and winning work to go alongside Tchaikovsky's strings, the Grieg "Holberg," the Dvorak "Serenade"; quite joyously romantic. (Kostelanetz fans will like it, too.) Superb string recording.

F O R T E P I A N O

MUSIC IN COLONIAL AMERICA. REINAGLE: PIANO SONATA. FRANCESCHINI: TRIO SONATA IN B FLAT. Arthur Loesser, fortepiano; J. Figueora, J. Margolies, vls.; J. Saunders, cello; F. Valenti, harpsichord. New Records NRLP 2006

► The 18th c. Reinagle sonata as played on a Challis fortepiano, style of 1800, is an unexpectedly significant performance and a delight to hear. The music is surprisingly good of its type, influenced by K. P. E. Bach (whom R. knew), not unlike the more contemplative Mozart. Loesser plays this style with beauty and understanding, a remarkable range of tone color and expression — surely indicating a needed revaluation of Mozart period piano. The early fortepiano, in these hands, is lovely — no better word! We will hear it increasingly without a doubt. The F. Trio-Sonata is an anomaly; it boasts a figured bass with harpsichord, but style is closer to unfigured trio of Haydn and Beethoven and it would be better thus. Simple, rather clumsy music; the dull cello part here overplayed.

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