

Continued from page 39

publisher continues to tease his readers, as in other reprints, by not stating the date of original publication; and in this book by not telling whether it was printed in Great Britain or the U.S.A.

Notes

DESPONDENT YOUNG FRENCHMAN: Jean-Louis Curtis's fifth novel, "*Lucifer's Dream*" (Putnam, \$3), indifferently translated from the French by Robin Chancellor, is tinged with existentialist despair. It is a story of the spiritually disinherited: Marceau Le Guern, born an orphan and raised until he was eighteen in a Catholic institution, never believes that the ancient and crumbling morality of prewar Europe had any claim on his allegiance. As he is handsome, it is easy for him to become Mme. Alice's gigolo; his conscience rebels sporadically, but does not force him to work. He spends most of World War II (which he finds totally meaningless) in a stalag; when it is over he returns to Alice. After he falls in love with Dominique and at last has motive enough to think of making money he finds that Alice's hold is so diabolically strong that he must kill her to be free. With this

oddly inconclusive disaster the book closes. In order to destroy evil Le Guern has had to damn himself, but the reasons why are never made clear.
—NICOLAS MONJO.

EVERYMAN'S CRIME: A first novel by Seymour Shubin, "*Anyone's My Name*" (Simon & Shuster, \$4), offers more in the way of sociological commentary than it does in esthetic achievement. Paul Weiler, writer of "fact detective" stories, is burdened with guilt because he distorts, underrates, and falsifies the life situations of the people who supply him with his material. Unfaithful to his wife, he is made to commit the unlikely murder of another lover of Claire Crisponi, the other woman who has solaced him. His prostitution of his love and his profession lead Weiler to the electric chair. The reader must content himself with the Polonius-like sententiousness of the well-worn thought that had the hero been true to himself he would not have been false to any man. But the attempt of the title to make a kind of Everyman of the protagonist is borne out by no effort in these pages to create probable or compelling situations.
—N. M.

EXPRESS FOR ETERNITY: Only a lichen-like grass covers the great valley in which the train stops, says Robert Nathan at the opening of his new fantasy, "*The Train in the Meadow*" (Knopf, \$2.75). But readers who get

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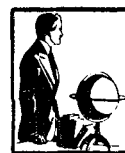
Title and Author	Crime, Place, and Sleuth	Summing Up	Verdict
A HIVE OF SUSPECTS Sheila Pim (British Book Centre: \$2.75)	Sourpuss Irish mine-owner dies untimely; actress niece is viewed askance.	Bees buzz briskly in yarn having color, charm, despite some clumsiness.	Uneven but entertaining
DEAR DEAD DAYS Jay Barbette (Dodd Mead: \$2.50)	Singing gal plunked in Midwest tangle involving fancy press setup; photographer tells yarn.	Elaborate plotting, timing make for uneasy reading; characters mixed lot.	Underexposed
THE CASE OF THE COUNTERFEIT COLONEL Christopher Bush (Macmillan: \$2.50)	L. Travers, British eye, takes on routine search that zooms into murder.	Opens nicely, but gets into heavy tangle; solution obvious early.	Overplotted, overloaded
SPINSTERS IN JEOPARDY Ngaio Marsh (Little, Brown: \$3)	Erudite Chief Insp. Alleyn, wife, child, take Riviera jaunt; death takes no holiday.	Weird cultists, dope ring, similar stock props mar typically admirable craftsmanship.	For devotees, and she has (and deserves) many
THE INNOCENT ONE James Reach (Coward-McCann: \$2.75)	Youth acquitted of sex murder in Freudian dither; lots of things happen.	Largely stream-of-consciousness; lacks fluency and suspense factor.	Clinical, frenetic, unlively

—SERGEANT CUFF.

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out and stretch their eyes as well as their legs will detect a considerable acreage devoted to that old staple, corn.

The train, of course, is the death express, pausing on its way to eternity to let the earth-bound Flyer slide by. But it, too, pauses while the authorities check passports and the like (what a view of celestial efficiency Mr. Nathan has!), and during the pause the author's imagination runs tame. Aboard the express are a couple of German refugees, a former American President, a priest (naturally ruddy), a waitress (unnaturally red-headed), a Communist, a has-been singer, a salesman who once knew the waitress, a widow, and an orphan who doesn't have a passport. The orphan gets to talking with a fragile young girl from the Flyer who gives him her papers so that he may be officially entitled to heavenly mercy and takes on herself thereby an orphan's hard lot on earth. Mr. Nathan's idea of a hero is as quaint as his notion of God.

There are moments of wit and delicacy in the conversations of his characters, but they are few and unrelated. The whole effect is that of a story that has been machined out of plastics instead of poetry; it whirrs but it wants wings. One is willing to grant fantasists privileges with all kinds of Time except one—the reader's.

—CHARLES LEE.

BLACK-AND-TAN TRAGEDY: M. F. Caulfield, an Irish journalist, has written a first novel that is both tragic and exciting. The hero of "The Black City" (Dutton, \$3) is Hugh Kelley, a member of the underground Irish Republican Army in Ulster; his hatred of the British began when the Black and Tan murdered his father. Preoccupied as he must be with terroristic plots—bombing police stations, holding up banks for funds—he and his fellows live the nervously hedonistic lives of marked men. Hugh's love for Maura Nolan cannot be kept separate from his political life; her brother turns informer and it is Hugh who must shoot him. Patriotism robs him of his love and eventually of his life. But it is not only a personal tragedy that concerns Mr. Caulfield. He has attempted to show an entire city wrenched apart in Protestant-Catholic riots. The early scenes in which he strives for a panoramic effect are weaker and more sketchy than the later ones; his authority increases as he centers his attention on Kelley's problems. But if his commentary on Irish politics is inconclusive, his concern with the effects of violence on individual men is humanely partisan and splendidly indignant. —N. M.

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