

"MISERERE," a series of engravings begun in 1914, is one of the masterpieces reproduced in **"Georges Rouault,"** by Pierre Courthion (Abrams, \$30). Without depicting actual scenes of war, these etchings powerfully project the human suffering and horror that are its legacy.



derstandably, sent out for more characters. Delivery is made in the first chapter, in which the adult Nicholas looks at some events of 1914 over the shoulder of the child Nicholas. The new people are simpler: three servants and a palpably false prophet. Indeed, the keynote of the first chapter is simplicity, embodied in the innocence of the times, the characters, and the child-observer. The threat of war seems remote. A parlor maid, fancying herself jilted, expresses herself directly by removing her clothes before going about her duties.

The people of the subsequent chapters, set on the eve of World War II, painstakingly conceal both flesh and spirit. The maid's abrupt unveiling reflects a boldness unknown in Nicholas's later years, when actions and thoughts are invariably indirect and unveilings are always mental.

These later chapters ring changes on the first. Another spurned lady breaks down, and a gentleman suffers the embarrassment of meeting his wife's former lover. Nicholas Jenkins is thrown

into the friendly company of his former mistress's former husband, and suffers at learning of the gross boundaries who were his successful rivals. A flashy *arriviste* runs away when he hears his former mistress making a Communist speech, and the husband of the second chapter loses his wife to her former lover.

Each incident discloses another aspect of past love and present regret. Other illuminations are provided, but nothing to advance a connected story and nothing to persuade us that Mr. Powell is doing more than selecting a few highlights. If the morsels of flavorful meat are still present in this latest book, they are getting harder to find because the soup is getting thicker and thicker. Less characterization is given to the important persons, and more is assumed. The plot consists of our accidentally running into them whenever the novel requires another cool glance into a jealous heart. Primarily, *"The Kindly Ones"* entertains, though it gropes and hopes to do something more.

A Web of Innocence

"The Golden Oriole," by H. E. Bates (Atlantic-Little, Brown, 204 pp. \$4), a collection of five novellas, deals with amorous, pathetic, sneaky, and touching aspects of English life today. Paul Engle is director of the program in creative writing at the University of Iowa.

By PAUL ENGLE

ALL OF these long tales reveal the unexpectedly complicated motivations of apparently simple people. "The Quiet Girl" is Maisie, a seamstress, described by H. E. Bates like this: "Her face was soft, rather dripping-colored and never really quite healthy in appearance; the skin seemed slightly greasy and the dark hair never quite adequately brushed up; her brown eyes had that downy appearance seen on moth wings."

That little mouse drives one man to suicide while she puts another rejected lover into jail. And all the time she has herself been yearning for a fast-talking, fast-traveling salesman. In the end, her quiet ruthlessness receives a quiet revenge.

Bates has always had a deft hand for the quick, diverting tale, the sort of humor that pleases without depending on pain. "Mr. Featherstone Takes

a Ride" narrates the adventures of an Oxford student hitching a ride with a truck-driver named Niggler. His astonishment begins when Niggler steals two cockerels and delivers them to two ladies at whose house he customarily spends the night when on the road. From then until the end of the ride, when Niggler gently but wickedly extracts five pounds from Featherstone, the education of the Oxford philosophy student proceeds more rapidly than it had at the university. The reader knows that Featherstone, who could ill spare the money, has been generously repaid with an insight into the flip and unscrupulous energy of life, far away from the scrupulous world of exact logic and cold thought.

No one does this sort of thing better than Bates. Although the stories lack the serious intent of his excellent war novel, *"Fair Stood the Wind for France,"* they have an accurate feeling for the cursed human race and a cool concern for pettiness, folly, and moral weakness, a subdued recognition of the desperate needs that excite apparently calm lives.

Perhaps the most touching story is "The Ring of Truth." George Pickard discovers the town in which his pathetic father had found the only emotional solace in his life. He also learns of the dark deception that his mother had committed. Caught thus between

the similar ordeals of his father and mother, he has the sudden strength to strike out on his own and find his salvation. The irony is, he finds it precisely where his father had, and with the same person.

H. E. Bates is a skilful teller of tales in the conventional manner. These are not stories that will draw blood, for they are the work of a writer who is an entertainer, in the very best sense of that word. Bates diverts and, in doing so, accepts the limitations of that effort. He gives away the point of his stories—as in “The Quiet Girl,” when he says of Maisie, “It seemed likely that some day something or someone would touch her and she would respond like a rampant charge of electricity”—but the novellas will amuse and gratify as much solemn fiction does not.

FROM BETA TO BOP: “Hard work,” Professor Coleman rules dogmatically, is the sure way, and only way, to happiness. So he thrusts a Greek grammar into the hands of his son Jeremy and orders him to learn it and like it. But to the boy there is no happiness except at the piano, and, what makes his musical passion even more offensive to his father, he plays not classics, but jazz.

The father, his sister Eleanor, and his son, plus an additional narrator for a single chapter, tell this story, one after another, in “Strike the Father Dead,” by John Wain (St. Martins, \$4.95). The boy feels he must break away from the onerous double discipline of home and school. His first step is a misstep; and he turns eighteen, a full two years older, before the desire for independence and the courage to strike out for it revive. A woman, always a woman, tempts him to abandon his father’s tested precepts, take up bravely the only way of life that matters to him, and exchange the stodgy classroom for nightclub and concert hall. But it is an American Negro, named Percy, to whom he owes his maturity as pianist and as man.

The boy’s first encounters with sex, alcohol, dance bands, and the problem of earning a living are comical and pathetic, too. He makes wrong turnings, he falters, he fumbles. Lucille isn’t quite what he thought a woman would be; Percy isn’t exactly the embodiment of his ideal of a friend; Tim is a baffling mixture: good, indifferent, unprincipled. In the end success and happiness come after hard work in jazz—much as they might have in Greek.

The clumsy technique of alternating narrators handicaps even an experienced novelist like this Englishman. But Jeremy’s search for the one right way for Jeremy makes a moving story.

—W. G. ROGERS.



Criminal Record



LONG RUN SOUTH. By Alan Williams. *Little, Brown.* \$3.95. English ex-reporter journeys to Morocco in search of adventure and finds plenty; death by violence abounds, as do echoes of Algerian war; much mint tea absorbed. Fine exotic noisemaker.

TRUST THE SAINT. By Leslie Charteris. *Crime Club.* \$3.50. The perdurable Simon Templar here functions effectively in half a dozen exploits carried through in London, Paris, Hamburg, Scotland, Sweden, Denmark.

THE BABE WITH THE TWISTABLE ARM. By Hampton Stone. *Simon & Schuster.* \$3.50. Gibby and Mac (New York assistant D.A. and pal) go into action when pair of murders breaks; downshaking cop in cast. Rough and tumble.

DEATH FOR SHORT. By John Gale. *Macmillan.* \$2.95. Here we go again with a British tale in which a euphoria-producing drug is the villain; casualties occur. Tongue-in-cheek job moves right along.

NEVER KILL A CLIENT. By Brett Halliday. *Torquil-Dodd, Mead.* \$3.50. Mike Shayne, rufous-pated Miami eye, commutes to L.A. on job but hustles back East when corpse turns up in his office and secretary turns up missing. Author’s 44th job with this hero, 1939-62. (Circulation breakdown on page 26 of tale.)

MURDER IN MINNESOTA. By Walter N. Trenerry. *Minnesota Historical Society.* \$3.95. This collection of true cases (1858-1917), fifteen strong, is as authentic history as wars, depressions, and Presidential elections. Let’s have one of these fine jobs from each of the other 49 states.

NO BUGLES FOR SPIES: Tales of the OSS. By Robert Hayden Alcorn. *McKay.* \$3.95 This is not so much an assemblage of “tales” as it is a brief history of the organization, exploits, and decline of the Office of Strategic Services, with several excellent case histories (author held high-ranking post). A fast-moving and important book.

DESPERATE MEN. By James D. Horan. *Doubleday.* \$5.95. These “revelations from the sealed Pinkerton files” were first published in 1949; present edition is much enlarged. James Brothers, Younger Brothers, and numerous others are protagonists in this excellent

chronicle of the West’s great outlaws.

FIVE FAMOUS TRIALS. By Maurice Moiseiwitsch. With commentaries by Lord Birkett. *New York Graphic Society.* \$4.95. Two 19th- and three 20th-century great British murder cases (Morrison, Maybrick, Brides-in-the-Bath Smith, Wallace, and Bartlett) are here deftly summarized, with extracts from testimony and notes by a leading barrister.

SECOND COUSIN REMOVED. By Simon Troy. *Macmillan.* \$3.50. Demise of English small-time civic leader imperils widow, two children, and wooer; fine local cop is big factor in brisk yarn.

THE RED STOCKINGS. By Pete Fry. *Roy.* \$2.95. Pete Fry, London eye (must be related to author), gets tangled in Foreign Office affairs, takes trip to Amsterdam, Hamburg; two die. Heavily diluted with conversation.

OF UNSOUND MIND. By Harry Carmichael. *Crime Club.* \$3.50. Seven seemingly unrelated suicides stir curiosity of John Piper, London insurance assessor, and his buddy, Quinn of *Morning Post*. Highly ingenious performance.

THE DEMONIACS. By John Dickson Carr. *Harper & Row.* \$3.95. Mid-18th-century London is scene of our author’s latest period piece, in which Laurence Sterne and Henry Fielding’s brother John are characters. There are enlightening terminal “Notes for the Curious.”

FIVE SPY NOVELS. Selected and introduced by Howard Haycraft. *Doubleday.* \$5.95. Oppenheimer, Buchan, Ambler, Albrand, Coles (1920-1958) are here represented by full-length tales selected by a ranking expert. Choice omnibus.

THE DEAD PAST. By Jean Scholey. *Macmillan.* \$3.95. Murder of Englishman in Tanganyika hands authorities with scanty resources a knotty problem. Background admirable in first mystery by this author, but story is largely formula.

DEATH AND CHICANERY. By Philip MacDonald. *Crime Club.* \$3.50. Quartet of yarns (three serialized 1958-1960) takes in California, Outer Mongolia. Nice handling by an old pro.

—SERGEANT CUFF.