

When Jurenito attempts to outdo the destructive powers available to the Europe of World War I by creating a super-weapon, he is tactfully advised to "save it for the Japanese." When he prepares a poster inviting citizens of the capitals of Europe to "A SOLEMN PERFORMANCE OF THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TRIBE OF JUDAH—including . . . TRADITIONAL POGROMS . . . plus BURNING OF JEWS, BURYING OF SAME ALIVE, AS WELL AS MODERN METHODS OF 'EVACUATION,' et cetera," he is immediately chided by a disciple for his cynicism.

He lectures a commissar on freedom: "You are destroying freedom; that is why I salute you . . . A day will come when 'freedom' will be the revolution-

ary slogan of boys in their last year at school, and from it . . . will come flying the magnificence and all the thousand vestments of the world you're building today. . . . But for the present 'freedom' is the consecration of all the world's refuse heaps. . . . If you don't shoot me I'll collaborate with you to the full: that is, I shall destroy beauty and freedom of thought, feeling and action . . . in the name of a unified, lawful and correct organization of mankind."

IN this novel Ilya Ehrenburg is the equal in rebellious imagination of Yevtushenko, Voznesensky, or just about any of the young turks now writing in Russia—or, for that matter, of their American counterparts.

survive the months on the Ark. After the landing on Mount Ararat, they settle with two of Noah's grandsons and, two by two, begin repopulating the world.

The parable, however, is less central than are the matters of "frivolous gloss": the gradual growth of the girls' awareness, the comic portraits of Noah and his family, the sense of kinship and of difference between man and animal, the mixture of good and evil in man before the flood.

At one point while on the Ark the twins are discussing the nature of God and the cause of the deluge. Niss, the more sensitive and dependent of the two, asks the questions that her sister, Fan, cannot answer.

"But you must have a theory," insisted Niss.

"No. I haven't enough facts to form one. It was damned lucky for us. That's all."

Niss was not satisfied with this. It was very reasonable but she would have liked Fan to have had a theory even if she had found it difficult to explain.

Niss never is fully satisfied, for Garnett never provides an answer, never pushes his parable into the confines of a concrete moral. Rather, his "meaning" lies in the grace, the tone, the gallantry of human response to unanswerable floods and dilemmas.

Katzenjammers in Antarctica: Philip Benjamin's *Quick, Before It Melts* (Random House, \$4.95) is one of those square-pegs-in-military-circles novels where laughs are sparked by rubbing misfits against strict military discipline. See *Here, Private Hargrove*, *No Time for Sergeants*, and *Don't Go Near the Water* are three other such works that come to mind at this writing; a little thought could easily lengthen the list.

This time out, the setting is the Antarctic during the International Geophysical Year; the service involved is the peacetime Navy. The Katzenjammer kids are Oliver Cannon, a fumble-footed reporter for *Sage* magazine, and Peter Santelli, a photographer who calls to mind Ensign Pulver of *Mister Roberts* and video's Sgt. Bilko—not to mention any half-dozen of those interchangeable boyish types that Jack Lemmon seems so determined to play *ad infinitum*. The thin plot line, strong enough to support a series of improbable incidents, concerns Oliver's need to dig up a sensational story for his magazine from the frozen quiet of the Antarctic continent.

Mr. Benjamin tells it all in a relaxed, easygoing manner that may not have the reader rolling on the floor but will not put him to sleep, either. Now and again traces of master humorists

Noah's Stowaways

Two by Two: A Story of Survival, by David Garnett (Atheneum, 144 pp. \$3.50), parables the story of the Ark. James Gindin, who is an associate professor of English at the University of Michigan, is the author of "Postwar British Fiction."

By JAMES GINDIN

ALTHOUGH the movies would indicate that much contemporary British writing deals directly with social issues, a number of recent British novels are parables or fables. Angus Wilson has written a fable of the animal kingdom in *The Old Men at the Zoo*; Iris Murdoch has injected bits of fairy tale, parable, and mystic symbol into the complex structures of her novels; William Golding's four widely heralded novels are all fables. Now, David Garnett, a writer long distinguished for his literary reminiscences and for his sophisticated novels about love, has published a parable, *Two by Two*, subtitled "A Story of Survival."

Although the parable attempts to underline what is enduring or significant about all men, each writer gives his parable something of his own insight, his own literary quality. Whereas Golding's fables sometimes seem locked in the machinery of their own metaphysic and Angus Wilson's proliferate to allow a vast range of detail analogous to contemporary society, Mr. Garnett's parable is graceful and witty, marked by the same compassion and unsentimental gentleness, clarity and compression that



David Garnett—"graceful and witty."

characterized earlier novels by him like *Aspects of Love* and *A Net for Venus*.

In a brief preface to *Two by Two* Mr. Garnett states that the novel "was conceived as a frivolous gloss upon the most charming story in the Bible," but that "a parable kept pushing its way in." This statement accurately represents the unpretentious tone of the novel.

A pair of twin girls, after eluding both the predatory primeval hunter and the organized slave market, sneak aboard Noah's Ark disguised as woolly monkeys in order to escape the general deluge. Befriended by lions, tigers, and snakes (if not by the monkeys), they

creep into the text to offer glimpses of the author's early mentors. S. J. Perelman comes to mind when Philip Benjamin writes: "... we talked of Trivia, a small emerging nation in Central Africa." And the arrival scene at McMurdo Sound, when their vehicle driven by a Lieutenant Partridge goes dead, offers a bit of dialogue out of the heyday of the Marx Brothers:

"Guess we ran out of gas," Partridge said.

"Come now," Santelli said, "that's an old dodge."

In spite of the fact that I was slowly freezing to death, I managed to gasp, "It looks more like an old Ford to me."

Despite the predictability of how all the high jinks must come out, and despite the familiarity of this type of novel, *Quick, Before It Melts* makes for a pleasant evening's reading. It is not "a very funny novel," as the publisher insists on labeling it, but it is fun.

—HASKEL FRANKEL.

Nanny and the Moonrakers: Pamela Frankau may not have meant to offer a guessing game as bonus, but the reader of *Sing for Your Supper* (Random House, \$4.95) will enjoy deciding whose story is to be continued in the next two volumes of the projected trilogy, *Clothes of a King's Son*.

One suspects it will be one of the male characters. Out, then, must go the nanny, Blanche Briggs, whose beautifully understated emotions at the beginning and the end of a fateful summer form the opening and closing scenes of the novel. Out also go Rab, the touching young American tomboy, and her mother, Paula, who become Nanny's charges in a real sense during the brief and intense period at the seaside.

This leaves Nanny's employer, Philip Weston, and two of his three children, for whom Nanny has always provided, during school holidays, their only sense of safety. Philip, a sort of upper-class version of the Entertainer, is chief actor and playwright of a makeshift revue called *Moonrakers of 1926*, currently running at the Fundrome on the pier. Though his lightning shifts of personality are understandably presented, he is clearly not the author's hero.

Each of Philip's children deserves a full-scale study. Sarah, like her brothers, is secretly struggling with a problem created by essential homelessness. She has a history of vulnerability to young women who seem to be all that she is afraid she will never become; and she falls in love with an "artiste" in her father's company. Gerald, the older brother, imaginative, witty, sympathetic, is torn between the Oxford education his talents demand—now made possible by



"—Now, taking a look at this morning's traffic situation, all highways leading into the city are jammed and moving very slowly, with considerable delay at the bridges and tunnels. Traffic is at a complete standstill on the expressway as a result of construction and there's a major tie-up on—"

his father's marriage to Paula—and his own private compulsion to fill his pockets with cash by methods out of bounds for gentlemen. Even at sixteen he seems too lost to be chosen.

So only Thomas is left—a square-looking ten-year-old with tousled yellow hair, uncommunicative most of the time but prone to sudden violence when his loyalties are in question. His problem is how to deal with the occult gifts he has inherited from his grandmother. The supranormal phenomena discreetly revealed by the author suggest a future with enough peril and possibility to fill a trilogy.

Miss Frankau, a conscious craftsman, has presented a cast of characters who never once speak or act out of key with what they are: servant or aristocrat,

child or adult, or (most difficult of all) British or American. In her autobiography, *Pen to Paper*, Miss Frankau describes a novel in progress as a "mountain to climb, with a story line like a rope made fast to a belay on the other side." Whether or not the most inspired works are written with endings so firmly forecast, Miss Frankau here climbs steadily to a superb one.

Nanny has said an outwardly calm goodbye to her children as they are swept off to dubious prospects in America. After stopping to pick up nightgowns to mend for a lady to whom she is a supercharwoman during her off-seasons, Blanche makes her quietly agonized way home, where there awaits her what no reader can fail to recognize as the one gloriously right eventuality.

—HOPE HALE DAVIS.

Coming February 15th

Education Supplement

"A Word of Advice to Overanxious Parents—
Get off Johnny's Back!"

By Lewis M. Magill,

Chairman of the Committee on Academic Standing
at Washington State University