lion of 1848-9; the effect is to make the events pleasantly remote in time and place, the characters fashionably charming in dress, manners and accent, and the poetry natural if rather less lyrical than usual.

Dominating the play is the Countess Rosmarin Ostenburg. In faith, hope and charity she holds her course with devastating and irresponsible purpose. An anarchist at heart, she inexorably demolishes the arguments of convention and expediency before they are uttered. "Lives make and unmake themselves in her neighbourhood as nowhere else." She has, therefore, allowed her daughter to marry the prodigal Richard Gettner, and with equal lack of dismay, to divorce him in favour of the impeccable Count Peter. She shatters her friends by harbouring Gettner, now a deserter, from the Hungarians, and by acquiescing in the detention of Count Peter in his place. When fortune fails the Hungarians, she harbours them in their turn. Inviolate, she dies with whimsy on her lips, and Gettner, until now a rationaliser in favour of personal comfort, takes his stand beside her to repel the intruders.

Such is the translation of Fabre's butterfly, finding its way through a dense wood in storm and darkness "in a state of perfect freshness, its great wings intact. The darkness is light enough." In so far as it gives purpose, the comparison is good: more often one is reminded of Mr. Fry's analogy of comedy as a dance in which, "groaning as we may be, we trace the outline of the mystery." Certainly not tragedy, the play moves significantly to point its moral, but not always with complete economy: minor characters have a habit of getting in the way, situations are unresolved, the attention is distracted. This is not to say that the play is not effective theatre—a duel, a shooting, a straying of affection add interest: but concentration is achieved by a rather summary dismissal of minor characters, not necessarily arising from the action. And one wonders in what sense the love for Gettner into which the Countess hopes to be "elected" differs from the universal charity she has exercised.

These things admitted, *The Dark is Light Enough* is most moving. The poetry has the charm one has come to expect.

> Summer would end, surely, but the year fell
> For my sake, dying the golden death
> As though it were the game to put
> Hands over my eyes and part them suddenly
> When primroses and violets lay
> Like raindrops on a leaf
> In the beginning of Spring,

and

> Since no words will set us free . . .
> Music will unground us best
> As a tide in the dark comes to boats at anchor
> And they begin to dance,

adorn this "Winter Comedy," along with much else. And above all, the Countess will go down in history as one of the great female characters.

—J. R. Tye

SLIGHTLY INTERESTING

PROOF OF VICTORY, by Mary Mitchell; Methuen. THE CROSS ROADS, by Jaspar Sayer; Jonathan Cape. English price 12/6. VOICES IN THE HOUSE, by John Sedges; Methuen. English price 10/6. INTRIGUE, by Christopher Veiel; Hamish Hamilton. English price 12/6.

SLIGHTLY interesting only: for, though three of the quartet are quite agreeably written, and the fourth quite skilfully slung together, there is not a single idea worthy of the name in the whole lot. So this column must be addressed simply to people who have time to fritter, not to the busy reader out for mind-food.

Mary Mitchell's *Proof of Victory* is the most human of the four books, though the edged wit which made *A Warning to Wantons* almost a memorable work, has here given way to a woollier but warmer wordiness. The theme is love, and the rejection of love, in a very ordinary Australian family, and the story flows along pleasantly enough in the conventional way. There are one or two characters who are *not* stock types: the mother who has been outgrown by her daughters is not without wounded dignity; and the shaggy, lonely old man whom one of these daughters befriends is another character on his own. For the rest, there are go-getters and failures: censorious matrons and easy-going maids, an Italian greengrocer with a jealous wife, and all the other concomitants of a small up-country town. Miss Mitchell is, perhaps, fonder of the town than of the people, thus making it more real: when she has to cope with anything so vast and amorphous as Melbourne, even her skilled hand falters, and manages to convey little else save unreality.

The Cross Roads, by Jaspar Sayer, is a novel about the permanently bewildered upper middle classes in England who can't make up their minds how best to spend their meagre cash. The hero, Richard Tendring, is hag-ridden by what seems to him a vital necessity, a good pre-and-public school for his boys. If you are English enough to grant that this *is* a necessity, you will be able to enter sympathetically into his angonies when, as a fairly high up civil servant, he is confronted with a crass American willing to pay him five thousand pounds for secret information. But, if you don't imagine that the world's leaders can only be reared in certain places, and speak with certain accents, you will (as I did) find the whole business curiously unreal. The death of married passion between Richard and his wife is a matter of more general interest: but the author has nothing at all original to add upon this saddening theme. He can only tell us rather portentously that, among timid and rather tapewormish humans, passion is never very real anyhow.

Voices in the House, by John Sedges, is also about married love, this time in America. A story of gracious living in Vermont troubled by a set of difficult servants, it seems destined to make quite a neat slick film: and *then*

(continued on next page)