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BOOKS

(continued from previous page)

with anecdote, uncanny stories and travellers' tales, reminding us again that the Victorian was eminently an age of adventure.

—David Hall

RECENT THRILLERS

FORTUNE IS A WOMAN, by Winston Graham; Hodder and Stoughton. English price, 10/6. **THE DUBLIN NIGHTMARE**, by Philip Lorraine; Hodder and Stoughton. English price, 7/3. **FOUR ROUNDABOUTS TO HEAVEN**, by John Bingham; Victor Gollancz. English price, 9/6. **AMBUSH FOR THE HUNTER**, by F. L. Green; Michael Joseph. English price, 12/6. **THE THREE INNS**, by Ralph Inchbald; Hodder and Stoughton. English price 10/6.

FOUR of these five thrillers are outstanding, and the fifth is good on a lower grade. In *Fortune is a Woman*, Winston Graham, a newish writer whose *Night Without Stars* has been filmed, shows that a thriller can be plausibly constructed round acceptable characters, and well written throughout. He is an exceptionally good story-teller. A young Englishman, unemployed and at odds with life, helps a strange woman on the road, finds his feet in the war, takes up insurance adjustment in London, meets the woman again in the course of business, and falls in love. Arson in her country house, with her semi-invalid husband dead in the ruins, puts him in the double position of suspecting her and being suspected himself. The action is exciting and the dénouement tense. There are interesting glimpses into a line of business I have not met in fiction before.

In *The Dublin Nightmare* one is taken into a much more violent world, one of Communist plotting and counter-plotting, of murder and perilous pursuit. This, too, is a well-written story, and in contrast to books of the same kind laid in England the Irish characters and idiom have an exotic attraction.

John Bingham, who made his name with *My Name is Michael Sibley*, has written a crime thriller in which there is no detection. In *Four Roundabouts to Heaven*, the whole advance and retreat process by which the main character, a man of ordinary humane impulses, comes to plan the murder of his wife, is laid bare to the reader, partly through the eyes of a close friend

who is in love with the woman the other covets. This is an ingenious study of a man who could kill but not hurt; at one point the plot turns on his avoidance of a cat on the road. Psychologically, it is an impressive tale, but the view of the corrupting power of evil is rather horrifying.

F. L. Green died recently, so *Ambush for the Hunter* may be his last book. It takes its title from the planting of a Communist woman spy in England in the guise of a much-publicised victim of Communism, with designs on the secrets of a young English research chemist. She is helped by an English civil servant who, however, has the grace to withdraw on the edge of the abyss. The means by which she is detected and thwarted, and the psychological elements involved in the struggle, are set forth in a highly exciting tale, the enjoyment of which is enhanced by the variety and vividness of the characters. To many, the most interesting feature will be the exposition of the motives that draw a certain type of intellectual to Communism.

Ralph Inchbald's second Colonel Paternoster novel presents such well-known types as the tweedy, pipe-smoking, cool-headed Englishman, the eccentric of both sexes, and the villainous foreigner. There is hectic and dirty work among present-day smugglers on the Cornish coast—caves and secret passages, contraband, power-boats, and beauty in distress.

—A.M.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A DUTCHMAN AT LARGE, by Johan Fabricius; Heinemann, Australian price 21/-. The memoirs of a Dutch novelist whose work has long been popular with English readers.

MY LIFE'S HISTORY, by Grandma Moses; Andre Deutsch, N.Z. price 21/-. The autobiography of the remarkable woman who began to paint at 78, and whose work has brought her wealth and fame. There are 16 full colour reproductions.

KANGRA PAINTING, with an introduction and notes by W. G. Archer, and *Japanese Colour Prints*, from Harunobu to Utamaro, with introduction and notes by Wilfred Blunt (Faber and Faber, 12/6 each), are two valuable additions to the Faber Gallery of Oriental Art.

COMING ROUND THE BEND,

With Denis Glover

I HAVE always admired the independence and complete self-possession of elderly women who are widows, whose children will have either died or dispersed, who have known love, anger and sorrow, and who have emerged triumphantly with a true appreciation of a cup of tea, and the necessity of wearing black.

A WOMAN will never be satisfied when she tries to fashion man after her own image.

MANY things which used to be simple good manners are now Law. How difficult it is to enforce either.

A SMALL boy gravely informed me that the North Island and the South Island are two pieces of land separated by the Union Company.

TOO many people only live together in order to share one another's miseries.

MANY an argument can be ended by saying, "You don't need mountain-eering boots on the flat."

OH, Johnny Gay, they say today,
It may be a great pity
But the world has proved
It's better to be wise than witty
And never to have loved.
—Clearly it's your duty
To spend no time on rhyme
Or love or beauty.

WHEN a man from the bush said that after West Coast weather 'the sun was splitting the winter trees.' I thought of many poets who are too preoccupied to cut their wives' kindling.

WHY do we still refer, in this so-called machine age, to "manu"-facturers?

OUR men are always Secret Agents. The enemy can only run to spies. Communists mount a podium: democrats deliver from a dais.

N.Z. LISTENER, JULY 24, 1953.