

Book Record

Conducted by "ANTAR"

WEEK END—WITH MURDER



Blood—More or Less —in a Quartet of Detective Tales

comes not so much from the blood-spilling as from the effect it has upon Val Jardin and her romance with dead Solly's son. So skilfully has Ellery Queen drawn her restless panic and doubt that he has contrived to write not merely a detective story, but a detective story with real and very vivid people in it.

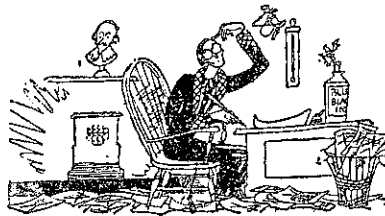
"The Devil to Pay" is a novel that will satisfactorily bristle the scalp of any ordinary detective-story reader, but will also win admiration from the literary-minded. I can recommend it unreservedly.

"The Devil to Pay," by Ellery Queen (Gollancz, London). Our copy from the publishers.

Journalistic Pen

REAL people also move through the pages of the second book, "They Almost Escaped," although this is no novel. It is a collection of actual murder cases, related only by a common theme. Each story tells of some tiny detail which the murderer overlooked and which ultimately was to bring retribution.

As crime correspondent for the



"Evening Standard" for several years, the author, Mr. Percy Hoskins, very quickly made his name. And his journalistic excellence is proven by his mastery of the concise and forceful phrase and by the clarity with which he presents his material. The most complicated cases are laid before the reader with telling simplicity.

"They Almost Escaped" is an engrossing study of Scotland Yard methods—a mine of interesting and surprising information. These real-life crimes are as frightening and twice as tragic as most fiction.

"They Almost Escaped," by Percy Hoskins (Hutchinson, London). Our copy from the publishers.

Got Its Effects.

CLIVE RYLAND'S "So Death Came" has not the vivid quality of "The Devil to Pay" or the surety of "They Almost Escaped." It is a thriller of no particular distinction and of rather laboured construction. Mr. Ryland even went to the trouble of annotating all his solutions at the end of the book,



with page numbers referring back to the related clues. I cannot claim to have made the most of this service, but then annotated Shakespeare cured me of footnotes many long years ago.

Nevertheless, at the end of this novel I did feel quite absurdly scared. Though it is a conventional and uninspired murder tale, it somehow manages to get its effects. It is, indeed, as good as the average story of its type, and might fill in a dull afternoon very entertainingly.

"So Death Came," by Clive Ryland (Hutchinson, London). Our copy from the publishers.

Amateur Sleuth

FOURTH of my week-end murder books comes "Mr. Pendlebury's Second Case," in which Anthony Webb again brings his elderly little amateur on the scene of crime. Mr. Pendlebury is as charming and talkative as ever, and his shrewd observation once more wrecks the plans of a dangerous criminal. Sometimes the reader will find the old gentleman's digressions as irritating as the police did, but they will forgive him much for his boyish eagerness and good temper.

It is a pity Mr. Webb did not build his plot as carefully as he built the character of Mr. Pendlebury. There are plenty of holes in the tale, and the denouement comes rather too leisurely. However, this book, too, will find its public and wile away a pleasant hour or two.

"Mr. Pendlebury's Second Case," by Anthony Webb (Harrap, London). Our copy from the publishers.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

AS plot for another romantic thriller, Captain Pollard has chosen espionage, with more than a dash of love. "Flanders Spy" is all about a flight-lieutenant in the R.A.F. who, in trying to solve the mystery of an uncle's murder, falls into a pretty tangle of international intrigue. A beautiful woman spy suspect is also entangled.

"Flanders Spy," by Captain A. O. Pollard, V.C., M.C., D.C.M. (Hutchinson, London). Our copy from the publishers.

IF it is possible to discern any general change in the technique of the hundreds of detective-story writers who are determined never to let old ladies rest quiet in bed at night without first poking underneath, then one might perhaps note recently a tendency to swing from the domain of melodrama into near-reality.

Far from gone are the days when novelists' sleuths could tell, from one single keen glance at an apple paring, that it was peeled off a decayed fruit by a tall, dark woman with a pink frock and no right arm. The Sherlock Holmes tradition still survives, and in good health, but I imagine that before long the less spectacular detective is going to come into his own. Readers of detective novels are not so excited as they once were by startling and wholly unforeseen exposures in the last page but one: many of them prefer to be given more clues earlier and to work out their own solutions of the crime.

However that may be, in four tales of sleuthing which I read lately I have found myself never so hopelessly tangled as usual in a confusion of red herrings and false logic. It is encouraging. I feel the authors are not being quite so niggardly with their clues—or perhaps it is merely that I am growing smarter at seeing into their minds.

New Ellery Queen.

EASILY the most outstanding of my quartet of "thrillers" is a new Ellery Queen novel, "The Devil to Pay." Mr. Queen is one of the very, very few authors who achieved success early and then worked to merit it. His first books were original in treatment and amusing; but Mr. Queen was not content with selling them. From unconventional writing he evolved a style, and then a good style, until this latest effort takes its place as one of the best-written detective novels published.

Like the condensed, vigorous writing of the book, its plot is clean in line and gripping in interest. From the murder of the unscrupulous money-spinner, Solly Spaeth, to the unmasking of his killer the pace never slackens—although half of the dramatic effect