

BOOK RECORD

Post-War German Scene By Noted Author, Hans Fallada

When Poverty Stalked The Whole Land And France Occupied The Ruhr

Three notable books are reviewed on this page to-day: Hans Fallada's "Wolf Among Wolves," a vivid and provocative picture of immediate post-war Germany; "The Story of a Lake," a "modern" tale with which Negley Farson follows his big success, "The Way of a Transgressor"; and "Entanglement," a clever study in which George Buchanan thoughtfully analyses, through his mixed characters, the effect of to-day's unrest upon "ordinary people."

HANS FALLADA'S notable new work deals with that chaotic period in Germany a few years after the War, when the mark was worthless; poverty and unrest stalked the land, plotters were planning the first putsch, and when "the French still occupied the Ruhr with their black troops and not a man was working there, not a single factory stack was smoking." Yet the depressing scene that unfolds "Wolf Among Wolves" might well, I imagine, reflect the "inside Germany" of to-day.

Outstanding

Be that as it may, "Wolf Among Wolves" emerges as one of the outstanding contemporary novels. It was first published in Germany in September, 1937, but did not appear in English until October of last year, when it created an immediate sensation and added immeasurably to the completely established reputation of the brilliant author of "Little Man, What Now?", "Once We Had a Child," etc.

There are few authors who have the same power as Fallada for creating atmosphere so realistic as to be almost uncanny, and for making his characters actually live upon the printed pages. He spares nothing, yet at no stage in his lengthy and involved narrative

does he mar his continuity or show the slightest evidence of striving for effect. For his characters are real, living people who need no false bolstering from him.

The Characters

In "Wolf Among Wolves," the principal characters are Wolfgang Pagel, former lieutenant of the German army, and Petra, his unlucky mistress, whom he has taken from the streets. Caught up they are in the misery, the intrigue, the tragedy of post-war Germany.

They are, however, but two people in a gripping narrative crowded with clear-cut figures representing an oil-and-water age, with the spirit of old militant, class-conscious Germany conflicting harshly with the new German unrest; in a picture of "a time that is both recent and yet entirely eclipsed."

In a brief preface ("which can be glanced through in a moment in any bookseller's") the author warns his public that "Wolf Among Wolves" deals with sinful, weak, sensual, erring, unstable men, the children of an age dis-jointed, mad and sick. But it presents also some upright and courageous people. All in all, it is a book for those who are, in every sense, adult.

And, all in all, it is a great book by one of the great writers of our time.

Story Of A Lake

READERS of Negley Farson's first, highly-successful novel, "The Way of a Transgressor" were no doubt eagerly anticipating his next. It has arrived—"The Story of a Lake."

I gather that to some extent this story of an American newspaper correspondent in Europe (head-quarters London) is biographical. It is in three distinct scenes which are well enough knit together to make an intriguing whole. The title comes from the fact that the focal point of the narrative is a lake in British Columbia, to which haven of retired colonels, fortune-hunters, and forgotten and forgetting men, hero Tony Lynd retires after a life of adventure, acute alcoholism and amatory upheaval, and complete disillusionment.

In the story of his attempts to divide his love between his wife and two other women, one a passionate White Russian, the other a hard-headed Australian, he intermingles some caustic comments upon the inner workings of international politics, and he paints a particularly enlightening and depressing picture of New-Deal America, to which he returns after a blustering "newspaper boss" has made his London job untenable.

A curious mixture, "Story of a Lake" is well written, and while they may not like some of his characters—the hero in particular on occasions—Negley Farson's admirers will welcome his latest. We leave Tony Lynd contemplating a new and less hectic existence on the shores of the lake; which suggests a sequel.

IT is, paradoxically, our misfortune that in these days of general literary competence, a first-class novel is apt to be lost in the welter of readable stuff that pours from the publishers. One of this type is "Entanglement," by George Buchanan, a novelist whose clear vision is allied with a meticulous handling of prose.

Through the lives of forty odd characters drawn from varying social strata, Mr. Buchanan presents a picture of England in the very present tense, an England of social insecurity and under threat of war, an England whose men and women are driven by a dreadful sense of urgency to live and achieve something before the deluge.

We see this terrible threat translated in the gropings and questionings of Kevin, the level-headed leading character; in the puzzled urge to action of Tom, the labourer, who goes to Spain to fight in the International column; in the pathetic endeavours of May, the comfortable country girl, turned London shopgirl, to make Kevin realise her love for him; in the vague mysticism and deliberate blind-fold attitude of Charles, the aeroplane manufacturer; in the useless escapes into romantic flights of Mark, the national airman-hero, whose only desire is to get away from routine as often as possible.

The only untouched people are the parasites, Lady Zia, for whom snobbery is a career; and her daughter Vela, pretty and shallow, living solely for the gaieties of a debutante season.

"Myths of Greece and Rome," H. A. Guerber. Revised by Dorothy Margaret Stewart. Harrap, London. Our copy from the publishers.



★**NEGLEY FARSON.**—Author of "The Way of a Transgressor." He has now written a novel of amours and politics—"The Story of A Lake," reviewed on this page to-day.

Efficiency Experts Get Short Shrift From Sinclair

UPTON SINCLAIR, in "Little Steel," has once again written a book with a message . . . this time exposing the efficiency experts who talk their way into established businesses in the guise of saviours of the industry.

The ramifications of the "industrial counsellors" is shown to be on an immense scale in America. Listen to this: " . . . Later the Senate investigation of industrial espionage brought out the fact that American corporations had paid a total of more than eighty million dollars for spy work against their employees; and you can buy a large flock of stool pigeons for that."

The gradual change in working conditions is pictured by Upton Sinclair, who has written a worthy successor to "The Jungle" and "Oil." He bases his story on the life of Walter Judson Quayle, a kindly old employer of the old school—a man whose father and grandfather had known each and every one of the workers in the growing factory.

Racketeers, in the guise of "industrial counsellors," came to the town and persuaded Quayle that he could do much more for the staff by enlisting the aid of their organisation. He does so,

In the background, and affecting all these lives, move the events of 1937-38, the Coronation, Armistice Day, the rape of Austria, and the daily bulletins of strife and tragedy and insecurity throughout the world.

"Entanglement" is one of those diverse, intricate novels that attain coherence only through the masterly handling of the author.

only to see his business running into bad times, with the counsellors working in their own interests.

Sinclair shows that the business of industrial counselling is a "big-time" industry in America. It has its own colleges, from which "graduates" are sent to "assist" industries to meet altered conditions; it has its own course of journalism, where men are taught the uses and misuses of publicity and propaganda.

The experiences of Walter Judson Quayle, who realises, just in time, that the "industrial counsellors" are ruining his business, breaking up his family and working against the interests of employer and employee, should be read with intense interest by both employers and employees.

The use of radio in world affairs; too, is discussed by Sinclair, who makes reference to " . . . and now and then a speech from the White House about 'economic royalists' and their pretensions to be the real rulers of the United States. What was America coming to, when hunkies and wops in a steel town could gather round a cheap radio set in anybody's home and hear the voice of the President of the United States telling them that they were 'ill-fed, ill-housed and ill-clad,' and that he was going to work to remedy that evil state of affairs?"

America has exported most of her business methods; no doubt industrial counsellors will come to New Zealand, but if "Little Steel" is read and digested they should not make much headway.—W.F.I.

"Little Steel." Upton Sinclair. T. Werner Laurie, London. Our copy from the publisher.

It presents—without heroics—a cross-section of human life, of ordinary people baffled, defeated, cocksure, quixotic, selfish; thoughtful, loving, ordinary people finding an uncertain way through an extraordinary age.—A.R.M.

"Wolf Among Wolves." Hans Fallada. Putnam, London; "The Story of a Lake." Negley Farson. Gollancz, London; "Entanglement." George Buchanan. Constable, London. Our copies from the publishers.

Myths of Ancient Greece Classic Collection Of Myths Revised

A NEW edition of Guerber's "Myths" can only be looked upon as an event. First published in 1907, it has often been reprinted, but this is the first time a new revised edition has appeared, and the editor has performed an onerous task faithfully and well.

Many of the old theories of the origins of some of the classical myths have been exploded or modified during the last thirty years—three decades which have been rich in fruitful research, and Guerber, which for so long has been a standard text, was becoming in danger of losing its authority.

Not only have the statements and assertions been checked and weighed in the light of recent discovery, but the many Greek and Latin texts from which excerpts have been quoted have been carefully coned over, and frequently augmented. "D.M.S."—perhaps better known as a poet than as a classicist—has done her work well.

A book such as this deserves a dark blue-gold, stamped buckram,

dignified format. Messrs. Harrap printed it on good paper in an attractive Caslon type and (most commendable trait in a publisher) allowed plenty of illustrations, bound, not pasted into the text.

The illustrations, indeed, are a feature of the book—there are 48 photographs of famous pictures or statues, and as frontispiece a coloured reproduction of Lord Leighton's "Bacchante."

Among the photographs one finds with delight not only the usual excellent Watts and Burne-Jones pictures, but such gems as Picart's Enceladus under Mount Etna and Harry Bates's delightful little Pandora.

This is not a child's book but a production which will give pleasure alike to the scholar who has delved some distance into classical mythology and to the layman with an interest in the subject, even though it is backed up by little detailed knowledge.—C.S.P.

"Myths of Greece and Rome," H. A. Guerber. Revised by Dorothy Margaret Stewart. Harrap, London. Our copy from the publishers.