destined to a like reception here, aided by Literary Guild distribution. The second is by Rosamond Marshall and is titled provocatively "The General's Wench."* It is the reliable Miss Marshall's third opus within the past twelve months. Frank G. Slaughter's "The Galileans,"** a story of Mary Magdalene reviewed in these pages last week, is a nice combination designed to satisfy sex and religious drives at the same time.

"Désirée" recounts the story of Désirée Clary, a commoner of France who was loved and jilted by the rising Napoleon, went on to marry Marshal Bernadotte, for a time minister of war in the French Republic, and later became Queen of Sweden and Norway. It is based, somewhat roughly, on fact, and is long, slow moving though packed with incident, artless appearing and full of craft. The artless appearance is gained by having the story told in the form of Désirée's diary. The craft lies in the way Miss Selinko has combined a tale of high court doings, pomp, and circumstance, with opportunities for the entrapped housewife to identify with the heroine. First, though innumerable men fall for Désirée, she is not too beautiful. Second, though she moves in the highest circles—meeting not only Napoleon, Josephine, and Bernadotte, but also Beethoven, the Russian Czar, and innumerable others—she remains a simple girl. Among the cozy touches Miss Selinko supplies is the information on a number of occasions that Désirée's feet hurt her. Another device, which she uses too frequently, is to have Désirée tell her sister, at moments of high tension, that her crown is on crooked. You see, she's just like one of us, even if she did have the love of Napoleon, negotiate his surrender, win the plaudits of Lafayette and the whole of France, and get to be a queen though born a commoner. It could happen to anyone.

As for the writing, it is technically awkward and the author (or her unnamed translator) has a lot of trouble with her tenses. But she flashes the reader through her dream world and shakes up all the familiar ingredients so thoroughly that most readers won't be too much bothered. I don't think they'll be hurt either except as people can be hurt by soporifics.

Miss Marshall's case is somewhat different. "The General's Wench" is plain pandering to the sex fantasies of its readers. As such, it may unfortunately provide ammunition to the gentlemen of Congress who would foist censorship upon book publishing. The story of Sabrina is nonsense as far as plot is concerned, atrociously written in the style of the confession

magazines, and held together only by its concern with sex. It begins with Sabrina voyeuristically spying upon a handsome general making love with a professional prostitute. It follows this up with a scene where Sabrina—now unhappily married to an aged lecher while loving the general—finds him impotent. From there it goes on to sadism on her husband's part, murder, some love dalliance with the general, a few scenes of flagellation, more love dalliance. Along the way there are glimpses into Sabrina's diary where she sets down her erotic imaginings, a few hints of necrophilia and quite a good deal of slyness. In all, Miss Marshall's performance is like all her past ones. I don't think that will interfere with her sales. The readers who buy her book know what they are getting. I suspect the readers who will buy "Désirée" and "The Galileans" also know what they are after. The difference is merely in the emphasis each author gives to the sex or the power fantasies of the reader.

*THE GENERAL'S WENCH. By Rosamond Marshall. New York: Prentice-Hall. 244 pp. $2.50.

**THE GALILEANS. By Frank Slaughter. New York: Doubleday & Co. 307 pp. $3.50.

The Quick Moment

LOVE FOR LYDIA. By H. E. Bates. Boston: Little, Brown & Co. 344 pp. $3.50.

By Constance Morgan

IN one sense the title of H. E. Bates's latest work is unusually explicit. This is neither one of his devoted studies of the British countryside nor a story of the war such as "Fair Stood the Wind for France." If this novel is stripped to the bones of its plot, it is simply an account of what love for a young girl named Lydia did to the girl herself and to the four young men who adored her.

One of the young men, Richardson, is the storyteller. Looking through his eyes we see Lydia, seated between her two elderly aunts in the family Daimler, driving for the first time through the gray streets of Evensford, (Northants?) England. With Richardson's rapidly involved emotions we follow her career as the young Miss Aspen of the great house. In Evensford the great house is not "on the hill" but stands like a legendary castle in its own circle of land right in the center of an unromantic, bustling (and in 1929, prosperous) boot-factory town. Lydia enters it as an adolescent whose painful awkwardness belies her actual age, nineteen, and covers a highly developed appetite for life, including sex. Physically she develops quickly into a charmer. It takes her longer to find a love which will fill the abyss left by a prison-like childhood and match her own capacity. In her pursuit she leaves behind her quite a wide track of devastation.

Like the title, this is a literal but deceptive description of Mr. Bates's novel. It leaves out the best of it. Lydia is less sensational than she sounds and at the moment of her development upon which Mr. Bates focuses, she is more a symbol of burgeoning life than a character. She is the object of Richardson's and his friends' love; she is the pivot on which are hung the gay, agonizing, foolish, tragic years between nineteen and twenty-four. In some ways she is not the subject of the book at all. The subject is "growing up" and the strange effects of the passage of time. The central figures grow from boys and girls to men and women; the peripheral ones grow old, and the pace of the book, which is as steady as the roll of the seasons which it describes so beautifully, increases one's sense of the shifting of generations. There are violent occurrences in "Love for Lydia," but they are not isolated incidents thrust up by an individual upheaval. The history of the town, the inheritance of a family, the changes in the land itself, and the weather, all have their bearing on incidents.

It is the nostalgic and sensitive record of Richardson's increasing awareness of the "confusion of reasons" which gives this novel its character, and it is because of this, perhaps, that the last pages seem the least convincing part of it. The confusions are resolved too neatly. The process of growing up comes to an end with an almost audible click and suddenly the two human figures seem less real than their own past or the snowy English night which surrounds them.