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an essay on the Negro in the United States, and

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The Fire Next Time BY JAMES BALDWIN. Michael Joseph, 13s. 6d.

There is a point at which

Laurel and Hardy, or Punch and udy. Their real mission is to urn the whole human race into a laughing-stock.

Sinister Mimicry

Field to Ghetto

s on the Honourable Elijah's side. first in one way, then another, by It is simply because more and always with superb directness and more power is accruing to him single-mindedness. Every wor every day, allowing him to force he says about the Negro migh

have been said, until recent years, about the white working-classes of the world, but since colour, not class, is Mr, Baldwin's theme, he refuses utterly to look for parallels, to invoke history, to see his theme as part of a larger one.

The whole power of his polemics comes from this calculated narrowness: he writes like a marksman who believes that if he considers anything outside his aim even for a second, the enemy will overcome him.

The total effect fully justifies the narrowness of the method. For what polemic was ever strictly accurate? It is the bite, vigour and overall common sense that we want, and where the conclusion is strong and plausible, we care little for the passing weaknesses. Mr. Baldwin, for example, describes St. Paul as "fanatical and selfrighteous." This is irksome, but it is not important.

In his twenties, Mr. Baldwin was a Christian minister in Harlem. His account of those days is entirely admirable: its emotional quality comes from the fact that much as Mr. Baldwin berates "the white God" of his past, he cannot kick free of the old pulpit. He denies Christianity only to preach it.

Mr. Baldwin would be horrified to think that the style of his book was more important than its arguments. And yet, his style is more impressive than all his arguments put together—and for a very plain reason.

Way Above Them

IN theory, Mr. Baldwin is just another plain black man-one of those sons of Ham who belong to an inferior race and cannot hope ever to rise to the spiritual and intellectual level of a white man. But in practice, he is already so far above the level of all but a few whites, that the contrast is quite embarrassing.

He writes a prose that cannot be bettered by any white writer in England or America. His intellectual capacity, and the swinging, easy way he uses it, makes an Alabama governor appear still to be swinging from a branch by his tail. He is also full of delicacy and sensitiveness, qualities that are often lacking in persons of the superior race. Mr. Baldwin gets very angry

when well-meaning white people encourage him and his friends to try and become more like themselves. He says quite frankly that he doesn't regard the white man as a good thing to copy. He even goes so far as to suggest that the white might benefit from copying the black. The book-reviewer would be content if the whites only learnt to write as well.

Out of the Market by DAVID ADAMSON

principle that we should go in.

As Miss Beloff makes clear, we

negotiated for too long on too

many points instead of being whole-hearted.

may be a bit narrow-romantic,

almost aesthetic concepts of cul-

tural integrity instead of the old

fascistic ones of racial purity-

but there is no hard evidence that

he had made up his mind against

us right at the beginning. He had

his farmers to think of, too, and

they were nearer than the Anti-

NEW FICTION

Schoolgirl's Anguish

JANET FRAME, Scented Gardens for the Blind. W. H. Allen, 16s.

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mental anguish and

unbalance, the New Zealand

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an intense, nervous, witty,

euphonious prose that seems

to come direct from the

experience she is dealing with.

for the Blind moves between

New Zealand, where a woman

called Vera looks after her

daughter, a schoolgirl who in her

late teens has become dumb, and

is carrying on his life's work,

research into the history of a

single family whose ramifications

and universal significance fascin-

It ends with a shock, one of

ate him into forgetting all else.

The action of Scented Gardens

As for the General, his ideas

The General Says No By Norah Beloff. Penguin, 3s. 6d.

he New Zealanders?'

M. Spaak: 'The fact that twice will emerge. come over to be killed for General who said "No." Ever

ntly the false positions and antipathies on which the Brussels

enough " men of goodwill " sitt

British side from Lord Avon (wh are we pledged to do anything the late Ernest Bevin had shaken

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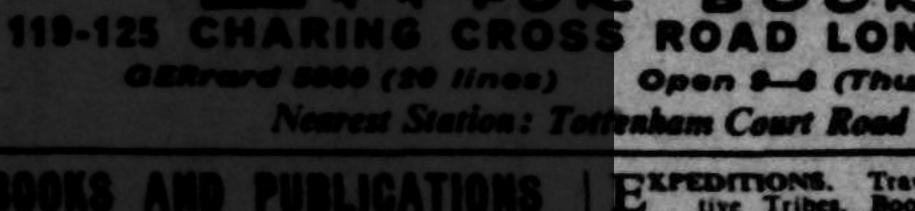
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By LORD

Britain's Moment in the Middle MONROE. Chatto, 25s.

DRITAIN'S supremacy in the Middle East, as we now see it, was a brief enough episode in history—beginning effectively with the first world war and ending with the fiasco

The time has come to look back on it in perspective, and this Elizabeth Monroe, an outstanding student of Middle Eastern affairs. has now done.

Britain's Moment in the Middle East, 1914-56, is a masterpiece of scholarly compression, in which Miss Monroe guides us with clarity and skill through a maze of events. enlivening her narrative with wellchosen quotation and anecdote. and contriving to convey to us not merely the cold facts but the human atmosphere of this confusing and not always edifying

Britain's interest in the Middle East arose initially from the need to protect her communications with India-where half her Army was stationed, largely against threats of expansion from Russia. This she sought to achieve partly through control over Egypt and partly through influence on Tur-

But the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, in the first world war, though it coincided with a Russian withdrawal from the field, created a power vacuum which required to be filled. Unfortunately the plans devised by Britain to fill it conflicted hopelessly with each other and with those of her Allies-contradictory undertakings to the Arabs and the promise of a home in Palestine for the Jews.

That promise, for all its high motives, was, to Miss Monroe. "one of the greatest mistakes in our imperial history". Throughout the rest of the area it "brought the British much illwill, and complications that sapped their power."

Nevertheless there emerged from the confusion a period between the two world wars podes and much more vociferous. defined by Miss Monroe as "The

rip the mat up from everyday life

and send it sprawling: a device

that has been used in fiction

before, yet comes as it should-

Firmly set in the home coun-

ties, by contrast, is Oh! To

Be in England by H. E. Bates.

whose Larkin family, the

publishers assure us, lives "the

kind of life many of us would

live if only we could and dared."

Well, not me; but if you love

merchant, with a swimming-pool

full of luscious daughters in the

The story is mostly concerned

with the christening of the entire

Larkin family by an embarrassed

curate called Candy, who has

trouble at the font distinguishing

between Zinnia and her twin

Petunia, and falls for the family

Paul Brodeur's The Sick Fox

is set in present-day Germany.

An American intelligence officer,

deep in a forest he has grown

to love and considers his private

kingdom, sees a sick fox and

of rabies rouses the authori-

ties to a frenzy of nosiness; and

an obscurer threat to security.

coming at the same time, makes

all the excitement an excuse for

moving in on a shepherd dis-

trusted for his "difference" from

some do the hunting, what they

seek in hunting or disclose by

being hunted are questions im-

Why some are hunted and

in this highly-charged

Isabel Quigly

everyday people.

if baffling allegory.

His story spreads. The threat

happens to mention the fact.

beauty, Primrose, aged 14.

garden, all as before.

him, here's Pop Larkin again.

as both surprise and fulfilment.

es against her.

E. Lawrence, in 1920, sed shrewdly that in these

archy is too expensive, and

d as heedless of his fore sers—as any made by Lloyd rge after the first.

iss Monroe tells her story h scrupulous fairness. But it at after all ranks as an appre-

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