of truth that can be held at the same time, and to this movement of theme corresponds a movement of style from the colloquial to an easy nobility of language which is as simple as it is grave. The flexibility of style and masterful handling of metre give Mr. Larkin's poetry its immediacy of impact. He is always ready with the simple colloquial word to intensify his effect:

> Sometimes you hear, fifth-hand,
> As epitaph:
> *He chucked up everything*
> *And just cleared off.*
> And always the voice will sound
> Certain you approve
> This audacious, purifying,
> Elemental move.

I know few poets whose writing is in as close a relationship with everyday speech as this. And the gift of simple language is perfectly suited to the expression of complexities. Poems like 'Reasons for Attendance' or 'I Remember, I Remember' are subtle re-creations of complicated states of mind, being 'out' of some party or coming back to the town where one was born. The acceptance of all the conflicting variants of life can lead to irony and humour or to tragedy, but running through these poems there are always compassion and wonder. In this simplicity lies a distinctively English humanism. No poetry is less arbitrary and none more objective.

ANTHONY HARTLEY

New Novels

THE least dipped-into of books are those said to be good for that purpose. The most dipped-into are novels. Every weekday thousands of people in bookshops and libraries (free and commercial) are sampling recent novels by dips and sips. If the author is new to them they want a taste of his quality; if they regard him as an old hand they want to see what he is up to now. A dip into A. J. Cronin's latest, **Crusader's Tomb** (Gollancz, 15s.), yields this:

> Lambert, save for some moody hours, was in his most winning humour, teasing them all occasionally, exhibiting his brilliance, dropping a witticism here, an epigram there, reciting long passages from Verlaine and *Les Fleurs du Mal*.

H'm. Lambert sounds as though he would be the life and death of any party—or any novel. Better dip again.

> Presently she took a square of cambric from her bag and dried her eyes. He broke the long silence, stroking her sleeve.
> 'One of these days you'll thank me.'
> 'I wonder,' she said, in a queer, far-off voice.
> The bells of the cathedral began to peal for Evensong. . . .

Unlucky dips! They give no clue to the kind of story we may let ourselves in for. It proves to be one in which no confirmed novel-reader will feel himself a stranger. Stephen Desmonde, its hero, son of the Rector of Stillwater, did not like the Church. Nature he loved ('hot sunlight on cool water, and a widgeon rising from yellow reeds') and, next to Nature, Art (' "Stephen has always liked to draw. Indeed, it was you who gave him his first box of paints." He bit his lip hard.'). His ambition was to warm both hands at the fire of life in Paris. There he had the regulation adventures, encountering specified and pseudonymous celebrities and becoming as bohemian as circumstances would permit. Tutor, during a period of financial stringency, to the daughter of a grocer, he taught her to recite 'Hail to thee, blythe spirit.' (*Did* Shelley spell it with a y?—three times here it so appears.) When the girl's mother tried to seduce him in shiny striped knickers and a pink camisole he gave her the slip. Fortunately, he had a friend whose figure reminded him of Goya's *La Maja*; she helped him to get on with his painting, and in due course he exhibited in England—only to be prosecuted under the Obscene Publications Act, 1857. As can readily be imagined, after his death (in Cable Street, Stepney) he was 'hailed' as a genius and the price of his pictures soared. Just conceivably, if Stephen had not been quite such a lay-figure and if the writing had been less like a parody, the telling of this old, old story might have been more successful. But, for some readers, it will always be a good novel to dip into: 'Glyn now tossed off his grog and, more than a little elevated, clapped Stephen fraternally on the shoulder.' Dear Ouida!

The temptation to dip into **The Sleepless Moon** by H. E. Bates (Michael Joseph, 15s.) could not be resisted. After all, one is curious to know what tree he is barking up. Not a jacaranda evidently: 'It was nearly May before she and Frankie Johnson began to meet again at Pollard's Mill. There were still late violets in the copse, but half the oaks were bare.' From this sample the experienced reader can easily divine that an English clandestine love affair is going on, so he begins at the beginning. There it is the year 1922 and Constance, a milliner, is being married to Melford Turner, a grocer, both of the parish of Orlingford. Melford is unable to rise to the occasion. He has a passion only for horses. True, he is able later to involve himself with Phœbe, daughter of the landlady at the 'George and Crown,' but by that time Constance (the 'she' of the dip) is consoling herself with Frankie, the pianist of the local cinema. Over these promising makings of a tragedy of provincial life looms the symbol of the church steeple. . . .

Never has our author been more Batesian. If there is a pervading sense of the *déjà vu* that is not a matter for complaint: one well reproach Hardy for writing like Hardy about scenes and people recognisably of his creation. That Hardy can be mentioned in this connection is not perhaps without significance. But the suggested comparison should not be pursued. Much in this novel is out of Hardy's range—or perhaps it would be better to say beyond his publishable limits. Anyhow, it is Bates's best.

The dipping method may as well be continued: 'After about an hour, which seemed half a lifetime, I thought, to hell with this, and I undressed and washed and creamed my face, and pinned up my hair, and I thought if he comes now it will serve him right.' That is from Kathleen Farrell's **The Cost of Living** (Macmillan, 12s. 6d.)—obviously a story of modern love, modern in its frustrations as well as in its fulfilments, and so worth reading through. It is an entertainment in which ironical wisdom lurks, and as a novel, the author's third, is a distinct success.

Any dip into Ralph Arnold's **Spring List** (Murray, 10s. 6d.) disturbs the relationships of authors and publishers. That influential organ of the trade, the *Bookseller*, has testified that 'the *mise-en-scène* is wholly authentic.' Its characters will seem no less authentic to an outsider. The publishers are seen as publishers see them; the authors as they see themselves? Perhaps not; perhaps they too are seen as publishers see them. Authors will know best about this. Disinterested onlookers will be content to enjoy the ingenious fun of the story.

No need to dip into A. G. Street's **Sweetacres** (Michael Joseph, 12s. 6d.). Readers who revel in novels about farming and office interference, with interludes for dry-fly fishing and clay-pigeon shooting, will probably have one of the times of their lives with it.

DANIEL GEORGE