

taxes with enough left over for a two-gallon jug—and got the best of the bargain; and Old Dick, the mule who was dangerous only when you did something wrong.

Every story has something good; and every reader will choose his own favorites. I like best of all "Walk in the Moon Shadows" for its fine subtlety and feeling, and "A Land Beyond the River" for its sense of inevitable and continuing family tragedy. But one mustn't forget Uglybird in "The Reaper and the Flowers," who loved his wife more than anyone knew, or Grandma Shelton, in "Set-

tin'-up with Grandma," who gave up heaven and came back from beyond to set the record straight about her favorite son. And you might like as well "Alec's Cabin" and "Grandpa" for their feeling of trueness, or "The Devil and Television" for its funny and touching conflict between the old Kentucky and the new.

But one thing is sure—Jesse Stuart is one of our finest and truest storytellers. You'll remember these people as long as I've remembered that image of his mother—and that's been twenty-five years. You can't ask more of any writer and his work.

Hell in a Toned-Up Pub

"The Cautious Heart," by William Sansom (Reynal. 186 pp. \$3.50), is a novel about a strange triangle that includes a composer, a painter, and a woman. It is reviewed by Leo Lerman, a well-known critic of modern fiction.

By Leo Lerman

IN A RECENT talk at a National Book League meeting in London, William Sansom, British novelist, short story writer, and essayist, is quoted as saying, "Life is too fantastic to be put into novels." In his fifth novel, "The Cautious Heart," he continues to put life (and quite fantastic it inevitably is) into his novels. His fantastic life does not usually partake of the unreal or of the imaginary. He creates no wild and extravagant world. His are everyday people—at least visibly they are the people seen on buses or walking anonymously. Nevertheless, once transliterated by Sansom, the ordinary people can murder and sometimes do. And they all love—one another, things, places, themselves. Beneath their prosiness all is passion and hotness. Even when they hate they love in William Sansom's passionate North.

"The Cautious Heart" is a short novel, not even 200 pages long. But within this economy three people quietly go through hell. In a toned-up pub a composer-pianist meets a woman (Marie) and with her is a painter of sorts (Colin). Composer falls in love with woman, who loves him back, but why, then, is she utterly concerned with good-for-nothing-save-making-trouble old Colin? What part of her heart nourishes Colin, is nourished by him? There, in its baldest terms, is "The Cautious Heart." It would be impolitic to re-

veal what does finally happen to the composer, Marie, or Colin. Mr. Sansom would have us believe that the Colins are always with us. They are, but so is poison ivy. Only the sick, sick, sick welcome that into their gardens.

Such is William Sansom's literary art that everything, even the unwritten details and atmosphere, is known about his cautious hearts. In the past Mr. Sansom's fictions have been flawed frequently by his remarkable ability to convey geographical places. Some of his stories have been more travelogue than tale. He has been more atmospherist than storyteller. In "The Cautious Heart" locale becomes character and character is action; the whole is William Sansom's most successful novel.

MAN AGAINST THE WORLD: Adriaan van der Veen's "The Intruder" (Abelard-Schuman, \$3.50) is typical of a certain category of postwar Dutch novels. The short narrative is in the first person; time, place, and story are less precisely defined than the author's thoughts about the case of the world versus himself.

The situation challenging the "I" in this book is the lack of collective guilt feeling in our world, at the end of World War II, about the horrors perpetrated by the Nazis on the Jewish population of Europe. This attitude shows itself in such inhuman remarks as: "Those refugees should be glad just to be alive . . . in Europe they put them in gas-chambers." However, an important problem is not enough to produce an effective novel.

"The Intruder" is set in New York during the last months of the war. The narrator, a Dutchman who had come to live here in 1939, becomes involved with a Dutch Jewish refugee,

a girl named Vera. Through her he is confronted with the problem of anti-Semitism; not anti-Semitism as a universal phenomenon, but the special inimicality which the refugees from Hitler experienced in their new American surroundings. He wants to help them in their fight although he is sharply aware of the fact that he is an outsider. When an incident in the final pages of the book brings him face to face with a police officer who asks him, "Are you a Jew too?," he answers falsely, "Yes," and thus feels finally committed in this battle.

In its style "The Intruder" is rasping and dry; the give-and-take in the author's relationship with Vera remains unexplored, and we are left to wonder what they "see in each other." The girl relates how she was once assaulted on a dark street near her American college campus—an incident which is probably meant to explain her sexual indifference, but is not further developed—and her announcement that this could have happened to her only because she is Jewish sounds as unreal as the naïve gratitude of the refugees when the narrator, though a Gentile, is found ready to attend one of their meetings. More crucial, "art does not argue," and Adriaan van der Veen has not quite succeeded in transforming his argument into art. Thus his preoccupations provoke impatience rather than sympathy.

—HANS KONINGSBERGER.

Criminal Record

A LITTLE SIN. By William Hardy. Dodd, Mead. \$2.95. Math professor in North Carolina college discovers body of co-ed who had crush on him; attempt to lie doggo blows up and academic calm is violently shattered; hero in real jam until terminal revelations clear air. Unusual and effective.

THE CASE OF THE TRIPLE TWIST. By Christopher Bush. Macmillan. \$2.95. Four-years-past gem heist becomes news again as Ludovic Travers, learned London eye, devotes holidays to lone-wolf re-creation of crime in suburban market-town; Inspector Jewle of Scotland Yard also interested. Pleasant, but overcomplicated.

DING DONG BELL. By Helen Reilly. Random House. \$2.95. New York ad gal's impending marriage to well-heeled widower in jeopardy when she discovers mystery private eye shot dead at desk; Inspector McKee digs into formidable mine of concealments and comes up with answer. Very involved. —SERGEANT CUFF.

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Reflections on the Brink

THE RESPITE didn't last very long. Within a few days after the Middle Eastern crisis subsided the world was confronted again by the thumping reality of two Chinas and one potential world war. When Communist China started shooting to back up her claim to the islands just off her shore, the resultant situation dramatized once again the growing precariousness of life on this planet.

A war over Quemoy and Matsu is not quite the same as a localized war such as took place in Korea. This is no limited military action involving a few gunboats and the Seventh Fleet. This is the main show—a total war involving the three largest nations in the world, all of which have made it clear that they will hold nothing back, neither missiles nor rockets nor nuclear bombs. The initial explosions may take place off the China coast but there may be no way of stopping the atomic furnace once it starts. It feeds itself; there are thousands of hydrogen bomb boosters to keep it going and growing.

There is an instant reply to this line of reasoning. It will be said that the United States must not allow itself to become intimidated or paralyzed in dealing with Communist threats because of the possibility of a nuclear holocaust. It will be said further that world communism will confront us with one military threat after another if we ever succumb to this atomic blackmail.

The trouble with this line of argument is that it assumes two things. First, that the other fellow will back down once we make it clear that we intend to start shooting. Second, that we can still achieve our objective if

he doesn't back down but shoots back instead. As for the first assumption, the same this-is-the-time-to-draw-the-line and we-can't-afford-to-turn-away arguments may hold with the other fellow. As for the second assumption, the idea that military victory is obtainable in a nuclear shooting war is as outmoded as the medieval fort. War no longer works. In today's world, nations do not wage war; they wage mutual suicide.

This brings us to the main point. If the United States is serious about trying to halt the spread of communism in the world it will develop the kind of policy that is likely to be effective. First, we can give up our sleight-of-hand policy with respect to the United Nations—now-we-use-it, now-we-don't. We can make the United Nations central, not tangential, in our foreign policy. We can recognize that there is no security for us or anyone outside of a world organization strong enough to deal with basic causes of war and world tension; strong enough to enforce its decisions; strong enough to have a direct connection with peoples rather than governments—a U.N. concerned with the operation of justice rather than the juggling of sovereign wills. And if it is said that communism will oppose the development of the United Nations into such a world organization, then the answer is that we should proceed to make this the central issue. We can also attempt to mobilize the world's peoples behind our advocacy of those measures that can free men from the fear of universal extermination and release their energies for a saner and better life.

Second, we can tune in on what is

happening in the rest of the world, especially as it concerns the determination of the majority of the world's peoples to free themselves from outside rule. In some areas, we take the position that our own political and economic interests are in conflict with the effort of peoples to achieve national liberty. This position is as perilous as it is narrow. It sees no justice except in terms of our own needs. Nothing is more likely to endanger our real security than a policy that separates us from the support and good will of the predominant weight of mankind.

Third, we can inject some sense of utopian adventure into the present human situation. This could be the most exciting and creative period in human history. Never has there been a more dramatic or fruitful field for the scientific or social intelligence. Our potential conquests are not theoretical; they are within reach. We can probe the virus or soar into outer space. We can harness the sun, make rain, control winds, draw energy from the seas. We can, in short, equip our planet with the means to make life fuller and more meaningful than any generation of men has known before.

Coming back to the present Chinese crisis, nothing we do in behalf of our own security is likely to work unless we are identified with a great idea or a moral cause. The tragic weakness with our policy about the offshore islands is that it is void of moral substance. It is connected with no great principle of justice. It lays no claim on the sympathy or support of other peoples. It doesn't identify the United States with any of the big questions that have such a powerful hold on the human conscience. We dare not even take the issue before the United Nations because this would only serve to dramatize our lack of support in the world. It does no credit to the American people for the world to know that we are ready to go before the United Nations only on those issues where we are likely to win.

A democratic nation faces its greatest danger not when it is up against a frightening concentration of force but when the people of that nation become detached from their government, when they fail to make their will known, when they convince themselves they are helpless to take part in the big decisions that have to be made, when they fail to get the necessary information, when they fail to communicate with one another, when they separate themselves from their ideals. The danger from such a tragic detachment is at least as real today as the billowing smoke over Quemoy.

—N. C.