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The Stroke of Eight.....J. L. Hardy  
Team Work .....Jane Butler  
To Wake the Dead .....J. D. Carr  
The White Brigand .....Edison Marshall

## NEW NOVELS

**Great Argument.** By Philip Gibbs. The argument is war, peace, Socialism, youth, democracy, Fascism, the League of Nations, unemployment, re-armament, Communism, pacifism, Italy's war in Abyssinia, sanctions, Spain, idealism, realism, Liberalism, with almost every related topic thrown in. The discussion is uninterrupted and always light and chatty. There is not a great deal more than that, however. The scene moves from the neighbourhood of Guildford to Chelsea and back again. The chief characters are a Labour M.P. named Jesson, the editor of a six-penny weekly, an idealist with the habit of wearing one brown shoe and one black; his Communist undergraduate son; his daughter Faith, a student at the London School of Economics; the stiff, shy, conservative young man who loves her, Roy Charrington, whose body is like Greek sculpture and who is the son of an immensely rich manufacturer of underwear. In the end Jesson, who has lost his seat in the last election is forced to resign the editorship of Tomorrow; the Communist son goes off to fight in Spain; while Roy, after flirting with "pink" sentiments, is being converted to Nazism in Germany and will doubtless pay the penalty of losing Faith. Sir Philip writes easily and in a vein of unmistakable Liberalism. But this hasty and simplified conversation on specialist topics is not intended to hold the interest of the exacting reader.

—"Times" Literary Supplement.

**The Road to Damascus.** By Annie S. Swan. The Road to Damascus is the title of a symbolical allusion to the conversion of St. Paul; for, although the heroine gets as far as Jerusalem, she does not continue her journey to Damascus, but finds illumination, comfort, and inspiration in a vision at Gethsemane. After having lost her parents in a motoring accident she goes to stay with an uncle, who is a Congregationalist minister in Yorkshire, and is turned into a domestic drudge by an antipathetic aunt, who is no sort of help to her husband in his pastoral duties. The author devotes much care to a skilful delineation of the characters of the minister's family, from which the heroine is rescued by a local benefactress, who plays Fairy Godmother to the orphan. Things, however, go wrong. The heroine's first excursion into the *pays du tendre* ends abruptly with the young man's betrothal to another girl, and her discontented aunt elopes with a layman and takes her daughter with her.

The heroine has to console and control the surviving members of the family; but ultimately is again rescued by the Fairy Godmother, who takes her on a cruise to Greece and Palestine, during which the girl's outlook is greatly widened. She finds peace in Jerusalem and satisfactorily

renews an earlier friendship which had begun in Edinburgh. The author, having settled her heroine happily, very kindly finds space to show that divorce has been the making of the runaway aunt and appropriately allows the once-distracted uncle to marry the Fairy Godmother. Thus a story, which is not in the least old-fashioned in the telling, and is full of thoroughly modern tribulation, ends on a happily-ever-after note which comes as a refreshing surprise.

**The K Code Plan.** By Graham Seton. The men who were plotting the downfall of the British Empire decided to murder Colonel Grant. For they considered that that redoubtable Secret Service agent would prove to be their most dangerous enemy. Much to the chagrin, however, the assassin's bullet only killed the Secretary of State for War, and Colonel Grant survived to follow a trail which led from London to India, through a tangle of codes and conspiracies, treasons, treacheries and torture. The story is swift, flowing, and well stocked with dramatic episodes, but the characters suffer from over-emphasis of villainy or virtue.

—"Times" Literary Supplement.

**The Stroke of Eight.** By J. L. Hardy. Although successfully designed and written as a thriller, this book also has the merit of throwing a clear light upon the deeper recesses of ordinary characters. For this reason the story gives the reader an unusual impression of watching events that might befall men and women whom he knows. Gerry Hickman, for example, is just the sort of a sociable fellow to drink a glass too much at a British Legion dinner, and then suffer the tragic misfortune of killing a man with his car. The fear-haunted wastrel who blackmails him belongs to a familiar type. Also the strange way in which Hickman becomes the champion of his persecutor seems to derive from fact rather than fiction.

—"Times" Literary Supplement.

**The Evil Messenger.** By Sydney Horler. The novelist who wants us to take Satanism seriously can either rely on vagueness to give a thrill of horror or give us a code, valid for the duration of the story, of the laws limiting his devils or vampires (as in "Dracula"). Mr Horler, in this his thirty-second novel, tries the first way, then, with more success, the second, but too near the end. Memory, the chief character (is his name allegoric?), commands more devils than any medieval witch. Against him is Quin, detective of Satanists. Victims are Loring, tea merchant, retired from London to Cornwall to have time to read the Times; young Sinclair, whom Memory bewitched into a villain, and Stella Loring, his fiancée. Memory wanted her but apparently could not bewitch her, perhaps because she bought seven-and-sixpenny detective novels. Some minor characters are amusing.

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