

And you are not mollified at the strained and uncommon emotion of most of the others, at the opera-singer in *Land's End* who is cured of her neurosis by following the bell that calls off the stormy beach, or at the ghostly family in the fog in *Ked's Hand*. Mr. Steele is a very competent writer, but you wonder if his admiring critic has not confused a theatrical sense with narrative art. The cleverness with which the stories are composed does not remove the sense of motives' having been strained for. And the settings are strangely familiar, the sea of unrelieved horror and greediness, the fisher-folk, the abandoned ship. The strangeness of the themes only brings the conventionality of the backgrounds into greater relief. A genuine artist would have reversed this process and charmed us with simpler motives that glowed in a setting of original quality. This manner of story-telling, in which Mr. Steele is as good as any of his fellow craftsmen, is beginning to seem a little old-fashioned. The professional "short-story" has become an artificial and wearisome thing. Art is going to be more demanding. It is unfortunate that Mr. O'Brien should try to confuse our minds, and particularly about a writer who can be enjoyed so honestly not as an artist but as an admirable "professional" of the old school.

LAND'S END. By Wilbur Daniel Steele.
Harper; \$1.35.

In his introduction to this collection of ten stories Mr. Edward J. O'Brien claims for their author an artistic significance in the rank of Synge and Conrad. Indeed he rather prefers Mr. Steele for his "sensitive fidelity to the more abiding romance of ordinary life. . . The rich human embodiment of the stories assures them a place in our literature for their imaginative reality, their warm color, and their finality of artistic execution." But in preparing our minds for a writer of such large seriousness and distinction he is riding to a fall of disappointment. When you find that four out of the ten are mystery stories with carefully elaborated "creeps," you feel a little cheated out of your abiding romance.