

## Books

## The Golden Bough

*The Golden Bough. A Study in Magic and Religion. One volume, abridged edition.* By Sir James George Frazer. The Macmillan Company. \$5.

IT was on one of the earliest days of spring less than a year ago that with a sympathetic companion I went out across the Campagna and up to the Alban Hills, through Albano and Ariccia to Genzano, where we inquired the way to Nemi and came suddenly by muddy back streets upon a path which sloped steeply to the lake nestled in the hills. As we followed the path along the shore we thought of those contrasting pilgrims who by night long ago had one after another skirted stealthily "Diana's Mirror" on a ghastly quest; and of the priest of Diana's temple who with drawn sword and peering warily watched for the coming of the man stronger than he who should slay him as he had slain his predecessor. In all Italy there is scarcely a more romantic spot; and with our thoughts of "the priest who slew the slayer and shall himself be slain" there mingled meditations upon that other quest, an intellectual quest, a "dimly discerned mental journey" (in Pater's words) which had begun at the sacred grove and sanctuary of Diana Nemorensis and had led, sometimes by devious paths and again by following well-marked clues, far away in time and space from Lake Nemi.

When, more than thirty years ago, Sir James Frazer applied himself to the solution of the problems: Why should the succession to the office of priest of Diana be determined by mortal combat? and Why, before the aspirant to the office might attack the incumbent, must he pluck the golden bough from the tree that stood beside the temple? he had apparently no conception of the long and difficult quest upon which these illusive problems would lead him: to the customs of aborigines in all parts of the world; to strange and grotesque religious ceremonials such as would have fascinated Flaubert; to the religions of Egypt and Crete and Babylon; to the problem of the interrelation of magic and religion and science; to the evolution of the idea of kingship; to agricultural rites and the worship of trees and the fire festivals of Europe; to the tender spiritualized worship of Isis; to the bloody sacrifices of the Mexicans; to the myth of Balder; to Adonis and Osiris; to the grandiose conception of the scapegoat. The course of his argument is controlled by the comparative method; his proofs, such as they are, at times convincing, at times merely ingenious, are drawn from analogy.

With the most elaborate skill, as though dealing with the ordered complexities of medieval architecture, he builds his vast cathedral-like book, at times lingering in some dim side-chapel of obscure ceremonial, at times constructing the majestic nave of his dominant idea. The scholarly zeal with which he assembles facts does not interfere with his grasp of the essentials of architectonics. As one proceeds through the eleven volumes of "The Golden Bough," now entranced, now clogged by the sheer weight of cited instances, one can obtain a better idea than can be found almost anywhere else of the secular process that has gradually transformed what was once religious ceremonial, essential to the welfare of the community in which it was practiced, through the intermediate stage of "cult," to the final degenerate relics of popular custom, folk-play, and children's games. Frazer shows in how narrow a path the thoughts of men have moved, ideas and notions being found that are common to Australian aborigines of today and to civilizations extinct five thousand years ago. One need not attempt to retrace the course of his argument here; but in the end he returns to Nemi, a tentative solution in hand, having solved or indicated many other problems by the way, and having gathered a mass of evidence of the slow, discouraging progress of

the human mind and of the ignorance and credulity and cruelty and superstition of which our poor race has been guilty in its long history. Beside the lake he bids it and us farewell; the implications in his majestic words of parting must be taken account of by the theologies.

They tell us—the specialists—that Frazer has "never seen a savage" and that he is but a "parlor" or "closet" anthropologist; that his wide range embraces evidence of very varying degrees of reliability; that some of his theories are unsound; and that his conclusions are uncertain and at times fantastic. The author of "The Golden Bough" has often emphasized the fact that his conclusions are but tentative and that he is ready to revise or discard them when better explanations present themselves. Meanwhile he has used his theories as "pegs" on which to hang the vast collection of data that he has brought together from the reports and recollections of the army of explorers who for the sake of religion or conquest or commerce or science have penetrated into the wild places of the earth and of that other army which in the cause of scholarship has groped inquiringly into the dark backward of human history. Of late new discoveries have strengthened Frazer's position along certain lines. But even if his conclusions are at length discarded his book will remain; the specialists will beat against this great achievement of imagination and literary art as they have beaten against Gibbon and Carlyle. "The Golden Bough" is, with the possible exception of the "Arabia Deserta," the most massive work of English prose that this age has to show.

For many of us the huge mass of comparative instances acts as impedimenta to the proper enjoyment of Frazer's book; and I have sometimes thought that a beautiful anthology might be culled from its pages: its nature-description; its meditations upon famous places; its quaint and curious lore; its more exalted passages in which Frazer rises to the height of his argument. He has not chosen to bring his work within the range of a wider circle of readers by means of an anthology, but instead he now offers those whose purse is too limited to bring them the complete work or whose leisure is insufficient for the heavy though delightful task of its perusal, an admirably abridged edition in which the leading principles of the book are retained together with an amount of evidence sufficient to illustrate them. With some condensation here and there the language of the original has been kept; no new matter has been added, neither have the views expressed in the latest complete edition been altered. The entire body of footnotes has been sacrificed and with them all exact reference to authorities. Thus is effected wisely a great reduction in bulk, for the scholarly reader will always have access to the larger work, and to those who read for pleasure such bibliographical apparatus is a stumbling block. This one-volume issue will never replace the magnificent twelve volumes of the complete work; but these are hurried days of scanty hours dedicated to intellectual enjoyment; and it will be far better for a thoughtful person to know it in this new and shortened form than to go through life without becoming acquainted with "The Golden Bough."

SAMUEL C. CHEW

## D. H. Lawrence

*England, My England.* By D. H. Lawrence. Thomas Seltzer. \$2.

*Fantasia of the Unconscious.* By D. H. Lawrence. Thomas Seltzer. \$2.25.

*Women in Love.* By D. H. Lawrence. (Popular Edition.) Thomas Seltzer. \$2.50.

NAKED humanity. Naked, not in lack of trousers or a skirt, but stripped bare of those three veils a super-civilized race wears to veil the animal within: convention, hypocrisy, repression. Soul-nude are they who work the lonely gardens, collect fares on the whirling tram-cars, or keep the boisterous inns of "England, My England." Ten stories are contained in the volume, intensely individual, flawlessly conceived.

Constantly there is an uncanny feeling of disaster, of death to come, as though some fiendish gas of the war—with which most of the sketches are intimately concerned—had spread out and seized all mortals in its bitter and poisonous embrace. Yet the book is assuredly not gloomy. Intensity and swiftness of action prevent that. For a man cannot be gloomy in a typhoon. The figures of "Women in Love" think deeply and long; those in "England, My England" lack time to ponder, they can only act.

An Elizabethan vigor, too rare in these days of hyper-analysis, sweeps away all chaff, the significant alone remains. The fights in Tickets, Please, and Samson and Delilah are barbaric masterpieces. The girl collectors on a tram line band to end the Don Juaning of John Thomas, their chief. Imprisoning the luckless, too careless lover in a waiting-room, led by his latest victim, they mob him, dash him against a wall, beat, scratch, and hurl him, bleeding, to the floor. Lighter in mood, but containing a combat equally Herculean is Samson and Delilah, the tale of a huge Enoch Arden, who after sixteen years returns to his spouse, now proprietress of the Tinner's Rest, and stridently insists on remaining. Flinging herself upon him, she clings desperately, until soldier guests at the tavern bind him securely and drop him outside. Freed, a few minutes later, the husband noiselessly reenters the hostelry. The wife yields to him. A keen study of strange animalism.

The situations are brutally or bitterly dramatic. In *The Blind Man*, Maurice, disfigured, sightless, after a shell burst, compels his wife's friend, his own half enemy, shuddering, to touch the hideous scar, to press the mutilated eyes. In the story, *England, My England*, which gives the volume its name, the cutting of a daughter's knee on a sickle changes the chief character's entire life. He who reads is racked with sheer physical pain. *England, My England*, a tragedy, finally of black death on the battlefield, and *The Blind Man*, the groping of one who came back, should be read by those many or few who still believe that war is a novel, gigantic outing, where the youth of a nation get experience, romance, and pay at the same time. Nakedness of the soul becomes nakedness of the body as well in *You Touched Me* and *The Horse Dealer's Daughter*, two voyages into the sea of the sensuous. In the first a charity boy is awakened to his first knowledge of love by the accidental touch of a girl's hand upon his face; the other unfolds the frenzied passion of a despondent girl for the doctor who rescued her from death in a slimy pond. Singular, exotic; a soldier, a wife, a mistress in France, a babe, a letter, a passerby; a story told in flashes, flashes on a screen of dazzling white, the snow of an English countryside. This, *Wintry Peacock*. And through it all, painfully hops Joey dee-urr! merely a bird, pathetic, and futile. "England, My England." Indubitably a great book, great enough, probably, to be eternally damned as a classic, one from whose pages the teacher will select long passages, and hurl at the dreary youthful prisoners: "This is how to describe. This is how to narrate. This is the perfect climax." The book of one, a sensualist today, a mystic tomorrow: but always the artist who makes men's souls alive.

Now to the fiction-writer turned astrologer—"Fantasia of the Unconscious." To take or not to take it seriously is the question. For this queer hodge-podge of necromancy, psychoanalysis, relativity, and astrology appears full of humorous traps for the unwary. The reader sails along, peacefully, among the stars, believing for the moment with Lawrence that man is the center of the universe, sun and moon radiate from him, and lacking his presence the "sun would gutter out like a spent lamp," the moon, "meeting-place of cold, dead, angry souls," would also vanish. And then the reader hears him laugh. A hearty vigorous laugh. At the reader? Possibly. At himself and his idea? Possibly. Probably both. But it is most upsetting to be laughed at when sternly striving to understand complicated psyches and complex supermen. Most amazing is the planetary system. We see in heaven, not what we call the sun, but "the vibrations expelled by death from the body of life,

and returned back again to the body of life." Or "the moon is born from the death of individuals!" Other of the ideas and proposals are equally revolutionary. "Let all schools be closed at once . . . the great mass of humanity should never learn to read and write—never." "Wives, don't love your husbands any more. . . . Just boil the eggs." "Fight your wife. . . . Reduce her once more to a naked Eve, and send the apple flying." "We have fallen now into the mistake of idealism."

A bizarre Deuteronomy! In the serious moments the volume, in sum, seems a plea for individualism of the highest type, individualism of "the Holy Ghost" in man. But these profounder moments are relatively rare. The rather fearsome title need not bar the novice scaling the craggy mountains of the psychonanalytical. For only one-tenth is psychoanalysis, the other nine-tenths D. H. Lawrence, irrepressible and gay.

Perhaps, as the blue-coated jacket proclaims, it is "an important system of philosophy." But it is to be doubted, and much to be doubted that Lawrence so meant. The Moses bringing to the world the code for a new order must not come with a twinkle in his eye and an extra deck of cards tucked between the commandment tablets.

Triumphing over the attacks of the Society for the Suppression of Vice, "Women in Love," perhaps in gratitude, steps down from its expensive seat among the library aristocrats, and in dress far less costly, but spirit unchastened, happy in the knowledge it will now be read oftener and enjoyed more, takes, with dignity, its place as a member of the literary democracy.

BEN LUCIEN BURMAN

## A Teacher and Man of Letters

*An Old Castle and Other Essays.* By C. T. Winchester. With an introduction by Henry W. Nevinston. The Macmillan Company. \$3.

A PROMINENT British weekly has recently informed us that American criticism is "notoriously either academic or trivial." Professor C. T. Winchester's volume of essays, published some two years after his death, is neither academic nor trivial. It is at once scholarly and inspiring, the work of a college teacher who was also a true man of letters and who made the chair of English literature at Wesleyan University, in its quiet little Connecticut village, for nearly fifty years a shrine for lovers of great writers and great men. Professor Winchester's creed can be best stated in his own words: "Hazlitt has in a remarkable degree the gift to enjoy for himself what is best in literature, and the gift to convey that enjoyment to his reader—which I take it is the chief function of criticism." That is Professor Winchester's kind of criticism, in "An Old Castle and Other Essays" and in all his earlier volumes, of which the best is perhaps "A Group of English Essayists of the Early Nineteenth Century."

His exquisite taste and judgment were equaled by hardly half a dozen American college teachers; in fact, it would probably be safe to reduce the number. As he shows in the present volume, he never acquired that "scholarliness" which is a synonym for dullness and which is, for the most part, so admirably illustrated by the quarterly publication of the Modern Language Association of America and by other academic journals. On the contrary his judgments are not only eminently readable but full of quiet humor, shrewd observation of character, felicity of critical phrase, and a mellow tolerance which never includes tolerance of literary mediocrity. Such a teacher and writer is a kind of combination of Thomas Arnold and William Hazlitt, with a little of Charles Lamb thrown in. To those students who knew him, Professor Winchester was a source of that true education which is inspiration and incentive. The late Sir Walter Raleigh, of Oxford, said of him: "Of all the men I have met in America the most interesting was a man by the name of Winchester, from a place I never heard of called Wesleyan." And Mr. Henry W. Nevinston, who writes the introduction to