

whom the Gentleman takes a sorrowful interest; but the gist of the book is that the real English gentleman and the real English lady have manners and morals not in the least represented by the bizarre figure that is Mrs. Asquith's and the thick hide which is Colonel Repington's.

This is undoubtedly true. Manners are the finer part, the essence of civilization, and the manners of nice English people are incomparable. They understand the really exquisite art of human relationships. Henry James gave his genius to showing what a beautiful social instrument, what a beautiful human instrument, a civilized English person becomes, for any life whatever to play on. But this isn't the whole of the story.

If we are to have gentlemen and ladies in a world of the "commercial rich," who is to support them? It comes down more or less to that. Mrs. Asquith "did not know" "Lady Frederick Cavendish, or the beautiful Duchess of Westminster, or any of the Hamiltons, the Spencers, or the Howards. I do not think that she has been an intimate friend of the Portlands, or the Lansdownes, the Cecils, or the Percys." Congratulations! But how long can the Portlands hold together without Portland cement? That is the whole problem of Victorianism over again, the problem of aristocracy needing plutocracy. For my part, I am more interested in Walt Whitman in the military hospital than Lady Harrowby in the military hospital. He seems to me a less expensive spiritual flower, somehow. But when it comes to "government of gentlemen, by gentlemen, for gentlemen"—see Veblen—then I am with this Duster man. Because I like certain nice English people I hope that the noisy privileged will lose and the quiet privileged win.

FRANCIS HACKETT.

Mythical Science

Studies in Comparative Religion, Legend, and Law, by Sir J. G. Frazer. New York: The Macmillan Co.

THERE is a tradition,—which not having seen in print I may designate as folk-lore—that at Oxford, Frazer is recognized as the only Cambridge man who can write well. Without wishing to subscribe to any invidious distinction against Bertrand Russell and others, I may, at the outset, testify to the magical quality of Frazer's way of writing. Only some sort of magic can compel one to read through a three-volume book of over sixteen hundred pages from beginning to end, and this too, despite a most thorough-going dissent from the fundamental ideas and methods at the basis of all of Frazer's anthropologic work.

Following the procedure of his *Golden Bough* a number of passages in the Old Testament are used as pegs on which to hang vast collections of myths, magic rituals, and popular beliefs of "primitive" people, collected from all collocation of biblical themes with primitive superstitions—all done with rather naive humor—produces most charming results. The treatment of the stories about the patriarchs as if they were actual history produces rather broadly humorous results, e. g., when Jacob is spoken of as squeezing a free, even if somewhat uncontrolled, imagination shows itself in the suggestion of how the story of Samson and Delilah must have been told by the Philistines whom that lady freed from the burly free-booter. But perhaps the best illustration of an imaginative liberation from traditional ideology is shown when Frazer views the Deuteronomic reform and the destruction of the local "high places" as similar to the destruction of local or village

churches to compel people to go to town. But though a pupil of Robertson Smith and able to quote many books on the higher criticism, Frazer is entirely devoid of a critical historical sense. There is no sharp difference in his mind between actual fact and the content of popular myths about legendary figures like Moses. Hence, despite the almost unrivalled industry which these three volumes show, there is rather little light thrown on the Old Testament or on the life of the people who produced it. Zeal in the collection of facts cannot compensate for the absence of the critical spirit which is the essence of scientific procedure.

It may seem ungracious, especially after one has derived much innocent pleasure from the book, to quarrel with the author on the score of scientific method. Indeed, in the preface, Frazer explicitly renounces any claim for his general views except as tentative or provisional hypotheses, pigeonholes in which the multitude of facts can be temporarily arranged. But despite this genial prefatory profession of scientific modesty, Frazer cannot be absolved from the gross intellectual confusion at the basis of his unhistoric and indiscriminating use of the comparative method and of the method of interpreting everything as a "survival." The fact that these methods are now almost universally accepted in our popular social science and are supported by the supposed scientific character of the doctrine of social evolution, only serves to make the charm and the imposing bulk of Frazer's book all the more dangerous.

Despite the fact that degeneration is as much a biologic and historic fact as progress, the belief in the universality of the latter is so fashionable that few dare to doubt the pleasant dogma that there are certain necessary stages through which all people must pass and that the savage or lower races of today, represent the stages through which all civilized or higher peoples must at one time have passed. This belief, like the older popular account of the social contract, has the advantage of enabling us to write history a priori. We need not trouble to find the actual facts of the past when our formula can tell us what they must have been. The method of explaining every puzzling social fact as a survival is thus an ingenious device for capitalizing our boundless ignorance of the past and making it an unlimited reservoir of easy explanations.

Those who push this method in the social sciences think themselves scientific because they imagine they are following a method which has triumphed in biology. But apart from the criticism which vague and speculative ideas like evolution have received from modern experimental biologists like Jacques Loeb, there are important differences to be noted. Unlike the social evolutionists biologists take great pains to make sure of their facts before explaining them. The works of the social evolutionists from Spencer to Frazer are indeed monuments of credulity. Printed reports by globe-trotters, missionaries, trained or untrained observers, are all taken for a hundred per cent of their face value. They have no use for the undemocratic question as to the competence of the observer or reporter. Some ing Laban dry as a lemon, and the latter as inferior in the gift of gab as in the finer reaches of cunning.

Without meaning to be in the least irreverent he is certainly piquantly human in his description of the irascible but kindly-hearted deity who indulges in copious curses to ease his feelings (when Adam and Eve disobey him) and who waives scruples at the sin of David's census on the receipt of half a shekel per human head. The value of

years ago when it was fashionable to write up the East Side of New York, literary gentlemen used to visit our cafés where we generously fed them the kind of stories they wanted to hear. In this respect we were not unlike the savages who also like to please the traveler looking for striking details and local color. But the resulting books, though pleasant to read, are surely not competent to support scientific generalization. Social facts are more complicated than biologic ones and their careful observation for scientific purposes demands an even more cautious and elaborate technique. When Frazer, like Spencer and others, generalizes on the basis of myths and practices drawn from different peoples, without knowing the actual history or descent of these myths, his procedure is more absurd than that of a biologist who would generalize from the conduct of animals belonging to different phyla, e. g., the flying of bats, birds and bees. Comparisons are not significant unless we are comparing facts of the same order; an outer likeness of legends is no guarantee of similar origin.

Frazer is on seemingly firmer ground when he deals not with legends but with laws or practices. Magical ideas as to the harm that might happen to an animal if its milk (or some part of its body), is heated, do seem to explain in part the curious importance attached to one of the original ten commandments, viz., not to seethe a kid in the milk of its mother. But the subsequent development of this rule and its elaboration by the Talmudists into the dietary code and kitchen ritual which governs the orthodox Hebrews to this day, completely escapes Frazer. For here we are on historic ground and the actual development of this ancient tabu illustrates the inadequacy of the method of "survival." Indeed, no institution is really explained by the mere fact that it is a survival. There is always something in the present which makes some old practices continue while others disappear. What determines the difference is a question of historic fact, and not of a priori assumption.

It is curious that Frazer like other amateur psychologists dealing with the oddities of human conduct should fall into the naive rationalism of the assumption that all the queer things we do, we do because they were formerly deemed useful. This really amounts to the assumption that man is originally a rational or economic creature. But the facts of history clearly indicate that as far back as we can go we always find man just as full of irrational and inexplicable quips as are the most civilized races today. Rationality or economic action comes, when it comes at all, not at the beginning of human history but as the end of a process of eliminating primordially wasteful and meaningless motions. The lapse into the naive rationalism of our popular theories of magic is all the more curious in Frazer because his teacher Robertson Smith long ago pointed out the priority of ritual or conduct over myth and belief. The aversion for boiled milk may be older than certain beliefs in magic; and belief in magic may have as little to do with the Bantu's aversion for the use of water as is the case with many children and vagrant adults in our own midst. So also the wearing of bells by the priest, to which Frazer devotes so much alluring erudition, may be much earlier than the belief that he would die if he didn't. Must we suppose that every farmer puts a bell on his cow in order to frighten off evil spirits? I once heard two very learned modern scholars explain the stamping and shuffling of feet at unpopular lectures as a survival of sympathetic magic. But a little reflection might have recalled to their attention that at German University lectures the stamping

of feet is a sign of approval just as with us the clapping of hands.

Besides displaying on a large scale the frailties of our popular evolutionary social science Frazer's book illustrates the oft overlooked difference between imagination and insight. Frazer's type of imagination is the one that he himself glorifies as poetic fancy, "without which no one can enter the heart of the people." "A frigid rationalist will knock in vain at the magic rose-wreathed portals of fairyland." But the simple fact is that the scientific understanding of the nature of fairy tales actually comes not from the poetic fancy of credulous children but from rationally trained minds and that here we have the cause of the barrenness of Frazer's work. This conclusion imposes itself all the more when we compare Frazer with men like Maitland or Robertson Smith who use their imagination on the fragmentary material of history to open up for us new vistas on the life of the past. The latter are able to reconstruct the life of the past in its concrete fulness, only because their realistic imagination is supported by the critical sifting and checking up of evidence. It is only the abstract or lazy imagination that is repelled by the laborious methods of science. The imagination which is creative of insight finds in these methods indispensable nourishment and sorely needed support against irresponsible vagaries.

MORRIS R. COHEN.

A Social Bibliography

Modern Social Movements, Descriptive Summaries and Bibliographies, by Savel Zimand. New York: H. W. Wilson Co.

THE reality of the Russian revolution, the spectacular growth of trade unions in the past five years, and the extensive amount of general discussion concerning such questions as workers' control and guild socialism, have made many people curious about the form and content of the "new society." Mr. Zimand has set himself the task of enabling such people to satisfy their curiosity by cataloguing in this little volume the books, pamphlets, and articles that men and women have been writing on these subjects for many years. Here are to be found theories, political and economic, speculations, descriptions, and formal programs. Historic doctrine rubs shoulders with contemporary practice. Within the compass of 260 pages, Mr. Zimand defines, enumerates, and classifies all social movements from trade unionism to anarchism; from the Plumb plan to Bolshevism; from the single tax to national industrial councils; and from revisionist socialism to the schisms in the ranks of the British guild socialists. What is a social movement, anyhow?

With a canvas so small, and a theme so immense, no one should quarrel with the artist for overlooking a tree here and blade of grass there. All that can be asked for is a fair likeness, and a discriminating one. In the sweep of his brush, Mr. Zimand is both bold and sure; but inevitably the fine shades are lacking. One section of the book, for example, is devoted to "trade union theory." Now, books on trade union theory are generally of two kinds. They are either statements of what the theory of an organized labor movement ought to be or they are analyses of the working principles and practises of the trade unions themselves. Perhaps Mr. Zimand is aware of both of these elements, for in this section he includes such books as Cole's *Labor in the Commonwealth* and Blum's *Jurisdictional Disputes*, or De Leon's *The Burning Question of Trade*