

her argument, while Mimi, her little girl, who understands that she is always to look inattentive at such junctures, hurls herself at the dish of fritto misto; Miss Gilpin, the authoress, living daintily on small means in Italy because she loves the dear villagers and the white oxen; the learned Professor thrilling himself through the Forum with his exponent Julia of Assisi, fresh from the heart of things Franciscan, and painfully struck by the heartlessness of Rome, who at first in the grandeur and pride of the Seven Hills said to herself that it wasn't Assisi—a weak phrase, though she had soon found the right expression, a want of heart; Mr. Vickery the painter, white-haired, surviving in our thin and acid air from earlier romantic days, talking idealities from the luxurious installation of his studio, while his dry little wife arranged deliveries and entered the receipts in her ledger; and finally the English Marchesa, in the midst of her solemn and tattered palace mildly boiling her kettle over a spirit lamp, carrying alone in her widowhood her prodigious name, her responsibility, her sense of duty, her unassuming inefficiency, and the too much history on her hands—all these characters are done with a peculiar, shy brilliance and humor. Meantime, outside, the rumor of Rome is waiting.

It is this waiting of Rome outside in Mr. Lubbock's book that is a part of its quiet originality; but it is this waiting of Rome also that amazes me. The rumor and power of Rome I can see is felt and, even more, is critically perceived. I have a sense of a certain reliable apprehension of the qualities of the city, and of taste brought to it and ripe culture of mind, and of sensitive and right feeling. But I have a sense too of Rome as a mere ramification of an Oxford mood and English ego, singularly absorbed with details that are whimsical, personal, pleasantly gossipy and easily shared. Or Rome here is like a superb domain in which an insular soul can discover itself. It is a self-depreciative soul, socially abashed, but solid enough nevertheless with its own sort of assurance. It will not forget itself. It will enjoy the advantages of modesty in the midst of all this Latinity that is so teeming, so unselfconscious. Or sometimes in these pages Rome is too much like mere weather, that underlying subject of English life. And about this mood of his, or Rome, whichever you choose to call it, the author remains in the face of splendor sometimes a little timid, and in every case, save where a droll irony or sly humor will achieve his aim, always reticent.

For my part I like this book, it is one of the few bearable books on Italy in the world so far. But I am not willing to sit down with the author and both of us pretend that we are as cool and delightful and droll as all this; not while life is life and youth is youth, nor while the golden and brown walls and stairs, the pines, the cypresses, the suavity of the dome of St. Peter's, the colonnades, are there in Rome; not while the faintest memory is left of that magnificent centre of magnificent time, with its fountains sounding in the vast stone streets, its palaces and worldly pomps, and its impenetrable permanence and cynicism. And yet every book, of course, has a right to its own intention and to be judged by itself. And this reticence and light touch is, as all of us know by now, good literary cricket in an English essayist. At any rate it is one of the things that helps to make Mr. Lubbock's book so delightful, so well bred, so satisfactory in its sophistication, so wisely swung. But it is also one of the things, I may say, that helps us understand why London is not Rome.

S. Y.

## Dunsany Anew

*Plays of Gods and Men, Plays of Near and Far, by Lord Dunsany. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. \$1.75.*

IT might be amusing to take up the suggested challenge of If Shakespeare Lived Today and try to judge the new collection Putnam offers of Lord Dunsany's plays as if one had never heard of him. It is easier to do so in the volume entitled *Plays of Near and Far* than in *Plays of Gods and Men*, because the latter consists of four of the most famous plays already produced—*The Tents of the Arabs*, *The Laughter of the Gods*, *The Queen's Enemies*, and *A Night at an Inn*—and the destiny-and-impending-doom motive that runs through them all might seem familiar because of Maeterlinck's use of them, even if we did not recognize the stone-stamp Dunsany prefers to a rubber one in his catastrophes.

Judging with our professed detachment from the author's established fame, we would find in his work a strong dramatic sense clothed in a murky veil of mechanical mystery, shot with flashes of wit and gleams of irony. Little humor, if by that we mean a sense of the ludicrous—else how could the author persist in teetering, as he so often does, on the precarious brink of the sublime? So slight an impulse would precipitate him into the comic that the reader has an almost conscious pride in continued admiration—and conscious virtue in refraining from too-easy parody! This may be the unfortunate effect of reading in succession works meant to be presented singly—and a single Dunsany play in a contrasting program is as effective as a black opal artfully set—a smouldering jewel with a somewhat artificial valuation.

His exotic imagery, sombre beauty, and the constant elusive suggestion of oracular wisdom never clearly revealed, combined with the power of evoking a nightmare sense of inescapable horror—the very substance of a bad dream!—give Dunsany imaginative mastery. But we doubt if our detached critic could pronounce *The Compromise of the King of the Golden Isles*, *If Shakespeare Lived Today*, and *Fame and the Poet* more than “clever” or “promising.” (We see Lord Dunsany's fame, not vulgar and strident like that of his Poet, but in the guise of a matronly and dressy *Précieuse*, with blue stockings all too well-filled, who—tho' passing fair—might be fairer for reducing a bit!) A *Good Bargain* would make one very hopeful for a young poet—joyous and fanciful, lovely and whimsical as it is. But *Cheezo* is merely worthy cudgel-play.

Lord Dunsany, as his preface indicates, loves best *The Flight of the Queen*, and were one not teased by wondering if Maeterlinck would not have done it better, it would be easy to agree with him. But the actual disaffected critic would rather have written *A Good Bargain*, and rather have read *The Tents of the Arabs* than the more striking plays grouped with it.

Reading plays bound in a volume is admittedly poor diversion, like shooting driven birds. Yet if the authors and publishers choose to beat them out, we may consider them fair literary game. Lord Dunsany provides his established friends with noble sport,—soaring beauty in the printed words, despite the taint of an unnatural presentation. Yet we—in our role of new acquaintance—would look forward to a more purely poetic revelation of his gift than these two volumes offer.

DOROTHY BACON WOOLSEY.

*The Remnant*, by Rufus M. Jones. London: The Swarthmore Press. 5s.

PROFESSOR JONES, the distinguished scholar of Haverford College, has from time to time turned aside from the production of such major works as his *Studies in Mystical Religion*, his *Spiritual Reformers of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* and his histories of Quakerism, to give us such charmingly readable opuscula as *The Double Search* and this present volume.

By "the remnant" used in the historical sense, we mean the small, outstanding group of persons who have vision of the true line of march for their age and people, clear insight into the underlying principle of life and action, and a faith that ventures everything to achieve what ought to be. It is the small circle of those who give their mind to the things that are true and elevated and just and pure and lovely and of good report. A few—a rare and chosen few—travel on ahead of the rest. They are willing to pay the price, in agony and suffering, which is always involved in spiritual advances.

These sentences define very well what Professor Jones means by what he calls "the remnant-idea." Among the historical embodiments of the idea dealt with in the various chapters are the Montanists, the Donatists, the Franciscans, the Waldenses, the fourteenth century Friends of God, the Anabaptists and the Quakers. The book closes with two chapters of general reflections upon the part played by spiritually-minded minorities in religious history. Although the writer does not conceal where his own sympathies lie, generous recognition is made of the rights of the majority and of the value of public spirit. Altogether this little work can be heartily recommended as among the best of its kind, to all who care to browse in the quieter pastures of our spiritual past.

JOHN BAILLIE.

Alfred A. Knopf published on August 15th *The Dove's Nest and Other Stories* by Katharine Mansfield, of which a review (of the English edition) by Conrad Aiken appeared in *The New Republic* of August 8th.

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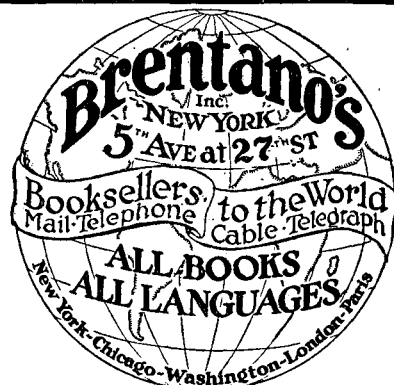
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