

## Lawrence's Latest

ST. MAWR. By D. H. LAWRENCE. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1925. \$2.

Reviewed by LOUIS KRONENBERGER

THE novels of D. H. Lawrence show variety in unity: all of them have much in common, yet each of them is different and unique. His unmistakable personality and style and outlook upon life make it impossible not to recognize a book of his at once; but it is equally impossible to imagine the substance of the book. His interest in life is too wide, his knowledge too deep, his own development too steady. Thus his latest novel has much in common with his former ones; indeed it firmly consolidates, for the first time in one book, their separate qualities. But it has also, as the others have not and do not much suggest, one new and unique creation, the horse St. Mawr.

With every right St. Mawr should become the figure for praise and remembrance in the book he gives his name, for he is one of Lawrence's finest creations and one of the finest horses in literature. He is a great horse, a great physical creation, and it is only after we have him as a great horse that we can allow him to play his part in Lou Carrington's highly neurotic life.

Lou Carrington and her mother Mrs. Witt are two American women who have moved over Europe as fleeting characters in all the varieties of European existence. Lou is satisfactorily enough married to a young baronet, but she lacks contentment. Men in whom the original life-force is played out weary her with their love and their cleverness. In St. Mawr's arrogant avoidance of others, in his untouched vitality and sense of mystical wonder, she finds a symbol of what she seeks. Again in a half-breed groom Phoenix she finds a living within oneself and isolation from life which charm and interest her. Her mother is a far different woman and a far more interesting one. She has lived more directly than Lou and now, at middle-age, she subsists by indirect contact: by acridly taking in everything that she can, by criticizing, by destroying. She too is attracted by a groom—St. Mawr's—who cherishes his individualism; but he feels too insulted by her manner to consider the idea of marriage she broaches. The two women, the two grooms, and St. Mawr leave England and go to America. Here Lou's disillusionment becomes complete when St. Mawr violates what perfection she had accorded him and grows interested in a Texas mare, and when Phoenix re-establishes himself in his native world of Indian women. To escape the captivities of life and sex, and so far as possible achieve her own inner soul, she buys a tumble-down ranch in New Mexico where she and her infinitely weary mother settle down.

The treatment in this novel is ironical, the tone is negative, the chief emotions are impotence and disillusionment. A single spirit of pure and incorruptible vitality is found for a while in the horse, but even he succumbs at last to the attractions of a mare, and the book ends diminuendo. But in spite of the negative quality of its action, "St. Mawr" shows Lawrence in full command of his powers, even if he but uses them in moderation. The faucet is not turned fully on, but the water flows clearly and continuously. The note of irony, for instance, which pervades the book from the beginning and is almost incarnate in Mrs. Witt, is sustained throughout. Partly because of this, and partly because the book consolidates Lawrence's many qualities without letting any of them run off with him, "St. Mawr" has balance. Its probings and analyses, if they break no new ground, are clear and relevant; its style, as richly cumulative as ever, is less idiosyncratic and more normal; its narrative, though it moves downhill and is in one mass without a single chapter break, is straightforward. In these respects, if Lawrence has plowed the field no deeper, he has yoked his horses more firmly together. In respect of the two women, neither characterization is very great. On the intellectual side Mrs. Witt is a rather brilliant achievement; but she has less of life about her than of Lawrence's own acrid wit. However much others may find in it, I cannot attach importance to the relationship between her and St. Mawr other than that the horse is a mere symbol of what she desires. And there is really nothing important about Mr. Lawrence's use of American women and of

the American scene. His recent visit to New Mexico enables him to picture it accurately and almost autochthonously with a great deal of scenic beauty. But like the nationality of the two women, it has only a geographical significance. Such superficial aspects count for little in the novels of D. H. Lawrence: whatever he beholds is transmuted by the eye of the beholder.

## A Yankee Victorian

EDWARD EVERETT, ORATOR AND STATESMAN. By PAUL REVERE FROTHINGHAM. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. 1925. 2 vols. \$6.00.

Reviewed by M. A. DE WOLFE HOWE

Author of "Barrett Wendell and His Letters"

THERE are books for the older generation and books for the younger. This, on the face of it, is a book for the fathers of the older, for the grandfathers of the younger, generation. Edward Everett died more than sixty years ago, at the age of seventy-one, three months before the end of our Civil War. He was a notable figure of the period which came then to a close. A biography of him published within ten years of his death would, in the very nature of the case, have made a powerful appeal to the interest and curiosity of the American public. Such a book was expected for many years from his brilliant, erratic, and adoring son, William Everett. The expectation was never fulfilled, and now, the great name of Edward Everett having shrunk to little more than a name, the Rev. Dr. P. R. Frothingham, a grand-nephew of Mrs. Edward Everett, has performed, and admirably performed, the long-deferred task.

In a recent address in England the late Dr. A. C. Benson laid the shortcomings of biography to the present-day conception of death. "Death," he is credited with saying, "was such a blow to the circle of friends and relations that it seemed to change their whole view of the departed, and his character was invested with a sort of sacredness . . . The biographer was faced with passionate emotion and intense hero worship . . . As long as these things remained, biography must continue to be a tame, reticent, sentimental, and insincere art." In this view of the matter—essentially a sound view—it is just as well that William Everett did not write the biography, which would have been far more liable to such limitations at his filial hands than at those of a great-nephew by marriage. Dr. Frothingham, indeed, stands at a fortunate distance from his subject, both in relationship and in time. There is at once enough of inherited respect and of detachment to secure a just appraisal of qualities, motive, and achievement. The penalty of the long delay in taking up the subject at all is that the interest of the book is rather historical than acutely personal.

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Yet a very definite personality projects itself from these pages. Dr. Frothingham did well, in framing his title, to place the emphasis of priority on the word "Orator." In the golden age of American oratory—with Webster, Choate, and others setting a high standard of performance—Everett, from the beginning of his career to its very end, held a place in the front rank of eloquence. Sometimes his gift got him into difficulties, as when, in the full flood of felicitous speech, on his first important appearance on the floor of Congress, he was beguiled, quite gratuitously, into what was interpreted by many as a defense of the institution of slavery—an ineptitude which cost him dear through all his days. In a time when the national life had many symptoms of sickness, and the patient was a fit subject for heroic treatment, Everett's prescriptions were constantly for moderation and compromise. The reformers would none of him, and even his early admirer Emerson exclaimed in his diary, "It is in vain for sugar to try to be salt."

In justification of Everett's consistent occupancy of the "middle ground," his biographer declares: "He was a clergyman in politics. He endeavored from first to last to employ the principles of the pulpit and to practise the gentle virtues of the Ministry of Religion amid all the heat and dust of the political arena." This explains Everett in part, but there are words of his own which, all un-

designedly, throw a revealing light upon his nature. "I"—he once said of himself—"who, as far as *hot water* is concerned, have a perfect hydrophobia"; and, even so late as the day before his sixtieth birthday, he had the clearness of vision to declare, "I am not *pachydermatous* enough." To a certain thinness of skin many of the changes in his varied life were due. It is a charitable statement on the part of his biographer that "nothing daunted him unless it were monotony."

But into what a variety of experience did his combined sensitiveness and horror of monotony lead him! Minister of an important Boston church at nineteen, appointed Professor of Greek at Harvard at twenty-one, with a provision for four years of study and travel in Europe before taking up his work, abandoning his professorship after a brief term, during which he was also editor of the *North American Review*, to enter the House of Representatives in Washington, Governor of Massachusetts, Minister to England, President of Harvard, United States Senator, Secretary of State, and at the last, as at the beginning, famed especially for his commanding power of public speech—rarely has an American enjoyed such opportunities for public service and personal influence. There was, in fact, hardly an American of his time so enriched through personal relations with the most significant men and women of the Victorian period, and the years immediately preceding it, both in America and Europe. His biography abounds in reference to these figures, from Sir Walter Scott to Webster and Lincoln—references to which it is possible merely to allude in this place.

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"Some of the orations would have been better," shrewdly observes Everett's biographer, "if they had not been so good." If the man himself—one feels after reading the record of his life—had not been so perfect a product of what were counted the most civilizing influences of his time, he would have held a securer place among its greatest men. Everything conspired to his taking himself with the utmost seriousness. All the favors of heaven seemed to be his for the asking. He was, however, not always innocent of misgivings and self-criticism. One seldom likes him better than when he laughs at himself, almost as a second Mr. Winkle, on a shooting-party in England. To still greater advantage he appears immediately after the day at Gettysburg when Lincoln's address produced a negligible effect and his own oration was hailed as a masterpiece, for he then wrote to the President: "I should be glad if I could flatter myself that I came as near the central idea of the occasion in two hours as you did in ten minutes." His wholehearted support of Lincoln, after he himself had run for the vice-presidency on an opposing ticket in 1860, gave to the final years of his life a glowing hue of patriotism which the highly colored words of preceding decades had somehow failed to effect. To the circumstances of these war-time years the biographer owes his fortunate freedom from any necessity of explanations and reservations in parting from his subject.

The book fills an important gap in the biographical history of the nineteenth century. It is a truer book than any "authorized" biographer would have been likely to make it fifty or sixty years ago. And it shows afresh, what several other recent biographies have shown, that without previous experience in the art of biography, a writer adequately equipped with a sense of proportion, with background, and with taste, possesses the essential qualifications for an important biographical task.

## The Saturday Review of LITERATURE

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or ashamed of not being Japanese; all his mind is on the story. Hence all our minds are on the story. Hence, incidentally, he writes the best prose that has come our way. Hence we feel at last freely admitted to the society of our fellows.

That this should be true of "You Know Me, Al," a story about baseball, a game which is not played in England, a story written often in a language which is not English, gives us pause. To what does he owe his success? Besides his unconsciousness and the additional power which he is thus free to devote to his art, Mr. Lardner has talents of a remarkable order. With extraordinary ease and aptitude, with the quickest strokes, the surest touch, the sharpest insight he lets Jack Keefe the baseball player cut out his own outline, fill in his own depths, until the figure of the foolish, boastful, innocent athlete lives before us. As he babbles out his mind on paper there rises up friends, sweethearts, the scenery, town, and country—all surround him and make him up in his completeness. We gaze into the depths of a society which goes its ways intent on its own concerns. There, perhaps, is one of the elements of Mr. Lardner's success. He is not merely himself intent on his own game, but his characters are equally intent on theirs. It is no coincidence that the best of Mr. Lardner's stories are about games, for one may guess that Mr. Lardner's interest in games has solved one of the most difficult problems of the American writer; it has given him a clue, a center, a meeting place for the divers activities of people whom a vast continent isolates, whom no tradition controls. Games give him what society gives his English brother. Whatever the precise reason, Mr. Lardner at any rate provides something unique in its kind, something indigenous to the soil, which the traveller may carry off as a trophy to prove to the incredulous that he has actually been to America and found it a foreign land. But the time has come when the tourist must reckon up his expenses and experiences, and attempt to cast up his account of the tour as a whole.

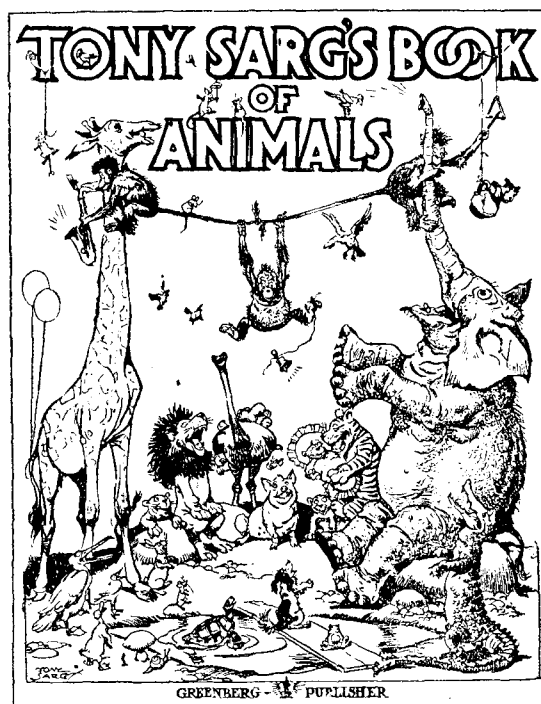
At the outset let us admit that our impressions are highly mixed and the opinions we have come to, if anything, less definite, less assured than those with which we started. For when we consider the mixed origin of the literature we are trying to understand, its youth, its age, and all those currents which are blowing across the stream of its natural development, we may well exclaim that French is simpler, English is simpler, all modern literatures are simpler to sum up and understand than this new American literature. A discord lies at the root of it; the natural bent of the American is twisted at the start. For the more sensitive he is, the more he must read English literature; the more he reads English literature, the more alive he must become to the puzzle and perplexity of this great art which uses the language on his own lips to express an experience which is not his and to mirror a civilization which he has never known. The choice has to be made—whether to yield or to rebel. The more sensitive, or at least the more sophisticated, the Henry Jameses, the Hergeshimers, the Edith Whartons, decide in favor of England and pay the penalty by exaggerating the English culture, the traditional English good manners, and stressing too heavily or in the wrong places those social differences which, though the first to strike the foreigner, are by no means the most profound. What their work gains in refinement it loses in that perpetual distortion of values, that obsession with surface distinctions—the age of old houses, the glamour of great names—which makes it necessary to remember that Henry James was a foreigner if we are not to call him a snob.

On the other hand, the simpler and cruder writers, like Walt Whitman, Mr. Anderson, Mr. Masters—decide in favor of America, but truculently, self-consciously, protestingly, "showing off" as the nurses would say, their newness, their independence, their individuality. Both influences are unfortunate and serve to obscure and delay the development of the real American literature itself. But, some critics would interpose, are we not making mountains out of molehills, conjuring up distinctions where none exist? The "real American literature" in the time of Hawthorne, Emerson, and Lowell was much of a piece with contemporary English literature, and the present movement towards a national literature is confined to a few enthusiasts and extremists who will grow older and wiser and see the folly of their ways.

But the tourist can no longer accept this comfortable doctrine, flattering though it be to his pride

of birth. Obviously there are American writers who do not care a straw for English opinion or for English culture, and write very vigorously none the less—witness Mr. Lardner; there are Americans who have all the accomplishment of culture without a trace of its excess—witness Miss Willa Cather; there are Americans whose aim it is to write a book off their own bat and no one else's—witness Miss Fannie Hurst. But, the shortest tour, the most superficial inspection, must impress him with what is of far greater importance—the fact that where the land itself is so different, and the society so different, the literature must needs differ and differ more and more widely as time goes by from those of other countries.

American literature will be influenced, no doubt, like all others, and the English influence may well predominate. But clearly the English tradition is already unable to cope with this vast land, these prairies, these cornfields, these lonely little groups of men and women scattered at immense distances from each other, these vast industrial cities with their skyscrapers and their night signs and their perfect organization of machinery. It cannot extract their meaning and interpret their beauty. How could it be otherwise? The English tradition is formed upon a little country; its center is an old house with many rooms each crammed with objects and crowded with people who know each other intimately, whose manners, thoughts, and speech are ruled all the time, if unconsciously, by the spirit of the past. But in America there is baseball instead of society; instead of the old landscape which has moved men to emo-



Cover design for the forthcoming "Tony Sarg's Book of Animals" (Greenberg)

tion for endless summers and springs a new land, its tin cans, its prairies, its cornfields flung disorderly about like a mosaic of incongruous pieces waiting order at the artist's hands; while the people are equally diversified into fragments of many nationalities.

To describe, to unify, to make order out of all these severed parts, a new art is needed and the control of a new tradition. That both are in process of birth the language itself gives us proof. For the Americans are doing what the Elizabethans did—they are coining new words. They are instinctively making the language adapt itself to their needs. In England, save for the impetus given by the war, the word coining power has lapsed; our writers vary the metres of their poetry, remodel the rhythms of prose, but one may search English fiction in vain for a single new word. It is significant that when we want to freshen our speech we borrow from America—poppycock, rambunctious, flipflop, booster, good-mixer—all the expressive ugly vigorous slang which creeps into use among us first in talk, later in writing, comes from across the Atlantic. Nor does it need much foresight to predict that when words are being made, a literature will be made out of them. Already we hear the first jars and dissonances, the strangled difficult music of the prelude. As we shut our books and look out again upon the English fields a strident note rings in our ears. We hear the first lovemaking and the first laughter of the child who was exposed by its parents three hundred years ago upon a rocky shore and survived solely by its own exertions and is a little sore and proud and diffident and self-assertive in consequence and is now on the threshold of man's estate.

## A Flash of Lightning

THUNDERSTORM. By G. B. STERN. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1925. \$2.

Reviewed by A. HAMILTON GIBBS

Author of "Soundings"

TO any reader who knows Menaggio, or the twin jewels just across the water, Bellaggio and Cadenabbia, Miss Stern's charmingly written episode of English life in Italy will be a source of undiluted joy,—or nearly so. The charm of the book is complete up to the moment when Miss Stern's flash of lightning rips across the Italian sky and disintegrates the English group. The trouble is that the flash is not the Almighty's, but Miss Stern's; and the effect is rather like turning a spotlight upon a blaze of sunshine, like putting new wine into old bottles, like letting fiction hobnob with fact. For nothing could be more in the nature of fact, more completely true to life than the Italian husband and wife, Ettore and Vana, who, with the dramatic intensity that belong only to the supremely naïve, live a hundred years in a single minute, suffer the pangs of death at the first symptom of an approaching cold in the head, are transported into lyrical ecstasy by the everyday phenomenon of a hen, their hen, laying an egg, and who are as emotionally satisfied by tears as by laughter. These two are not "masterpieces of delicate caricature" as the jacket states. They are masterpieces of realism, portraits of two individuals, of thousands of individuals, who at this moment are climbing the olive slopes anywhere in Italy. These two are the whole book, and it is for her painting of them that Miss Stern wins a wreath of bays. In the happiest manner in the world she has caught their atmosphere and the glamour of it is in every page. The method of their captivation of their English employers by the sheer delight of their personality is a joy to read, and when you find out that of course the English were aware all the time of the little peccadillos that were being committed from day to day and were drawing a subtle pleasure from the knowledge, you settle back to see what is going to happen when the thunderstorm comes on with the warmest appreciation.

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But the storm does not creep up across the sky from a cloud no bigger than a man's hand! It is a storm that you don't quite believe in. You fancy that through it you can hear the creak of the wind machine, the rolling of the balls across the sheet of iron that produces the noise! And all those recognizable and serene English people, who adore their villa and their life and whose sense of humor seems to be operating perfectly, suddenly become unrecognizable and damn each other to hell with a bitterness and a Latin-ness that seem a little too Latin to acquire in only two years residence in Italy. One of the characters asks, when the storm has blown over, "What could have been the matter with us all? I never knew civilized people could be such devils." But as the lapse of time, as stated by the author, is only half an hour from the moment when they were hurling poisoned darts into each other's souls and they are once more as peaceful as if nothing had ever happened, you cannot help thinking again that the storm was a put-up job.

One knows that people can be devils,—even English people. The group selected by Miss Stern have all the makings of quite perfect specimens,—their display of talent leaves no possible room for doubt; but their exhibition fills one with the same startled surprise that would ensue if one's neighbor fired off a million cannon crackers on the fourth of June.

Then, too, it smacks somewhat of a sacrifice of technique on the altar of suspense, to leave the reader peeping unsuccessfully over the character's shoulder to try and read the fatal telegram, towards the end of the book, and then to begin a new part and establish entirely unnecessary persons at some length, only to return to the other scene at the exact point where it was left off. Even the movies are alive to the danger of that. It would have been so simple to avoid wrenching the whole structure in that way by establishing those two, Miss Sophia and the sleeping partner, before the thunderstorm broke, instead of afterwards.

Eliminating for the moment, however, these two bones of contention, it remains true that the first half of the book is, in golfing parlance, a par performance and deserves a round of applause.