

A Challenging Personality

WINSTON CHURCHILL. By "EPHESIAN."
New York: Robert M. McBride & Co. 1928. \$5.

Reviewed by J. W. T. MASON

Author of "Creative Freedom"

THE Rt. Hon. Winston Churchill, M. P. is the most conspicuous living example of the way life progresses despite its failures. No other man has been tripped by his own impetuosity as persistently as Mr. Churchill and no other occupant of high political office has his capacity for starting life all over again year by year. The anonymous author of this eulogy of the British Chancellor of the Exchequer (his title as this review is written; it may change to Premier or vanish completely by the time the review appears in print) recalls that Mark Twain, introducing Mr. Churchill to an American lecture audience, said:

"By his father he is an Englishman, by his mother an American. Behold the perfect man!"

A Nordic verdict. Yet, in a way Mr. Churchill may be called the perfect man, in terms of action. He is never at rest and his activity covers a wider field even than that of the late Theodore Roosevelt who had to make his own circle a domestic one, politically. Mr. Churchill is fortunate in having the wider circle of British imperial interests for his performances and the world war as well.

Before he was twenty-five Mr. Churchill had started for South Africa as a war correspondent, during the Boer War, and "Ephesian" records that "this is his fifth campaign, and it is claimed for him that he shares with Napoleon the distinction of being the only soldier who has waged war on three Continents."

Four Continents, really; for at home, during his school days Mr. Churchill was frequently at war with masters or fellow students. He went further than Napoleon in another respect also. He showed his personal courage at school by volunteering to place an apple on his head for a swordsman to cut in two—a characteristic feat which he survived to repeat in different ways during the rest of his life. He has always been putting apples on his head for swords of Damocles to cut and his head is still on his shoulders.

Having started life as a Conservative, he changed to a Liberal, then evolved into an independent Constitutionalist and later returned to the Conservative fold (where he was as these lines were put on paper). In 1906, Sir Edward Gray proposing the health of Churchill, then aged thirty-two, said he had "achieved distinction in at least five different careers—as a soldier, a war correspondent, a lecturer, an author, and last but not least, a politician."

Since then, Mr. Churchill has achieved further distinction as the holder of most of the important posts in the British cabinet, except (at this writing) the Premiership. When the World War broke out he was First Lord of the Admiralty, having been previously President of the Board of Trade and Home Secretary. In succession, during the war and afterward, he was Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Minister of Munitions, Secretary of State for War, Head of the Air Ministry, Colonial Secretary, and Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Yet, nowhere is it possible to write that he was a great creative force. During the war he was forced out of the government because of his failures at Antwerp and Gallipoli. He turned then from his ministries to soldiering as a major in the trenches, until that palled and he returned to Westminster offering his head for other apples, and having his offer accepted.

He is a brilliant speaker, quick to take the dialectic offensive with clever sentences. In a tariff reform debate with Mr. Wyndham, as "Ephesian" relates, Mr. Churchill spoke of his opponent as "standing no nonsense from facts." But such thrusts do not explain his fame. It is Mr. Churchill's genius, perhaps, that he, himself, "stands no nonsense from failures." He is ever trying again. Mr. Churchill is credited by his biographer with being responsible for the fact that the British fleet was instantly ready at the outbreak of the war and with forcing the use of tanks upon reluctant *confrères*. Let it be so; his success is not in such accomplishments as these. It is in his refusal to stay down. Persistence, perseverance, defiance of fate will ever fascinate mankind and will carry rewards not based so much on accomplished results as on the spirit of ever keeping at it. "Ephesian" shows his readers Mr. Churchill's career in these terms.

Mr. Moon's Notebook

March 27: *Horses, Horses, Horses!*

A LETTER from my son, away at school in the West, informs me that he is going to learn the English saddle. He has been riding for some time now, and, presumably, always "riding Western." I am informed that my youngest daughter is also learning to ride. All of which starts me thinking about horses. They are rare enough in this city; and I seldom get up to Central Park to view the people posting along the bridle-paths. Almost the only horses I see nowadays are the intermittent few that seem to spend their time patiently hanging their heads at the curb, apparently anesthetized by the reek of the passing torrent of motors. And such horses, for the most part, hide themselves away on the side-streets—or park near the Plaza attached to ancient purple-cushioned barouches. A horse on Fifth Avenue, in the flood of traffic, is almost as rare a sight as a quagga or Burchell's zebra.

Horses seem beaten and baffled creatures in the city. They are now almost entirely at the mercy of teamsters. Gone long since the rolling landaus with their spick and span and spanking teams. But recently a young lady of my acquaintance, late for a dinner engagement, informed me that she had been delayed by feeding apples to a curbstone horse, whose name I forget. Was it Agnes? In any event, it was despondent. It had, as the lady put it, "feathers on its feet." It was the large, heavy draft-horse type. The lady of whom I speak is, on the other hand, quite small. Therefore it is pleasant to think of her comforting a huge dejected animal with apples, and of such a perfectly beautiful friendship ripening "midstream the city's roar." For the characteristic purveyor of charity used to be the little girl at the snow-silled casement, scattering breadcrumbs to robin redbreast,—though ancient city horses need their apples just as much! Not that I suggest that when a horse walks down your cross-street, there should be a bombardment of apples from all the office windows!

Horses' questing, snuffling noses are velvety and pathetic. Their eyes are usually beautiful. As for their patience—my God, it is terrible! The world has never deserved the patience of its domestic animals. I am no horseman, and yet somehow horses have constantly ambled into much of the poetry I have essayed to write. I used to ride, once upon a time, in California. Perhaps that is why. In those days there were whole summers of riding. One's mount was not lordly. I rode some old Army horse or other, in a heavy McClellan saddle with hooded stirrups. I am a bad horseman, and the best mount I had was really a carriage horse. But he was a slim, temperamental fellow, nervous and frequently scared by something in the road. And when he was scared he could certainly "lay himself down to go." One gets extremely fond of them when they are as nervous as all that.

I myself was quite scared when I first got aboard a horse. My friends tried to hide their laughter, and succeeded badly. It seemed to me that I was thirty feet up in the air at the mercy of the elements. The horse was a good old sturdy sorrel, and rightly named "Bumper." The first time he trotted with me my every vertebra was jarred loose. Afterward there were the meals one ate off the mantelpiece. Then I learned that horses could singlefoot, canter like a rocking-chair, and, finally, that they could run—this last always with visions of them stumbling precipitately to project the rider forward on a lonely and unfortunate flight. Well, the only thing to do is to sit as tight as you can and forget about that—as I had to do the first time I ever went up in an airplane.

They don't stumble so often. And nothing in the world, in my fond recollection, surpasses the sensation of sitting a horse at a dead run. Even so mediocre a rider as myself, if riding day after day, soon becomes to a certain extent "one with his horse." You get to know the horse's temperament. You get to talk to them, if you're riding alone, in a casual sort of way that they seem to like. They begin to cock an ear back at you and telegraph their own point of view concerning something in the road ahead. They're very nice people, most of them. And the tame ones are fairly helpless when you come right down to it.

One horse—or rather, old black mare—I never liked; and she never liked me. I had to ride her

sometimes when there was nothing better to ride. She was really too old for roads and hills; and she was grouchy. She acted just the same way when she was harnessed to the surrey. She always got the reins under her tail and stopped short. When you saddled her for riding she distended; and, consequently, about a quarter of a mile along on your ride, when she decided to become a perfect thirty-six again, the cinch slipped and the saddle turned round under her belly—or, at least, *would have*—if you hadn't been prepared.

Then she used to roar, also. She had natural horse-asthma—or maybe it was only mulishness. But she roared very offensively when she put her mind to it. I rode her at no very great pace—one couldn't—so it wasn't proof of my cruelty, but proof of her acrimony. Occasionally she would squeal and try to buck. But the poor old lady couldn't buck off even a bad rider. She so resented being ridden, however, that it almost completely spoiled the occasion for me; particularly as one inevitably dropped back clean out of sight of the better-mounted riders.

But that was about the only horse I never got along with very well. I loved the slim fellow I have spoken of, whose cognomen was "Bird." As I remember, he was a bay. He was long-legged and highly strung. He held his head prettily. But before I rode "Bird" I rode others, and there were three who rode with me. Sometimes, indeed, there was a regular cavalcade through the California moonlight. It is glorious to climb hillsides studded with live-oak in full California sunlight. But blanched roads in the moonlight, and the clattering tattoo of the hoofs of four horses past somnolent ranch buildings—the sudden challenge to race on a lonely straightaway stretch, and the sensation (as near to flying as anything human can be—I mean of flying with the human body, not trapped in a machine) of the rush forward in an uncanny light that seems to erase all the little obstacles that take the eye in daylight (as is the case when one runs afout by night—you seem to go much faster, the road runs under you much more swiftly),—all that is part of the true romance.

And then, of course, singing goes with moonlight riding, and a pleasing sentimentality goes with moonlight riding. And men, I think, have lost a large sort of gallantry, too, since they have descended to fuss and fiddle with self-starters and gear-shifts, and no longer ride. For gallantry goes with horses. To ride best you must hold yourself erect, with your chin up. You gain poise, and,—yes, perhaps a touch of swank. But not deleterious swank, or you're pretty sure to come a cropper. You move in a rhythm, the rhythm of a tall, proud, sure-stepping animal. You become part of a larger, more vital existence—or it seems so. This is no dead metal that you manage, whose power and pace make dynamic for a space your puny, parasitic being. This is a great, natural creature with whose vitality you are for the moment integral. For man, the most fundamental exhilaration will always reside in power and speed. Perhaps one may feel more truly conquering in an airplane, where the only blood and flesh and bone concerned are one's own. But the relationship of man to horse goes back so far through the ages that, in riding, the legendary centaur life is easily felt, can be keenly imagined. As horse and man move forward together, one is in closer kinship with the instinctive world of languageless creatures than even, to my mind, through the friendship of a devoted dog.

Motion! How little we actually *move* in this city life of ours; how much we are carried, in lifeless mechanisms propelled by the combustion of gases in cylinders. Riding in the open is how different a manner of being carried! It is constant exercise. And what wonder that, as I have mentioned, horses inspire poetry; for riding is a rhythmic art. The paces of a horse are great, natural, varied rhythms. They have begotten many famous lines, all the way from "quadrupedante putrem"—etc., to "Riding at dawn, riding alone, Gillespie left the town behind," which last could only have been written, as it were, at a gallop; and, as it was, by an Englishman accustomed to the saddle. What singlefooting—or is it nearer to a rack—in Browning's, "As I ride, as I ride—" "Zebra-footed, ostrich-thighed—" what fine impressionism (incidentally) concerning that particular Arab steed!

Only once in my life have I been insulted by a

horse. That was in the New Forest, in England. I suppose the horse knew that I was a Yank. It had its head out over the half-door of its stable. Its ears went back, its eyeball rolled, it elongated its neck, —and then it retracted its upper lip in a manner which I cannot hope to imitate, much as I have since practiced it,—curled its lip back right over its nose, it did, and grinned at me with a positively Rooseveltian ferocity. The only retort I could think of at the moment was, "So are you!" Which seemed a bit weak.

No, I have never ridden to hounds, and I never bestraddled a horse that could jump anything. A young friend of mine lang syne rode a beautifully spirited young animal that had to be broken of a nervous habit of rearing and falling over backward. But I never experienced any such excitement. However, there is one glorious memory I carry on with me through life, the memory of riding cross-country in the Spring after the drenching winter rains of Northern California were over. One simply cavorted then, over rolling fields, through flashing silver water and flying clods. Cool blue and gold was the morning. No horse but danced that day, if reined down to a trot. One just naturally let out a loud whoop and rode what one imagined must be "hell-for-leather." And over the crest of a hill the wide rolling world broke, laughing with sunlight, like the golden age returned anew. "For winter's rains and ruins are over—!" Holy mackerel,—how the heart sang!

WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

(To be continued)

The Life of Myth

THE MYTHOLOGY OF ALL RACES. Vol. IV. Finno-Ugric, Siberian. By UNO HOLMBERG. Boston: Marshall Jones & Company. 1927.

Reviewed by B. MALINOWSKI
University of London

MYTH, clothing the brutal and naked beauty of primeval thought with the dignity of tradition and the majesty of sacredness, exerts a singular attraction upon the human mind, civilized and sophisticated, as well as simple and untutored. The mixture of incompatible extremes, of the shameful and the holy, the graceful and the raw, the fleshly and the spiritual, the tragic and the clownish, surrounds myth with an atmosphere of mystery and gives it a meaning which has always inspired the artist and puzzled the student. From myth and folk-tale have sprung the earliest as well as the ripest products of art: the savage enactment of myth at initiation and tribal feast as well as the tragedies of ancient Greece, the Elizabethan theatre, and the Wagnerian musical drama. In primitive, in pagan, and in Christian painting and sculpture, myth has supplied most of the subject matter and atmosphere.

The present volume, opening up one of the most wonderful and, for many reasons, least known regions of folk-lore, will be equally welcome to the scholar and the man of letters. It is a comprehensive survey of the mythological *Weltanschauung* of the Siberian and Finno-Ugric peoples, based on a polyglot and extensive knowledge of the subject and, to a great extent also, on personal field work. It will be an important addition to the subject of general mythology, on which we have material enough, but not of the right sort.

The enormous variety of theories in comparative mythology and the wide range of opinions as to the true nature of a sacred tale is bewildering and disheartening. It shows how difficult to understand is the purely theoretical problem set by these tales, which come from a distant past and in which we seem to hear things both strange and familiar, almost incomprehensible messages which yet seem to convey a profound and inevitable meaning. There are theories which make folklore into a muddled natural science, and the psychoanalytic interpretations which make myths into day-dreams charged with an incestuous desire; opinions which consider legends as but a slightly mangled tribal history, and others which make myth the outcome of unbridled imagination. At times myths are dismissed as the mystifications of priestly cunning, or again as a primitive *lapsus linguae*—the self-deception of the primitive mind by a self-made metaphor.

Most theories credit the savage with a too great propensity for arm-chair philosophizing and at the

same time ascribe a too childish outlook to him. In fact he is not so silly as naïvely to personify natural objects, or to ignore the difference between men and beasts, animate and inanimate objects. Nor is he duped by his metaphors any more easily than is civilized man. On the other hand, he is neither idle nor speculative enough to spin out fantastic, semi-poetical explanations and rhapsodies; to standardize his day dreams, or to record his tribal histories. His sense of historical accuracy and his interest in reconstructing the past is on the whole extraordinarily weak, as witness the almost complete absence of historical accounts from the immediate past, and the entire unreliability of such tales as can be checked from European chronicles. As to day dreams in myth, the psycho-analytic theory stands and falls with the assumption of a "race memory" and a "race unconscious" which will be accepted by few anthropologists who do not belong to the inner ring of ardent Freudians.

The fact is that learned antiquarians, inspired psychologists, and vigorous protagonists of the "historical method" have all poured out their own opinions as to what the savage means by his story, why he tells it, and in what manner he relates his mythopoeic phantasies to reality. But they failed to ask the savage himself, or to look into the facts for an answer.

Myths in primitive culture are told with a purpose, and they are deeply rooted in the savage's interest and his social organization and culture. But the links which bind folk-lore to the rest of native life, the threads by which they are woven into the social fabric have not only so far been ignored by the ethnographer, but have actually been severed by him. Stories have been taken down without any cultural context and projected out of native life into the ethnographer's notebook. Volumes of folk-lore have been published quite recently by first class ethnographers, in which the texts are given, as if from the beginning they had led a flat existence on paper,—(as for example, in Boas's "Tshimshian Mythology" or Rattray's "Ashanti Proverbs").

And we find hardly any record of field work in which the cultural function of myth, legend, and folk tale are systematically studied; in which the ethnographer follows up all the connecting links between a sacred story and its influence on social organization, law, order, and ritual.

In order to explain a cultural product it is necessary to know it. And to know, in matters of thought and emotion, is to have experienced. The first necessity in the study of mythology, then, is to grasp how the natives *live* their myths. I maintain that the sacred tale is not told for amusement, as a simple entertainment. The "sacred" in early human societies is not an idle show or pretence imagined for the satisfaction of curiosity or even of emotional craving. The "sacred," both as a mental attitude and a form of behavior, is a dynamic principle of culture, governing some of the most important fields of human activity: magic, religion, morality, and social organization. In magic the "sacred," the power that resides in words and the efficacy that comes from appropriate gestures allows man to achieve supernaturally that which his practical means and abilities fail to accomplish: to inflict disease on an enemy and to restore the health of a friend; to enhance his own strength in battle, and to cow the adversary; to insure plenty in hunting, fishing, and in agriculture; to gain success in love and in social ambition. In religion, the "sacred" works as a life force which binds members of a group together and, by the establishment of moral values, integrates the mind of the individual in the crises of life—death, puberty, marriage, and birth. In conduct and organization, the "sacred" sanctions value, rule, and law.

Now what rôle does myth play in magic, religion, and morality? In all domains of the "sacred," man is required to act, often under considerable sacrifice to himself, in order to reach some ideal or goal. He has to undergo ordeals, to observe taboos, to forego comforts and endure privations, frequently for the benefit of others, always for advantages which are neither obvious nor immediate. To enforce the commandments of religion and magic a strong belief must exist that the promises or threats which sanction the commands are true. But man is more likely to believe in a future when he has some evidence of it from the past; he is more likely to act on a promise if there is a precedent to confirm it. There

is no doubt, in fact, that the main cultural function of mythology is the establishment of precedent; the vindication of the truth of magic, of the binding forces of morals and law, of the real value of religious ritual, by a reference to events which have happened in a dim past, in the Golden Age of old, when there was more truth in the world, more divine influence, more virtue and happiness. Myth, coming from the true past, is the precedent which holds a promise of a better future if only the evils of the present be overcome. It also usually indicates how the present can be vanquished with the help of ritual, of religion, of moral precepts handed down from the past.

If with these principles in mind we look honestly at our own religion, we can easily see how the story of Paradise, of the Fall, of the Expulsion, of the Promise of a Redeemer, and finally, of the Redemption itself gives the breath of life to Christian morality, to the Sacraments, and even to such of the ritual as some of us follow. Nor are the savage Australians, the Melanesians, or the African Negroes and Bantu different from us. Wherever we have a sufficiently full account of religion and magic along with the narratives of folk-lore, it is possible to show how deeply connected the two are, and how myth in its fundamental function is neither explanatory, nor "wish-fulfilling," nor historical, but essentially a precedent in support of religion and magical belief, or in support of social and moral order.

To conclude then, we may say that no myth, no part of folk-lore can ever be understood except as a living force in culture. The field worker should not merely collect tales torn out of their context, but observe the influence of myth on the social structure, the foundations of man's power over nature as expressed in it, in short, he should study the influence of mythological ideas on morality, on law, on magic, and on the religious ceremonies side by side with the stories.

Dr. Holmberg's book makes a considerable advance toward the presentation of myth from this point of view. The volume gives remarkably few stories, too few perhaps, and consists mainly in an account of the various beliefs, practices, and institutions in which is embodied the mythological world of the Siberian and Ugro-Finnic races. The vivid, convincing, and well documented picture of the material and spiritual universe of the natives will rivet the attention of the casual readers from start to finish, and prove invaluable as first-hand material to the specialist. Scientifically the most important are those parts of the book in which Dr. Holmberg shows the cultural life of sacred stories and ideas and thus reveals the true nature and function of myth. Thus the extraordinary cosmological concepts of some Siberians about the Pillar of the World, which supports the sky and tethers the stars, are shown to be connected with ancient forms of religious cult. Again in his account of Shamanism, Dr. Holmberg succeeds in giving a new, original, and dramatic version. For he does not merely tell us about the Shaman, nor is he satisfied to list the native beliefs on the subject; he shows us the Shaman at work, predicting the future, curing sickness and causing disease, surrounded by his familiar animals and guardian spirits, wielding the instruments of his office: the hammer, the ring, and the drum—and, withal, drawing a reasonable income from the supernatural trade and enjoying considerable prestige. Dr. Holmberg also establishes a remarkable connection between Siberian Shamanism and totemism. He shows that both types of belief are rooted in the mythological idea that Shamanistic lineage on the one hand and magical powers on the other have been received from animals by human ancestors.

All these subjects will have an equal appeal to the student and to the layman, for Dr. Holmberg's style is vivid, his argument clear, and he knows the actors and the scenery from personal experience. The descriptions of the Arctic tundra, of the steppes, of the wide rivers of Eastern Europe and Siberia, are a fitting background to the contortions of the Shaman, to Spirits of Nature hovering among the stunted firs and birches, to the Living Stones—the Seide of Lapland,—to the sacrifices of the Votjaks and Cheremiss made to their gods of nature among primeval groves on the plains of the Volga. All this Dr. Holmberg has seen with his own eyes and he conveys it to us well in his vivid description and in the excellent illustrations.

The insistence with which the real nature of myth