

"I haven't been doing anything wrong," said Caroline. "If I were, perhaps, and he came,—but he always did have good manners,—he never intruded."

"But how the devil could there ever have been a tower," I burst out, "where a New York apartment-house now stands?" Then I decided to tell her the whole thing; and did so, briefly.

"I've got it,—of course,—" she interrupted my imposing conclusion. "But I gather you never heard of 'Old Urquhart's Folly'?"

I shook my head.

"When New York was somewhat different, my great grandfather built it up in this direction, over on this upper East Side that is now becoming so popular. A most peculiar looking dwelling, with a tower on top. My grandfather inherited it. It stood, in fact, till he died,—when I was about eight. I've heard family stories of how he used to entertain his cronies up there, after he had been sometime a widower. Reports I am sure were 'grossly exaggerated.' Still,—that 'Milly.' Really, Val, you shouldn't have told me. How extraordinary of Grandfather!" Her laughter rippled. It seemed to me of a much more enjoyable *timbre* than Milly's ghostly giggle.

"He had two principal cronies," Caroline went on, when her mirth subsided, "Isaiah Quackenbush,—and—Geoffrey Carple."

"'Duck's' grandfather,—and *mine*?" I stammered. Then, after a moment's reflection: "Sha'n't we tell him?"

"Tell 'Duck'? He'd merely think we were more than usually crazy."

"This is *astounding*!" I said.

"Nigh that tower, in the olden days," Caroline rejoined, dreamily, "flowed freshly, in all its sinuous beauty, the wild East River. The Loquat Indians frequently beached their canoes and cherished their campfires along the alluvial borders of that superb estate—"

I snorted. Caroline loves to be silly. "As for my own forbear," I put in, "he domesticated in a crooked red house down below what is now Greenwich Village, as I remember. But was your grandfather given to seances?"

"Oh, quite," said Caroline, "he was quite a spiritualist in his time. But," rising, "I promised Fortune I would be at Carnegie this evening—"

"You'll let me give you a lift in my car, of course, Caro," called "Duck," from across the room, as he saw her ready to depart.

"I quite expected it," drawled Caroline with a smile.

Prudence wafted off with them. I was left to my reflections. The next day I had a note from Caroline. It read merely: "Don't give Grandfather away, will you? He looked so worried."

Well, is this giving him away? I suppose so. But "Milly," after all, quite attracted me—even if she wasn't any of our known grandmothers.

WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT.

(To be continued)

## Witchcraft at Work

A MIRROR FOR WITCHES. By ESTHER FORBES. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. 1928. \$2.50.

Reviewed by EDITH OLIVIER  
Author of "The Love Child"

WITCHES and their broomsticks have lately been "in the wind." Their literature increases, not only in volume, but in dignity. We have moved far from the disdain with which the nineteenth century,—that Age of Reason,—dismissed such "foolish superstitions" to the limbo of contempt; and, while the study of demonology is a branch of the science of history, witches wing their way through the pages of modern stories.

"Lolly Willowses" was a light-hearted book. Sylvia Townsend Warner's witches and warlocks were a joyous crew, merrily meeting outside the village for their secret rites, and their story was unsubstantial, light as air, and playfully ironic.

Esther Forbes is ironic too, but here is a very different irony,—that deep, tragic irony which culminates in St. John's Gospel, in the creations of the Greek dramatists, in Thomas Hardy. Her story has that human poignancy which tears the heart in the account of those witches who really were done to death at Salem, and as one reads "A Mirror for Witches" one feels stream over one the force of that same evil, reasonless torrent.

The scene is set "upon the skirts of Cowan Corners, and but six miles removed from Salem," and the action takes place some twenty or thirty years before the Salem witch-findings. As far as I know (though I may be mistaken), it is not founded on historical fact, but is a rarer thing,—a creation compact of imagination and of sure historic instinct. It is indeed a *tour de force*.

As a tiny child in Brittany, Doll Bilby had seen her parents, and two hundred more devil-worshippers, burnt "in one great holocaust before her eyes, her mother crying out to her most piteously from the midst of flame." Mr. Jared Bilby, the Captain of a Dawlish brig which chanced to have put into the harbor, came upon the scene as the priest was

telling the soldiers to let the witch child burn too, and he "caught and held the wild child, who did not struggle against him, as she had against the soldiers. Instead she held fast to him, for even the wicked may recognize goodness."

He took the child, half dead and half demented, to England with him, and thence to Massachusetts, when he and his wife Hannah, who loathed the foundling from the first, crossed the seas to make their home there, and the story is the commonplace, almost sordid, one, of a panic-stricken child, pursued by spite and jealousy in a world where frightful beliefs can clothe the happenings of every day with a fiendlike supernatural character. It is there that lies the amazing technique of the writing. There is its unique ironic quality. As one reads the story, one sees that all its events are entirely normal. But in the poisoned light of fear and superstition they cast huge shadows, which swallow them up and engulf them, till they are no longer the doings of human people, but the awe-inspiring movements of some spectre of the Broken. And so completely does Miss Forbes identify herself with the mental attitude of the period, that one realizes how the fantastic beliefs generated in a soil of ignorance and fanaticism, can permeate everywhere, so that even the little victim herself believes at last that she is possessed and loved by a demon lover. The atmosphere of the book is entirely true to the seventeenth century.

And the characters which move in this atmosphere are clearly and delicately drawn. They come very near, in spite of their remote setting. The tiny, stunted figure of Doll is full of pathos and beauty; and Jared, with all the characteristics of the conventional sea captain, yet succeeds in being individual and charming. Hannah is a detestable woman, but she is not a fiend, and it must have been very hard not to make her one. She is a disappointed, jealous, credulous creature, with that belief in her own infallibility which attacks the weak mind nurtured on an infallible Book. Mr. Zelle (evidently drawn from the Rev. George Burroughs, and of all the characters in the book, the nearest to history) succeeds in being lovable in spite of the fact that he is described from the point of view of an antagonist. But that is where the originality of the treatment lies all through. Miss Forbes writes in the spirit of the seventeenth century, but her vision is the vision of to-day, and she conveys to her readers this double standpoint.

The "historical novel" is, as a rule, but a hybrid artistic form, and is commonly neither historical nor a novel; but Miss Forbes could, without misgiving, have dedicated this book, with its rare subtlety and insight, to Calliope and Clio for their joint acceptance.

## In Medieval Norway

THE AXE. By SIGRID UNDSET. Translated from the Norwegian by ARTHUR G. CHATER. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1928. \$3.

Reviewed by CHARLES WHARTON STORK

SIGRID UNDSET here gives us the first volume of her second trilogy, a sufficient proof that she does not take the novelist's calling lightly. Like her previous *magnum opus*, "Kristin Lavransdatter," "The Axe" presents Norway in the Middle Ages with an intimacy of psychological and physical detail that reminds one of Balzac. It may at least be said that no one to whom Balzac's method is repugnant will enjoy a book in which the salient events are few, and the minutiae abundant and predominantly disagreeable.

It is on the courage of truth, not on the seduction of beauty, that Sigrid Undset bases her appeal. She has realized her people, major and minor, with an energy that leaves us unable to doubt them and, furthermore, she has realized them as individuals. In this respect we are reminded less of Balzac than of George Eliot and Sheila Kaye-Smith. The result in connection with her antique background is both disturbing and stimulating. The Middle Ages so inevitably connote romance to us that the frequent mention of dead fish and manure heaps demands a considerable readjustment of approach. If we make this, however, we shall find the life of the story very close to us. Olav's rashness and Ingunn's vacillation will soon become our own—or may at least find exemplification in our friends and acquaintances.

There is much beauty in the early phases of the love story which holds the stage throughout the

book. But before long the net of circumstance involves the principals in a grim struggle wherein nothing avails but patience. This is precisely the quality lacking in Olav and Ingunn, as in young lovers of later ages. Yet in each there is courage and sincerity of a high order, and these in the end bring the pair together. As the ugliness of fact is nowhere avoided in the setting, so the unheroically human traits of the characters are faithfully developed. Many readers will find the treatment of the heroine in the second half of the book too pathological. The tone is in fact not so much fatalistic, like that of Hardy—and how old-fashioned Hardy seems to us now in this respect!—as scientific, almost medical. We have, not the march of destiny, but a random succession of incidents which casually bring out the good and bad qualities of the lovers. Two fights and a seduction furnish the high points. In brief, "The Axe" is not so much a novel as an experience understandingly analyzed. Not that the style is cold, it is only unflinchingly strict.

It may have been gathered that, despite its sordidness, there is a bracing quality in the novel as a whole. Such is decidedly the case. The landscape backgrounds are done with fine sympathy and reserve. The picture of medieval Norwegian life and customs is most interesting, particularly in the complicated legal questions that arise as to blood-money, marriage tithes, etc. These are skilfully woven into the main story. In fact, so complete is the representation that on laying down the book one has to rub one's eyes in order to be sure that one is in modern America, not on the estate of an ancient Norwegian baron.

Mr. Chater's work in the translation seems less happy here than it is when he is handling a book with a modern setting. He might have read the prose romances of William Morris with advantage. For though the style of "The Axe" is realistic, it should not be made too up-to-date. Quite terrible is such a sentence as "Ingunn had a well-dressed look in all the ample folds of her garments." This is a pity, for in general Mr. Chater's ear and instinct are well above the average. Take for instance, "The pealing of the bells broke in upon their mute and tranquil rapture—the mighty brazen tones from the minster tower, the busy little bell from Holy Cross Church." But the chain of prose narrative will always be tested according to its weakest link.

## Maynard's Poems

EXILE. By THEODORE MAYNARD. New York: The Dial Press. 1928. \$2.50.

Reviewed by PADRAIC COLUM

"EXILE" is the title of Theodore Maynard's latest collection of poems, and "Bread and Wine" is the poem that dedicates the volume: these two titles are significant, for they show the poet's feeling for the natal place and for the goods that are familiar. Wine and firelight, first sparrows on the roof, daisies with their round young faces, Constable's colors over England—these are the intimations around which his poetry focuses itself. And yet he is by no means the poet of pure objectivity: Theodore Maynard is a mystic, and for him these familiar things, lovely in themselves, have sacredness too—they are revelations of the kindness of God, and of His kinship with humanity.

Is not earth's beauty but a hint of that which flames  
Beyond the sun? Didst thou not leave me here for sign  
Lily and mustard-tree and sheep and little lambs,  
The wheat-field and the vine?

Birds flash about me, making love and building nests,  
And the kind smiling heavens look down upon their  
love—  
Comes there not somehow to my breast, and their  
small breasts,  
The Holy Ghost, the Dove?

The poem that gives title to the book is full of such pictures as an exile draws from the memory of his home-land. But the memory of the home-land is not really the theme of the poem; it is not elegiac; it is written in a heady measure. The poet sees beyond England from which he is an exile, and beyond California with its alien magnificence and the evidences that it has of the exile of other men of other civilizations.

And here in evidence the plain  
And iron intellect of Spain,  
Her fury hot and cold.



And these blunt arches, innocent  
Of Gothic's mystical intent—  
Enormous, squat, secure—  
Remember how in fierce disdain  
The broken chivalry of Spain  
Broke at last the Moor.

All men, the poet sees, are exiled, for they all know  
of a place that their cities have tried to copy.

That city which, in more than pride,  
Their kings and architects have tried  
To build and nobly failed.

And so, although he "aches in memory" for the  
natal place, the poet's face is turned towards the  
other city, and he can praise "God's bitter gift, Exile,  
the best of all." A stirring and a fine poem!

"A Gray Day in California" has a more delicate  
music. How tentative, how hesitating, how admir-  
ably suggestive of blurred beginnings is the stanza  
he uses—a stanza made over from the one which  
has been so often used to give effects of clearness and  
brilliancy.

Gray and timid, sad and chill  
The morning crouches on the hill.  
Is this the glad and golden morning  
That crouches heavy-eyed and ill?

Yet sunshine taught me love of gray,  
Always unvalued till to-day,  
When in her vague and timid beauty  
The day broke o'er me cold and gray.

There is a philosophic idealist in the poet who made  
"Autumn Mist." This poem has not been given a  
title really appropriate to it, and it loses, in my esti-  
mation, by being tied up with literal and temporal  
appearances.

A heap of burning leaves will do it; first  
That rain has draped with jewels are more sure.

"Autumn Mist" has to do with the beauty that has  
never been expressed, that never has materialized,  
that is with all that is in the Realm of Essence.

"Alas," I hear the spectral voices float:  
"Not less than you do we desire to tear  
The stammering tissues from your tongue and throat,  
That you may sing; and make the clouded air  
Lucent, that you may find us fair.

"'Tis only by our longing you are drawn  
To your deep longing: at our breathing move  
Your quivering senses in the tinge of dawn  
Or when the moon spins mystery in the grove:  
We live in everything you love.

"Yet though you closer come we shall elude  
Your hands; we fade to make you closer come:  
Be your frustration your beatitude!"  
The mist grows denser and the voices dumb . . .  
The door shuts. I am far from home.

"The Enchanted Forest" is at the other side of  
"Autumn Mist," for in this poem what has not been  
realized, what has not materialized, are shapes of  
fear. The mysticism that is in these poems has not  
been easily won to. Like all the poets whose mysti-  
cism is not an easy attitude, but a real experience,  
Theodore Maynard knows of spiritual inertness, and  
he expresses something of what the greatest of mysti-  
cal poets has named "The Obscure Night of the  
Soul." It is in this poem "In Time of Doubt."

The fire has sunk to ashes in the grate;  
The candle slowly gutters;  
And I am left alone,  
As cold as coldest stone,  
Empty of noble love and noble hate,  
Empty of all the passion of belief,  
Of ardor and of indignation,  
Incapable of Joy or her twin-sister Grief  
(And who shall say which is most fair  
Or potent for the soul's transfiguration?)  
I only have despair.

He wins to faith—a faith that is in "L'amor che  
move il Sole e l'altre Stelle." In this collection there  
are the themes which contemporary poetry leaves out  
—loyalty, companionship, faith, humility; in fact  
the themes of a poetry that is truly masculine. Theo-  
dore Maynard gives us a masculine reading of life  
in "Exile." There is a passage in one of his poems  
in which he notes across an English countryside a  
road the Romans made, grown over now with black-  
berry and bramble. "The rigid lines were lost in  
clover." And in "Exile" the stark and bare lines  
of an austere faith are covered over with imaginings  
of simple and familiar things; the verse is like the  
clover—freely growing as against the stunted con-  
temporary verse. It is a joy to find familiar things  
and the high themes restored as they are in "Exile."

## The BOWLING GREEN

THE circulation of the *Saturday Review*, I am  
delighted to observe, is far more diversified  
than I had supposed; which I learn from  
the really startling gamut of correspondence elicited  
by recent allusions here to the "Sincere Friendship  
Club." One letter, bearing apparently every pos-  
sible identification of genuineness, I insist on print-  
ing:

Dear Sir, Gentleman I have seen your advertisement in  
the *Saturday Review of Literature* of where you have got  
Women enrolled in your club & where they are adventuring  
for a good husband. I would like to cummunate with the  
one on page 741 in your book the last column of add for  
Husbands Very neat and attractive highly educated Ameri-  
can Girl age 24 sharply figure Methodist. Well I have  
written to you the same as it is in your Book I sure would  
like to get in Touch with this Lady that wants a Husband  
of good character & intelligence honestly & ability Well I  
have all these qualities I am a man I never smoke I never  
swear & I have no bad habits what ever & have great am-  
bition & a good character I can give you plenty of Rec-  
ommendations from people who know me Will be glad to  
hear from you I remain as yours Respectfully . . .

As we remarked before, the classic utilization of  
this theme in fiction is O. Henry's story "The Exact  
Science of Matrimony," in the volume *The Gentle  
Grafter*. If half a dozen people should be moved  
to read or reread that enchanting book our allusions  
to the Sincere Friendship Club will not have been  
in vain.

A. H. H. writes from Burnwood, N. Y.:

You ask "who was Lord Raglan?" I think I can tell  
you. He was the commander in chief of the British forces  
in the Crimean war. He was really too old for the job.  
He had been aide de camp to the Iron Duke at Waterloo.  
He was thought to be responsible for that magnificent error,  
the charge of the Light Brigade. He evaded the issue. He  
intimated that he had sent Captain Nolan to Lord Cardigan,  
in command of the Brigade, to "prepare to charge." But  
Lord C. said that the order, as brought by Capt. Nolan, was  
"to charge"—which Lord C. did with reluctance. The  
only man that knew the truth was Capt. Nolan, and he  
was shot through the head before the charge had gone very  
far. After Balaklava Lord Raglan died, as much from  
worry as from his age. I was a small boy at the time, but  
I have a vivid recollection of the war and its aftermath.

The coat was named much in the same way as the car-  
riage called a brougham after Lord Brougham, and the  
Wellington boot after the Duke. The Duke chaffed  
Brougham about the carriage, but Brougham retaliated  
about the boot. "Dammie," said the Duke, "I forgot about  
the boots. By God!"

How I roared about Father Healy's racing donkey. I  
have not done laughing yet.

We are familiar with Father-and-Son dinners  
and golf tournaments; how about a Father-and-Son  
sonnet festival? The idea was suggested to me by a  
brace of excellent sonnets written by O. M. Dennis  
(aet. 45) and O. M. Dennis Jr. (aet. 20). I am  
holding them in the Folder on the chance that there  
may be some other progenitorial pairs (male or fe-  
male) who would like to enter the lists. Mean-  
while, to show how pleasantly a father may chaff  
his heir, I venture to reprint from the *New York  
Herald Tribune* the little reply written by Mr. O.  
M. Dennis to a verse by his son that appeared in the  
*Princeton Tiger*:

### Last Will and Testament

Make of my worldly goods a tiny pile,  
Heap up the myriad virtues that I lack,  
Add then my life work, hideously vile,  
So, light a match beneath this goodly stack.  
When that is done, perhaps, those curious stains  
My person showed for all the world to view  
Will be removed. If you have my remains,  
I pray thee, Julia, coffin me in blue.  
O. M. DENNIS, JR., in *The Princeton Tiger*.

### Codicil

In blue, my lass, and mantled as with snow,  
In all my unpaid bills strewn lightly o'er me.  
Speak to me in those accents thrilled and low,  
That ever used unflinchingly to bore me.  
And above all to my cold, faultless nose  
Affix my thumb with fingers wide extended,  
So firm that none may charge me with mere pose.  
Ah! leave no doubt as to the thought intended.  
And so in gravely classic posture passes  
A younger prophet of the upper classes.  
O. M. DENNIS.

In regard to booksellers in Newcastle (England)  
our highly esteemed client Helen G. reports as fol-  
lows:

Last summer Harry and I went over to practise French  
slang (with a few disastrous results) and, of course, man-

aged to get in some England too. We visited cousins in  
Sunderland and went to see Arthur Rogers in Newcastle.  
I'd been corresponding with him ever since P. E. G. Quercus  
wrote up his catalogue in "Trade Winds," and by that time  
I was getting alarmed at the prospect of breaking up a nice  
letter friendship by showing myself. So I wrote that I  
should feel embarrassed if I should ever meet this stranger  
whom I knew so well—you know how it feels. He wrote  
back and said not to worry, just to come in and say "Hullo,  
I'm here." I did, but he wasn't. When we arrived there  
was only Confucius, the office boy. He said that Mr.  
Rogers was "out just now," and when after half an hour's  
wait we inquired further, he said he'd phone to the Coffee  
House and get him for us. We were satisfied because it  
seemed the perfect place for an English bookseller to be in  
the morning, instead of at his place of business.

Handysides Arcade is a little out of the business center  
and occupied mainly by grain dealers. He's since moved to  
a more elegant address and added a Lady Secretary. He has  
a special shelf of books which are his own favorites of the  
lots he buys. The usual glass covered bookcase for Firsts  
contains many Montague items, C. E. M. being one of his  
idols.

He took us out to lunch, but during the course of it got  
a chance to tell my brother privately and with thoughtfulness  
most uncommon to a bookseller that he was not going  
to sell me any more books for some time—I had been spend-  
ing entirely too much!

Apropos a certain tendency among highbrow pil-  
grims in London to deprecate The Cheshire Cheese  
(which they have heard of as being over-touristed)  
and to inquire for some other pubs (which we do  
not mention, respecting their secrets) a Fleet Street  
correspondent writes us in a rich vein of indigna-  
tion:

They're too fly by half. Why not like the Cheshire  
Cheese? Cross over there, and look along, the greatest view  
in London: St. Paul's, with Martin's thin black spire a point  
of rest there in the foreground. Accident? Not much! It  
may be rum to think of a whole church created just as a  
point of rest, not for the individual, but for the view of a  
cathedral. St. Martin too: for one recalls—one should  
recall—the writings of Pope St. Gregory *Dialog.* lib. II,  
cap. 8, as mentioned in the *Paradiso* xxii, 37 ff. It may be  
rum: but from the doorway of the Cheshire Cheese you see  
it: and, as J. says, you don't believe it can be as good as  
that; and you go in, and come out, and it's better.

Perhaps the one ultimate truth about London, if  
there were any, is that her secrets are saved for you  
alone; no one else can help you find them. In an  
old copy of a British magazine called *Architecture*  
(December 1924) we found a fine little essay by  
James Bone, *A London Footnote*, in which he says:

The Thames itself with the long "S" it describes between  
the Tower and Chelsea is in the conspiracy of London  
mystifications and by its devices St. Paul's seems as movable  
as Easter, appearing where you never expect it and not  
appearing where you do expect it. Glancing from White-  
hall down Horse Guards Avenue you discern it somewhere  
in Southwark. It seems to dodge all over South London.  
You gaze in vain from Westminster Bridge for St. Paul's  
until you spot it somewhere about Waterloo Station. A  
distinguished artist who once set out to draw one hundred  
views of St. Paul's as Hokusai drew a hundred views of  
Fuji Yama gave in overborne by its mobility.

Then this reticence and elusiveness of London, populace  
and architecture, is related to a factor which affects both:  
its weather. The winds do not blow differently in London,  
nor can the sunshine and moonlight be different, but London  
has an atmosphere of its own. Westminster is built partly  
on a swamp, and the Victoria Tower of the House of Lords,  
for instance, should have been many feet higher, but the  
foundations on the old river bed would not stand it. Even-  
ing mists rise through the stones and tar and in the autumn  
the golden haze, veil upon veil, comes between London and  
its business. The coal fires and the river mist still produce  
the famous London fog in all its varieties from the white  
volatile clouds to "London particulars." In a great many  
days of the year it is impossible to see the City church spires  
from Waterloo Bridge. In the spring the color of London  
is like the flower and gray-green leaf of lavender and often  
a blue grape-bloom appears on the silhouetted stone build-  
ings. There are days with a sparkle amid faint purple haze  
like the depths of an amethyst. London has more than its  
share of fitful days when the Portland stone towers and  
spires of the City seen from Waterloo Bridge whiten and  
vanish, brighten and vanish, like lights turned off and on by  
the Lord Mayor. Sometimes the sungleam sweeps over the  
City with a majestic movement, transfiguring the noble  
façade of Somerset House and bringing sacred fire to the  
cross of St. Paul's—and in an instant all is gray again.

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.

"After studying for fifty years the peculiarities  
of weird or more or less normal people who frequent  
public libraries, Mr. Frank Pacy, the Westminster  
librarian," said the *London Observer* recently, "told  
a reporter some of his conclusions. He found that  
men are fond of 'thrillers,' that flappers prefer rather  
shocking 'border line' books, and that when grandma  
was young she preferred that kind too! 'Scandalous'  
books of fifty years ago, he said, would now be  
thought dull by school girls. Every librarian has a  
dark cupboard in which he hastily hides unsuitable  
books which may emerge at a later date when the  
general public has developed!"