

Sometime Innocence of Love

THE HIDDEN FLOWER. By Pearl S. Buck. New York: John Day Co. 307 pp. \$3.50.

By HARRISON SMITH

FOR many years Pearl Buck has drawn on her knowledge of the people of the Far East, and especially of China, for a long series of novels, short stories, polemical works, translations from the Chinese, as well as books for children. Since that country is now more remote from Western influence than it was in the eighteenth century, it is not surprising that Mrs. Buck has turned to the Japan of the American occupation for her latest novel, and also to the theme of miscegenation. "The Hidden Flower" is a love story which in almost any other writer's hands would have culminated in irretrievable tragedy. Through Miss Buck's conviction that the salvation of mankind depends on a union between the East and the West, however, it terminates in a surprising and somewhat mystic consummation.

Josui Sakai, a beautiful Japanese girl of good family, was born in California. On the outbreak of World War II she returned with her father

and mother to Kyoto. When the Americans arrived, she was engaged to a suitable young man after the delicate negotiations through which for centuries Japanese families have been united through the marriage of their children. It was unfortunate that she had not forgotten the freedom of the American girls she had known, for one day, as she was entering the university, she met a blonde and blue-eyed lieutenant. For both of them it was what is known as love at first sight.

Alan Kennedy, the only child of an old Virginia family, had been in the army long enough to know that he should not attempt to seduce an aristocratic Japanese girl, or failing that, marry her; and he certainly should not have forgotten that his mother was a domestic tyrant who would never accept as her daughter-in-law any member of a "colored race." After Josui had broken her engagement, and incidentally her father's heart, the enamored couple were married by a Buddhist priest. Alan's indulgent colonel sent him home, and poor Josui after a few breathless nights of love followed him to Virginia.

She was refused permission to enter the ancestral mansion. After discover-

ing that he could not marry her in Virginia and that a Buddhist ceremony was not binding in the United States, Alan took her to New York. In his eyes she had suffered a sea change in crossing the Pacific. In Kyoto she had represented an ancient culture he vaguely comprehended. In a small city apartment she was merely pathetic and embarrassingly unlike a Virginia girl he had once thought of marrying. When he drifted back home, he was so obtuse that he did not know that in a few months he was destined to be the father of an illegitimate child. Josui fled to the kind of refuge in San Francisco where girls who had fallen in love with the American army were delivered of their babies and who after a week never saw them again. She abandoned her son to a childless obstetrician who had sensed that there was something strange in this determined young woman who was returning to her family in Japan and something still stranger in the miraculous child.

Mrs. Buck is eloquent about the conception of the baby, "the world child." She writes, "When was the mortal life of the child begun—somewhere in the glorious months, at some place of love in the chain of days and nights of love the world child was living. They were not thinking of him but of themselves." It is difficult to avoid the suspicion that she is announcing the creation of a new Savior of mankind, born of a Virginia gentleman in the U. S. Army and a Kyoto girl of good family who fell in love with him at first sight. All this is slightly confusing since Mrs. Buck's subject has appeared to be the unfortunate result of the mating of a most admirable young Japanese with an American who in sterner days might have been called a scoundrel, and who after he had abandoned Josui was dismissed by his home-town girl when he asked her to marry him because he did not know the meaning of love. But for the purposes of this fascinating and often moving novel it was doubtless unnecessary to analyze the quality of the love that was offered, or Mrs. Buck's motive for proclaiming the child that was born of it a Savior.

Your Literary I.Q.

By Howard Collins

"A ROSE IS A ROSE IS A ROSE IS A ROSE"

Mary Brobston, of Bessemer, Alabama, offers fifteen quotations about roses. Can you identify either poet or poem in each case? Eight correct is par, ten is very good, and twelve or better is excellent. Answers on page 31.

1. Plant thou no roses at my head, nor shady cypress tree.
2. One sad, ungathered rose on my ancestral tree.
3. Any nose may ravage with impunity a rose.
4. Out of his mouth a red, red rose!
Out of his heart, a white!
5. He wears the rose of youth upon him.
6. The bride hath paced into the hall,
Red as a rose is she.
7. The rainbow comes and goes, and lovely is the rose.
8. I sometimes think that never blows so red
The rose as where some buried Caesar bled.
9. Flowers of all hue and without thorn the rose.
10. The tear down Childhood's cheek that flows
Is like the dewdrop on the rose.
11. O my love's like a red, red rose
That's newly sprung in June.
12. That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet.
13. Sudden a thought came like a full-blown rose,
Flushing his brow.
14. Strew on her roses, roses,
And never a spray of yew.
15. There is sweet music here that softer falls
Than petals from blown roses on the grass.

Fiction Notes

THE STRANGE BRIGADE. By John Jennings. Little, Brown. \$3.50. John Jennings is a veteran historical novelist, a glib tale-teller, and once again he offers us a sound product with no disappointments and no surprises. His strange brigade is composed of a group of Scottish families, left desti-

(Continued on page 30)

Personal History. *In a way Gene Fowler resembles Lytton Strachey, for he has founded a school of biography. Fowler's bright, light lives of John Barrymore, Jimmy Walker, Jimmy Durante, and other men of affairs, long on anecdotes and short on interpretation, have won him a host of readers and several imitators. Among the most successful of the latter is Robert Lewis Taylor, who first essayed this art form with a book about W. C. Fields and now turns to Winston Churchill in the volume Vincent Sheean reviews below. . . . A fortnight ago in reviewing two books about blindness—Peter Putnam's "Keep Your Head Up, Mr. Putnam!" and Henry Barry's "I'll Be Seeing You"—we commented on the unusual crop of inspirational books this spring. Now we review several more: two for parents, John P. Frank's "My Son's Story" (page 20) and Dorothy W. Baruch's "One Little Boy" (page 21), and one for the ladies, Mary Bard's "Forty Odd" (page 31).*



Robert Lewis Taylor—"nasal epigrams."

Today's Own Pericles

WINSTON CHURCHILL. By Robert Lewis Taylor. New York: Doubleday & Co. 433 pp. \$4.50.

By VINCENT SHEEAN

MR. TAYLOR has written an amusing book about everybody's favorite character. It was difficult to do because the subject himself has written it all out at exhaustive lengths, as have others. The merit of the work is twofold: it summarizes many volumes which all of Winston's admirers do not have time to read, and it does so in what seems to be an American dialect. It is a fable in slang, and as such deserves the success it will have.

Just the same, the relentless and untiring brightness of the book bore heavily upon this reader's nerves. It never lets up for a moment. This kind of brightness is suited to those who read a paragraph or two at a time, at convenient intervals, interspersed with other activities and unencumbered by thought. But for one who has spent a lifetime reading and writing, and is as a result used to paying close attention to every word, such glitter fatigues beyond measure.

Let me give a few examples. Leonardo da Vinci was a "Renaissance hustler." William of Orange was a "nosy continental." Louis XIV was "famous for mediocre decisions." The first Duke of Marlborough's emoluments were "a neat haul." William the

Conqueror was a "hungry nuisance." And, if you care for a more extensive aria, lend an ear to this sentence on fox-hunting in Ireland: "Taken all around, if foxes were as smart as they're traditionally supposed to be, the ones in Ireland would have joined the snakes in the general walkout at the time of Patrick's tantrum."

These whacks are in a well-established American tradition, and one of our greatest writers, Mark Twain, impressed them on the consciousness of the world. But Mark Twain had the sense to space them out, to give them room, to let his reader breathe between-whiles. Here we are unmercifully hammered from beginning to end, and the "nasal epigrams are only interrupted by equally nasal superlatives about the character of Winston Churchill, of whom the author says: "It is wholly possible that he is the liveliest yet produced by the upper vertebrates."

The opening words of the book are: "The last of the great statesmen, Winston Churchill . . ." I am certain Mr. Churchill would agree with me in saying that, although he may well be the latest of the great statesmen, he cannot be the last if this race is to endure.

The story of Churchill's life is dazzling as it is, just as it happened in the fulness of time and by the will of God. To have it reflected in a dozen burnished mirrors of admiration and emulation is really too much. Our author was undoubtedly convinced that so brilliant a subject demanded a sustained ecstatic brilliance of treatment, although any child should know that you cannot wear your gloves and carry them at the same time. Wherever the subject himself comes

through unmistakably, so that we can say: "Aha! That's Winston Churchill!" the point is clear. For example, in early days when Churchill had suffered more than his share from inability to study the classics, he was told that Gladstone read Homer for pleasure, and remarked: "Serves him right." There is more wit in those three words than in the whole of Mr. Taylor's accompanying text.

Underneath the tinsel there is something quite shocking about Mr. Taylor's book. It is the assumption that human life reached a climax of desirable arrangement in the era which formed Mr. Churchill. Those were the days; everything since has been a degeneration, twilight of the species. That puts us all in our place. We should have been born in 1874.

At a given point, having occasion to note that Churchill once memorized a quantity of verse by Robert Montgomery, Robert Taylor says "not to be confused with the movie actor." Reader inquires: "Why not?"

FRASER YOUNG'S LITERARY CRYPT No. 467

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 467 will be found in the next issue.

ONTO

QUBORAUO

MDBEUORM, LNUODLRM.

—O. N. NGWAUF.

*Answer to Literary Crypt No. 466
Everything unknown is taken for magnificent.*

—TACITUS.

Vincent Sheean is the author of "Personal History" and "Lead Kindly Light," a study of Gandhi. His newest book, "Rage of the Soul," will appear shortly.