

not give her a child. Bound to him by the need of the strong to be needed by the weak, she still hungered for motherhood. In a private and informal rite, the Banions adopted an infant from a Catholic orphanage. Then the coil wound tighter: Liz took a lover, left the Catholic Church, alienated her family, and found herself on the side of the goddess in a legal contest for the soul of her child.

The climactic court hearing is in the familiar literary tradition of juridical debate that extends from "The Brothers Karamazov" to "The Caine Mutiny" and Perry Mason. Here it becomes a tug of war between a natural and a foster mother, between generation and generation, philosophy and dogma, and human and divine love. What does it mean to be *born* into a faith? Who is responsible for the salvation of a four-year-old girl? Throughout, God is interpreted, invoked, and called upon to do everything but testify. On both sides are those burdened with a sense of exile, a passion for martyrdom, those without certainties seeking the metric system by which to measure goodness. Pro and contra are skilfully presented though, regrettably, the Catholic stand is weakened in being championed by an unwed mother and a morally schizophrenic zealot.

A tendency toward overstatement and excessive psychologizing gives the book a slow start. Too often the motor idles while thoughts and feelings of characters are unnecessarily underscored, placing the reader in a kind of echo chamber.

The author hits her stride too late, devoting herself to elaborate stage setting which obfuscates a good story. Only after the reader is half-way there does he realize, happily, that he is in for more than a slick exposition of love in and out of wedlock. Mrs. Schweitzer would have been a better barrister if, like counsel for the defense, she had limited her opening remarks.

—GLADYS J. CARR.

Lion and Lamb

By Walker Gibson

WHATEVER tumbles trunks of trees
Trifles with ripples on a pond:
Seawall and grassblade both respond
To that promiscuous blast or breeze
That wafts or wrecks. High on a tower
Cups spin frantic to count the gusts:
Whatever rips cups off their shafts
Touches them later like a lover.

PERSONAL HISTORY

From Delhi to Oxford and Back

"Walking the Indian Streets," by Ved Mehta (Atlantic-Little, Brown, 148 pp. \$3.50), comments with both amusement and zest on the Asian country where the author was born. Several of John Masters's many novels have been set in India.

By John Masters

THIS book is by a young Indian who, after graduation from Oxford, returns to the home country with another Indian friend from Oxford. The friend is Dom Moraes, a brilliant poet and, like Dylan Thomas, a man who searches for the ultimate in the intimate. The book describes what Mr. Mehta sees and does and feels while in India, at first with Mr. Moraes, later alone.

He visits Delhi, Haridwar, Katmandu, Calcutta. He meets several Indian writers, poets, and artists, whom he sees with a sharp and humorous eye. He meets Mr. Nehru and, because he is a patriot, becomes girlish with uncritical admiration. He is very funny about Delhi society, which is indeed, as he paints it, a tragi-comic caricature, almost farcical in its overtones of the worst of Mayfair.

Most of the book was published, in article form, in *The New Yorker*, but Mr. Mehta writes with feeling as well as accuracy. He is a youthful writer still, exuberant over nonessentials, uncertain of what he is trying to tell us but certain that we will be interested in his least thought, the tiniest word that falls from Dom's lips. Fortunately, he is quite right. We are interested—but not in the ostensible subject of the book, his impressions of India. Here he gives me a strange feeling that I am listening to a man in a Madison Avenue bar late at night. The man is telling me why he returned to Dubuque, whom he met there, and what an extraordinary thing it is to go back to your old home town and find you have become a stranger, why, they've torn down the Post Office but the grade school where I went is still standing, mind, they've enlarged it. . . . In this area it is a pretty thin book in all senses of the word.

The charm and fascination of it

lie in our communion with the author. We learn much about him and soon share his problems. He does not really know why he is returning to India, and at once we are involved. Why is he? He doesn't find the answer and we, sharing his split personality, understand why. He never expected, somehow, that Oxford would have changed him so much—or is it India that has changed? We, who have seen from his first sentences that Oxford has invested him with its wry and tangential humor, quite un-Indian in its character, know he is going to be a very perturbed young man, and wish we could help him, but we can't.

At the end he decides to return to the West to complete his education. Why? And does he want to write a book about India's influence on England because it will be a worth-while book to write, or because he will then

(Continued on page 29)



—From "India and Modern Art."

"Mother and Child," by Jamini Roy.

View from the Mikasa's Bridge

"Admiral Togo," by Georges Blond (Macmillan. 252 pp. \$5.95), retells the story of the man under whose command the Russian fleet was vanquished. Paul S. Dull is professor of Japanese history at the University of Oregon.

By Paul S. Dull

A BOOK on Admiral Togo, the Japanese naval hero who commanded the ships that defeated the Russian fleet in the Straits of Tsushima in 1905, could be one of several things or, happily, a combination of them. It could be a find for the naval battle history enthusiast, giving new details or fresh analyses of the sea engagements in which Togo participated, recreating the terrible suspense and agony of the moment of truth for those who go down to the sea in fighting ships. It could be a biography that gives us new insights into Japanese history, or, the rarest of all writing, could breathe life into a man, who—as all men must, hero or poltroon—makes his lonely way from womb to pyre. Georges Blond's "Admiral Togo" seems to attempt all of these things, yet, in the end it does not achieve brilliance in any of them. The result is a run-of-the-mill book that irritates the reader as much as it satisfies him.

Contrary to the dust jacket's comment, this is not the first "full length biography" of Togo, and it apparently taps no fresh sources not utilized by R. V. C. Bodley's 1935 biography. Consequently, little new ground is broken in describing the naval battles; nor did the author succeed completely in putting the reviewer on the bridge of the *Mikasa*.

Blond is at his poorest when he turns historian to explain the times that formed Togo's personality and career. He errs both in interpretation and factual accuracy. He appears to be unaware of the complex internal forces at work in Japan from 1853 to 1864 among the shogunate, Imperial Court, and *daimyo*. Surely, the southern *daimyos'* espousal of *Jo-i* cannot be explained as merely xenophobia. British Admiralty records disagree with Blond's assigning blame for the burning of Kago-shima in 1863 to the storm that caused

rolling ships to overfire the forts. The British were using incendiary rockets to produce the conflagration.

Blond tries to bring Togo to life, but he simply does not seem to have adequate sources of information or the writing skill to do it. The author concludes the book, "For me, at least, his last words enable me to leave him not quite as we leave a stranger, a foreigner: 'I desire only to rest until the end. My thoughts turn to my emperor'—a sigh—and to roses." There spoke the poet, but the reader has been totally

unprepared for such words, for nowhere has he been told that the admiral was indeed consummately skilled in versifying.

Another matter merits serious discussion. The book is replete with errors in rendering Japanese names and words. Kichizaemon is first written correctly and thereafter is always written Kichizeamon (incorrectly). It is Ii Kamon no Kami, not Li Kamon no Kami, Hori not Hovi, Yamaguchi not Yalaguchi, *hakama* not *kakema*, *haori* not *haou*, Yoshinobu not Yoshinobo, and thus throughout the book. One hardly knows whom to blame. At any rate, while a reader may forgive and forget an occasional error, to find five in six lines (page 39) strains the patience too far.

This book certainly marks only a minor and indecisive skirmish with knowledge and literature.

Victorian Whirlwind

"The First Five Lives of Annie Besant," by Arthur H. Nethercot (University of Chicago Press. 419 pp. \$7.50), conveys the vitality of a versatile Victorian lady whose goal was to become a Mahatma. Gandhi, who stole her thunder, is the subject of Ranjee Shahani's next book.

By Ranjee Shahani

A WITTY Frenchwoman once wrote a book called "A Pair of Trousers." What she meant to suggest was that, all said and done, England was a man's country, where the male of the human species cut such capers under high heavens as would make the angels weep. True, but true also of many other lands in East and West.

If the feminine half of our race has never received its due, there is little doubt that there have been, from time to time, women who have been more mannish than man. Think of Queen Elizabeth I. Or of Catherine de Medici. Or of the Indian Empress Nur Jehan.

Among these masterful women and others who could be mentioned, an honorable place must be given to Dr. Annie Besant. She crowded more activities into her life than are dreamt of by many of us. Indeed she did so many things so well that it is difficult to know what her secret *ambition* (the word is used in its French sense) was. Perhaps she was being driven along by forces

stronger than herself until she reached the higher grounds of Hindustan, when the plan of her life unfolded itself to her in a blinding flash. Why, she would become a Mahatma. How wonderful! She would have succeeded in her aim had she not been too restless to be a mystic and had not Gandhi appeared on the scene and stolen her thunder.

But her attempt was magnificent, almost without parallel. She failed to be the High Priest of India, but she remained to the end a revered figure.

Dr. Besant's first five lives are recounted with a wealth of detail by Professor Arthur H. Nethercot, and several more of her lives will be put before us in a subsequent volume. There is no fear that the subject of inquiry will be buried under two heavy tomes. The author of this book writes simply and vigorously, fully aware of the value of literary chiaroscuro.

Dr. Besant emerges as a living and breathing figure, inspiring awe. She was a veritable geyser of energy. The more she burned the fiercer she became. Her early motto seems to have been; "Let me be consumed in giving light."

Her girlhood was typically Victorian—that is, from our point of view, atrocious. It oozed with almond-oily piety. This did not destroy her, but threw her back on her own resources. She achieved an education that was liberal in the best sense of that much- and ill-used word. She acquired a free mind, which is our ideal even today.

In 1867, at the age of twenty, she