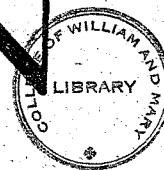


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SIXPENCE

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## THE BABY IS PASSED BACK

THE unanimity of the Anglo-American Committee on Palestine is the common denominator of defeat. The Committee—and who can blame it—has found no royal road to the solution of the twin problems remitted to it—the distress of the Jews in Europe and the position of Jews in Palestine. As an immediate measure of relief it makes a recommendation which the British Government should immediately and unequivocally accept; that arrangements should be made for the immediate immigration into Palestine of 100,000 Jews from Europe. This will at least empty of their present pitiful occupants the “displaced” Jewish camps in Germany, Austria, and Italy. But the figure of Jews likely to desire to emigrate from Europe is put by the Committee at 500,000 out of a surviving total of slightly over four millions, of whom a tenth are classed as “refugee” and “displaced.” The Committee has little hope that homes outside Europe can be found for all, or indeed many, of these would-be emigrants. It calls, therefore, on all the Governments concerned to assist the Jews to rebuild their shattered communities on the Continent by enforcing guaranteed civil liberties and equal rights, and by enacting restitution of confiscated Jewish property.

As for the future of Palestine itself, the Committee takes refuge in an affirmation that its peculiar status as a Holy Land “dedicates it to the precepts and practices of the Brotherhood of Man, not those of narrow nationalism.” The Jewish National Home is to remain in Palestine, but Palestine is to be neither a Jewish State nor an Arab State. With its present explosive mixture of antagonistic nationalities, it is not ripe for independence; and, pending transfer to United Nations’ trusteeship, Britain must continue to exercise the Mandate conferred by the old League. The immediate grant of 100,000 entry certificates does not represent finality; but the Committee confesses its inability to “construct a yardstick” for future annual immigration of Jews. The Mandatory Power must do its best to interpret its obligation to “facilitate Jewish immigration under suitable conditions while ensuring that the rights and position of other sections of the popula-

tion are not prejudiced.” Rejecting partition, the Committee recognises that the absorptive capacity of Palestine will depend on raising the living standard of Jews and Arabs alike. It recommends that the Land Transfer Regulations of 1940, which prohibited or restricted sales of land to non-Arab purchasers in certain zones, should be repealed as “discriminatory”; and it gives a vague blessing to plans for large-scale agricultural and industrial development in Palestine, provided there is a guarantee, not merely of peace in Palestine, but of the willing co-operation of adjacent Arab States. But surely, since it is agreed that the future of both Jews and Arabs depends on such development, the Mandatory Power must face and overcome political difficulties. Otherwise we are caught in a vicious circle, saying that there can be no peace without economic betterment and no betterment without peace.

Such action would, of course, involve the assumption by the United States of a share, at least financial, in the responsibility for Palestinian development, and there is no hint in the Committee’s Report of American willingness to shoulder any part of the burden. The baby, in fact, is passed neatly back to Britain. The British Government is left in the invidious position of having to decide how far to implement a Report which does not satisfy Zionist aspirations but which will cause among the Arab community serious apprehension lest the door, which they thought had been closed by the White Paper of 1939, is being reopened to unlimited Jewish immigration. That the 100,000 immediate entry certificates should be granted, we have no doubt. This is required in the name of common humanity. In his preliminary statement in the House on Wednesday, the Prime Minister seemed to suggest that action by way of immediate relief could not be undertaken in isolation from the rest of the Report’s recommendations, and large-scale entries of Jews to Palestine in 1946 must be dependent both on the result of discussions he was initiating with the U.S.A. and on the disbandment of all illegal Palestinian “armies.” This is cold comfort for the unhappy refugees in Europe; but we agree with Mr. Attlee that the task of finding a

long-term solution to a problem which has baffled the Committee is not one which the British Government can fairly be asked, as the Committee asks it, to undertake unaided. The sooner Palestine passes into *Uno* Trusteeship, the better.

### Progress at Paris.

So far, the four Foreign Ministers’ voyage on the stormy seas of treaty-making has been attended, contrary to expectations, by few incidents. The ship is still far from port; but, in so far as he has his hand on the helm, Mr. Molotov appears to be bent on steering it away from the obvious rocks. Cynics have suggested that his motive may be a desire to give the French Right no excuse for charging Russian Communism with wrecking tactics until the referendum on the French Constitution is over. However that may be, the Russian delegate has been more conciliatory than was expected. He agreed without demur that France should take part in the discussion of the Balkan treaties; he did not maintain the previous claim of the Soviet Union to one-third of the Italian fleet; he now proposes, not sole Soviet trusteeship over Tripolitania, but simply that there should be a Soviet administrator (with an Italian deputy) under an international trusteeship, with an advisory commission representing the other three Powers; and, subject to “certain considerations,” not yet defined, he offered no objection in principle to the cession of the Dodecanesē to Greece. All this, of course, does not mean that the Conference is yet on the way to reaching a comprehensive agreement. Apart from the fact that the Soviet delegation declares that it is not yet ready to discuss the problem of Austria and shows no signs of eagerness to join in discussions of the long-term future of Germany, there is still plenty of room for dispute over the Italian Treaty—notably the Trieste frontier, for which the four “experts” have proposed four lines. Moreover, the fate of the Italian colonies has yet to be settled. Mr. Bevin, stressing British pledges to the Senussi, proposes that independence should be accorded to a United Lybia, embracing both Cyrenaica and Tripoli-

New Novels

Raleigh History Lecture for 1944—deals with one facet of it at almost equal length. This extremely erudite discussion of selected aspects of the 1848 Revolution concentrates on the policy of revolutionary Germany towards the national claims of the Poles in Posenia. It says little about the domestic story of the German Revolution or about France and Italy. It is marked by an undoubted bias against the Germans—the “professorial lambs of Frankfort, who, bitten by the Pan-German dog, caught rabies,” and it suggests that latter-day liberals have spun a legend around 1848 which Hitler blindly accepted. Otherwise, he might well have found a great deal to extol in the *deutsche Männer und Freunde* of the Frankfort Assembly.”

Although one can do nothing but admire Professor Namier’s lavish documentation, it is necessary to point out that in spite of its comprehensive title, this essay does not pretend to be an examination of the origins and general course of the 1848 revolution. It does not, in fact, convince one that it was a “revolution of intellectuals.” But it is a useful addition to the literature on 1848 in English, of which we still have far too little.

NORMAN MACKENZIE

NEW NOVELS

- Titus Groan. By MERVYN PEAKE. Eyre and Spottiswoode. 15s.
Three. By WILLIAM SANSOM. Hogarth. 8s. 6d.
The Gipsy’s Baby. By ROSAMOND LEHMANN. Collins. 7s. 6d.
The Real Life of Sebastian Knight. By VLADIMIR NABOKOV. Poetry London. 8s. 6d.

In the face of Titus Groan I feel like a soldier who has sworn so much that he has no words left with which to describe the act of shame. I mean that I should like to describe the book as fascinating, but the semantic of the word has become so disgustingly eroded that it is inconceivable that it any longer conveys any meaning. I am therefore forced to say that Mr. Peake’s first novel holds one with its glittering eye. It begins by saying: Part One: Gormenghast. No part two is discoverable throughout the entire length of the book (well over four hundred modern pages) and the hero is much younger even than Tristram Shandy by the time the book ends; he has in fact not spoken up to that point. The reader is left to anticipate further volumes. I hope they will come; I do not think I have ever

so much enjoyed a novel sent to me for review. The book, which is about the ancient family of Groan, who live in a vast castle in an unidentifiable landscape and at an unnamed time, is as nearly pure story-telling as any book I have read since childhood. I admit that every now and then I was uneasily conscious that by the contrast of the megalomaniac aristocrats and the hut-dwellers at their gates, a contemporary contrast might be adumbrated; and the internal struggle for power inside the castle itself might also “imply” something. But I shut these thoughts out as often as I could, and hide myself for being a victim of the intellectual inhibitions of my time. In any case even a Marxist might find so riotous an embellishment of his favourite themes a little frivolous.

The emphasis of the story lies principally in the machinations of the intelligent upstart, Steerpike, who escapes from the kitchens of Gormenghast and the domination of the loathsome cook, Swelter, and becomes the assistant of the castle doctor, Prunesquallor. He worms his way into the trust of the neglected twin sister of Lord Sepulchrave, and incites them to set fire to his lordship’s library. Sepulchrave, “whose days are like a rook’s nest with every twig a duty,” leads a melancholic life, attending to a ritual traditionally planned for him, its origins lost in the mist of centuries; the fire accelerates his decline into insanity, and Titus, at the age of one, succeeds to the earldom. The book concludes with the ceremony of the “earling”: a disturbing occasion for Titus’s family and retainers, for Titus throws the sacred insignia into the lake on which the ceremony takes place, and turns his attention to the bastard infant daughter of Keda, a hut-dweller who has been his wet-nurse. On this provocative note the first instalment ends; I look forward eagerly to its later developments.

Titus Groan, though long and Gothically detailed, is not wayward; it has a genuine plot in the strictest sense, and it persuades you to read on simply in order to know what will happen; in spite of its setting, there is nothing particularly dream-like about it. Its gallery of characters is wonderful. The old nurse, Nannie Slagg, appears oftener than can be easily put up with, and the mysterious Keda, with her two lovers who kill each other, is not a success: she recalls, rather strongly, Meriam, the hired girl in Cold Comfort Farm; though her part in the action will doubtless later be revealed as indispensable. Otherwise the characters are a joy: Swelter, Flay, the Prunesquallors, Steerpike, Barquentine, the

Countess, and not least the thwarted and deluded twins, Cora and Clarice. (“I like roofs,” said Clarice; “they are something I like more than most things because they are on top of the houses they cover, and Cora and I like being over the tops of things because we love power, and that’s why we are both fond of roofs.”) The book is also remarkable for its gigantic set-pieces of action. Steerpike’s daylong climb over the great roof-scape of Gormenghast, and the final conflict of Flay and Swelter in the Hall of Spiders, are magnificently thrilling.

Mr. William Sansom’s early story, The Wall, is one of the best pieces of writing the war has occasioned, and his other stories about the fire-service have a curious intensity, a kind of solid poetry, which is Mr. Sansom’s own especial gift. There, his tendency to circle at great length round the same point becomes a virtue; elsewhere it is a dull, laborious vice, as in his Kafka fantasies and allegories. There is one of these fantasies in the present volume, called The Invited. It seems to me as dull and leaden as anything Mr. Sansom has written. He has abundant imagination and inventiveness, yet somehow he persists in muffling and distorting them; his stories uncoil themselves lethargically, and where one expects a tour de force, the tour de force doesn’t appear. Fortunately, The Invited is preceded by two other stories. One of them is a fresh, clear and glittering anecdote of fire-service life, in which the statement is made, I hope truthfully, that it is legal to call out a fire brigade to get a cat down out of a tree. The other is a new and successful departure from Mr. Sansom’s methods hitherto: a long reverie of a floor-cleaner in a French café, as she goes about her morning’s work. (It takes her from eleven to one to get the floor of the café done; and the café is moderately, or completely, full of people the whole time: we order these things better in England.) A story of small-town intrigue floats about above her head, and mingles with her memories and with her views of people’s legs and of the floor which she is toiling her way across. Her sudden glimpses of the high-spots of the action are brilliantly done.

The Gipsy’s Baby is a collection of five stories which have already appeared; taken separately, they are all rather slight, and it is clear that Miss Lehmann has no great interest in the short story as a form; together, they complement and light each other up, and they are executed with such grace and humour, such exquisitely exact observation, that one reads on through accounts of often trivial incidents, as Mr. Forster says he reads

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BASIL BLACKWELL

Jane Austen, with "the mouth open and the mind closed." The stories deal always with adult life seen through the eyes of accompanying children, or with childhood seen through the eyes of a parent. Miss Lehmann has already shown what she can do with the first of these themes, on a larger and more serious scale (and with the same children) in *The Ballad and the Source*; the latter theme is, I think, new to her, and she imparts the vision with a curious astringent poignancy threaded through her fluent humour. In the first story she mentions E. Nesbit, the delightful author of *The Treasure Seekers*; Miss Lehmann herself shares E. Nesbit's gift of avoiding mushiness in presenting children; and of showing without evasion the dreadful and barely bridgeable gulf between children of different classes.

In *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*, a novelist who comes to us with the blessing of Mr. Edmund Wilson, does what Mr. Maugham has done in one way or another several times already. He attempts to reconstruct the life of an imaginary famous artist, who has been misrepresented by another biographer. He collects material here and there, and unfolds his version with a cunning casualness. Unfortunately, neither Sebastian nor the other characters comes to life, and the amount of incident in the book is extraordinarily small. And though the outlines of Sebastian's books are engaging, the specimens of his prose which Mr. Nabokov is daring enough to show us do not suggest a great writer. Nevertheless there are good things in the book, among them the scenes where the writer tracks down Sebastian's last love; and one feels curiosity about Mr. Nabokov's other novels, several of which apparently exist in Russian. HENRY REED

GRAMOPHONE NOTES

- STRAUSS: *Till Eulenspiegel*. Boston Symphony Orch., cond. Koussevitzky (H.M.V. DB6267-8).
- SAINT-SAËNS: *Second Piano Concerto in G minor*. Moura Lyman with National Symphony Orch., cond. Warwick Braithwaite (Decca K1161-3).
- SAINT-SAËNS: *Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso*. Ida Haendel with National Symphony Orch., cond. Basil Cameron (Decca K1171).
- WOLF: *Italian Serenade*. Philharmonia Orch., cond. Süsskind (Col. DX 1236).
- DVOŘÁK: *Carnaval Overture*. City of Birmingham Orch., cond. Weldon (Col. DX1235).
- TCHAIKOVSKY: *Eugen Onegin: Waltz and Polonaise*.

- London Philharmonic Orch., cond. Beecham (H.M.V. DB6266).
- BLISS: *Baraza*. Eileen Joyce with National Symphony Orch. and Male Chorus, cond. Muir Mathieson (Decca K1174).
- WAGNER: *Tristan and Isolde: Prelude to Act 1 and Isolde's Narrative: Prelude to Act 3 and Liebestod*. Helen Traubel with Philharmonic Symphony Orch. of New York, cond. Rodzinski (Col. LX941-5).
- SCHUMANN: *Dichterliebe*. Aksel Schiøtz acc. Gerald Moore (H.M.V. DB6270-2).
- POULENC: *Métamorphoses and Two Poems by Louis Aragon*. Pierre Bernac acc. Poulenc (H.M.V. DB6267).
- MOZART: *Das Veilchen*, and
- SCHUBERT: *Dass sie hier gewesen*. Elisabeth Schumann, acc. Gerald Moore (H.M.V. DA1854).
- VERDI: *Rigoletto: Questa e Quella*, and
- VERDI: *Un Ballo in Maschera: Di' tu se fedele*. Jussi Björling with Orsch. (H.M.V. DA1837).
- MOUSSORGSKY: *The Song of the Flea*, and
- KOENENMAN: *When the King went to War*. Marian Nowakowski, with London Symphony Orch., cond. Warwick Braithwaite (Decca K1172).
- VERDI: *La Traviata: How Wondrous!* Joan Hammond with Philharmonia Orch., cond. Süsskind (H.M.V. C3486).
- HAYDN: *The Seasons: O How Pleasing to the Senses*, and
- PURCELL: *Faery Queen: Hark the Echoing Air*. Isobel Baillie, with Hallé Orch., cond. Heward (Col. DX1234).
- BALAKIREV: *Réverie and Mazurka No. 6 in A-flat*. Louis Kentner (Col. DX1237).
- ALBENIZ: *Granada*, and
- GRANADOS: *Tongdilla*. Andres Segovia (guitar). (Brunswick 0159).
- CHOPIN: *Polonaise in B flat, op. 71 No. 2*, and
- DEBUSSY: *Clair de Lune*. Moiseiwitsch (H.M.V. C3485).
- FALLA: *El Amor Brujo: Ritual Fire Dance and Dance of Terror*. Jose Iturbi (H.M.V. DA1853).
- RAVEL: *Habañera*, and
- DVOŘÁK: *Humoresque*. Heifetz (Brunswick 03617).

The new set of *Till* represents American recording at its very best. There are moments in the score when the extreme resonance of the studio is a disadvantage; but on the whole this is a fault on the right side and contributes, most of the time, to a sparkling and individual interpretation of a masterpiece. Individual chiefly in the matter of tempi, some of which are slower than has been usual; but Koussevitzky's moments of special deliberation—for instance, during *Till's* final fling—serve to clarify

the outlines of this acrobatic score. The old *Buch* recording is still very good, but I think there is no sharper and the tone-colour more distinctive in one respect, however, both versions seem to me to fall short of perfection: the Epilogue is too plainly phrased to express—as it is meant to do—the rascal who was really not so bad at heart.

There are times when the eclecticism of even the most eclectic composers seems a little mad. Saint-Saëns was a prodigiously clever man; but one presumes to wonder why he should have thought fit to marry a Bach organ fantasia to the most domestic type of Schumann, within the limits of a single movement. The result is peculiar, to say the least of it, and the impression of aimlessness is not redressed when the composer tops up a Scherzo in six-eight with a quite remarkably vacuous *Finale* in Tarantella rhythm. Both formally and stylistically, then, this concerto is a mess; but the musical public seems long ago to have decided to prefer it to Saint-Saëns much finer and more consistent *Fourth Concerto*. Miss Lyman deals with the solo part in the right spirit of bombast combined with technical brilliance; but the recording, though at times very good indeed, tends to become shrill and confused in the *tail*. When Decca succeed in achieving a treble as agreeable and rounded as the bass, in this set, is fine and sonorous, their issues may well become the best on the market. The second Saint-Saëns item on my list has the same faults of recording as the first, and many people may continue to prefer the old Heifetz disc. This piece is of course jam for any violinist, and Miss Haendel does not fail to wring the maximum of effect out of the Rondo, which paints a comic picture of an overdressed personage, somewhat the worse for drink, attempting to descend a grand staircase with dignity.

Some confusion exists on the subject of Wolf's exquisite *Italian Serenade*. L. H. Haward, writing in *Grove*, describes the work as "a charming Italianische Serenade for string-orchestra, which was a later version of an early string quartet." On the other hand, Ernest Decsey, who knew Wolf personally, speaks of the well-known string quartet version as being "only an arrangement" of the original composition "for small orchestra." While believing the latter to be the true statement of the case, I would be grateful if some reader could give me positive information. In any case the orchestral version (edited by Max Reger) is entirely delightful, and though it may be felt to lack some of the southern airiness and delicacy of the quartet arrangement, it cannot be denied that the addition of wind instruments gives more colour to the whole, and here and there characterises certain phrases in what seems

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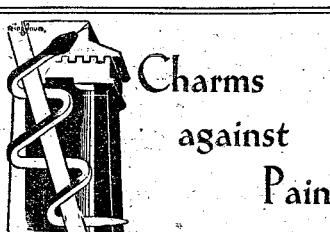
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