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all true science begins in the purposeful examination of some branch of technics.

The second lecture could be considered as Politics and Medicine, and the conclusions reached have much relevance to conditions in our own country. Since we cannot go back to small scale communities, it follows that much of our knowledge of the relation of the biological sciences to society is of a statistical kind. In this of course the exceptional is lost. Clearly then the good doctor is a technologist first and a scientist, if at all, a long way after.

The third lecture deals with science and law, and we are introduced to the predictions in policy made possible by the analysis of statistics. Yet no results of a scientific survey of law are available, we are told, and the principal use of statistics has been to make central governments stronger and their departments more responsible.

These lectures are the mature reflections of a mature mind disciplined in a number of sciences. The general tone of pessimism is not caused by the pursuit of science, but by a sober appraisal of what is possible. Anyone looking for a passport from chaos will not find it here.

—J. D. McDonald

A GIRL'S BEST FRIEND

YOUTH IS A BLUNDER. By Elma Napier. Jonathan Cape.

IT is difficult to convey in a short space the charm of this splendidly disordered monologue. The writer describes her childhood and growing up, 1896 to 1912, and no doubt will display the same vitality and vivacity in later volumes. The book, to be sure, will have snob appeal; the writer, a Gordon Cumming, is exceedingly high born, and her pages are sprinkled with titles. Although she is now a democrat, she touchingly values her ancient pedigree, which climbs back amazingly through the bloodiest pages of Scots history to Charlemagne, and then five centuries before him to the "royal line of the Sicambri." Her ancestors had bad luck in their dealings with kings; the Red Comyn was done to death at Dumfries in 1306; Elma Napier's father was condemned to social extinction in 1891 on the word of another prince in the celebrated "Baccarat Case."

Youth is a Blunder covers much the same sort of ground as Osbert Sitwell's memoirs and is written in the same spirit of serene detachment. Elma Napier substitutes for Renishaw equally eccentric and at times even gloomier households in Scotland, Devon, and in several parts of Europe. She is less gifted as a writer, but "muddles through" gaily and conveys an equally firm delineation of her parents. As she chatters on, now funny, now vulgar, now profound, we watch with unabated interest every move in the triangular duel of the three principals, her father, her mother, and herself. Her mother, of course, had staked out a claim for gratitude and love so immense that it might well have proved unendurable to many men less ruthless, selfish, and brilliant than Elma's father: for she had married a disgraced man in his darkest hour, succoured his wrecked fortunes with her money and, she fondly thought, his wounded spirit with her affection. Sir William Gordon Cumming was scarcely aware that this great bill was owing.

Elma's mother found her revenge in authority, of which her eldest daughter was the main but not the exclusive object. When they were ill, the deserving poor got soup and blankets, but their lives were interfered with and their wages were small. It was a form of slavery run on philanthropic lines. . . . "It so happens that Mother was exceptionally benevolent, but I don't think that made it a good system."

Elma's father consoled himself with the consistency of his habits. "It didn't take the Baccarat Case to make enemies for my father. He had made them for himself long before; had cuckolded so many husbands; been witty at the expense of so many fools." Elma defends her father's honour, both steadfastly and dispassionately. Was he perhaps "framed"? His counsel in the libel action always believed him innocent.

The rich and the eminent can find childhood hell just as surely as any slum child. "The lack of logic in my education never ceases to fascinate." Mother shielded Elma from the "facts of life," but could never resist a lavatory joke. Her poor child was "told much one day and denied all knowledge the next; what one might seem to do made more serious than what one did." Little wonder then that Elma felt marriage an escape. But ". . . a happy marriage is no safe defence against that senseless thing called love, although a sure refuge to crawl back to, bleeding from wounds." Her final judgment on her loving persecutor is mature and balanced: "No one ever understood Mother. Only as I grow older I come inevitably nearer to comprehension; am filled with sympathy."

GO TO THE ANT

THE LOST ANT. By Miriam Blanco-Fombona. George Allen and Unwin.

IN this gallant but misguided novel, the basic theme, the transplanting to London of a newly-rich South American family (largely Indian, though its name is resoundingly Spanish) from its native village (the "Lost Ant") under the Andes, is interesting and well-maintained. But the plot grafted on to this main topic is drawn from the worst sort of novelette. By flashes *The Lost Ant* is fine, serious, and moving, but much of it is grotesque and absurd. The author, one supposes, knows South America a good deal better than London where most of the events are transacted. The nostalgic yearning of the worldly for abandoned purity is a good subject for any novelist, but the imagined beauties of the Lost Ant in the lonely immensity of South America under the soaring peaks become a little tiresome with repetition. This is unlucky, as much in the book is unusual and sincere.

The Lost Ant was printed, elegantly, in Sweden, and appears to have been proof-read there too.

—David Hall

NATIONAL FILM UNIT

RICHARD FARRELL plays Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody No. 6 in the National Film Unit's Weekly Review No. 356 which is to be released July 2. The young New Zealand pianist, who is at present giving concerts throughout the Dominion, has developed impressively since he went abroad eight years ago to further his studies. His talent has put him in the top flight of pianoforte artists. Other items in the reel include "Winter Show," from Hamilton, showing some of the produce grown in the district, so much of which goes to help feed Britain; "Motor Cycle Road Race," also from Hamilton, provides plenty of thrills with its exciting and dare-devil riding. This is the first time this Grand Prix has been held in the North Island.



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