

"THE PRIEST WHO SLEW THE SLAYER"

DO boys still read Macaulay's Lays? If they do, they may wonder, as my generation did, what the meaning is in these lines:

From beneath the still glassy lake that sleeps

*Beneath Aricia's trees—
Those trees in whose dim shadow
The ghastly priest doth reign,
The priest who slew the slayer,
And shall himself be slain.*

There was something very sinister about this. Well, a great man died the other day in England who devoted most of his life to the elucidation of the mystery of that priesthood on the woodland lake of Nemi, in the Alban Hills, not far from Rome. The priest slew his predecessor, and must be on watch night and day lest he too be slain. He guarded a certain tree, the Golden Bough. Only a runaway slave could pluck a bough from it, and if he did this it entitled him to fight the priest and reign in his stead as King of the Wood. But what a reign! The grim figure of the king prowled round the tree, sword in hand. "Year in, year out, in summer and winter, in fair weather and foul, he had to keep his lonely watch, and whenever he snatched a troubled slumber, it was at peril of his life."

In a whole shelf-full of volumes Sir James Frazer traced the roads and byways of myth, magic, folklore, religion and ancient custom in many lands, to account for that recurring drama in the Italian landscape. In doing so he established himself as one of the greatest anthropologists of this or any time. The twelve volumes of *The Golden Bough* were condensed into one, and that runs to over 700 pages. Beautifully written, clothed with learning lightly worn, this work is one of the great literary-scientific monuments of modern times.

The labours of Sir James Frazer and other anthropologists have had an im-

(Continued from previous page)

Useless for Downing Street to issue categorical denials: "It was learned in London to-day on the highest authority that authoritative circles were undisposed to attach any credence to the reports from a neutral source that Herr Hitler is in England. Herr Hitler has never visited this country, and it now seems doubtful whether he ever will."

Why Not Send Him Back?

The news will soon be out. Something must be done about Hitler.

England's War Cabinet is stumped. Can't someone suggest what to do with the fellow?

Then up speaks a certain junior Minister. "I suppose," says this Minister, "it would never do to put him back? He's not doing us much good, and as I see it, he's not going to do the Germans much good, in the long run."

And so Herr Hitler finds himself in a British bomber somewhere over Eastern Germany. He is given a drink of brandy and a stick of nut-milk chocolate, and in a few seconds he is parachuting down into a wide, shallow bog.

A *Flying Visit* is a delightful fantasy, and a quaint forecast of the manner of arrival of Herr Hess. But so far no one has suggested returning him to Germany.

portant influence on our attitude towards primitive races. We see the "savage," not as a carefree child of nature, but a being hedged round all his hours and days by taboos, customs and beliefs which he is terrified of violating. Indeed we have taken the word "taboo," or the Maori "tapu," into our language. But if the "savage" is not free, and is fearful of breaking the iron code of his religion and tribal customs, we have to admit that we, too, are subject to an elaborate system of restrictions. The man who is pained by seeing somebody wearing the wrong sort of tie has a dim affinity with the primitive who surrenders to death because he has offended against tribal law. So *The Golden Bough* helps us to understand that civilised and uncivilised man have a great deal in common. It is largely a result of the research of anthropologists that the belief is growing that it is not wise to try to civilise primitive man completely on Western lines, but that there is much in his culture that is worth preserving; indeed it must be preserved if he is to survive. Indeed *The Golden Bough* might be described as a text-book for officials who have to govern primitive peoples.

—A.M.

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