

DEATHS AND ENTRANCES

LONDON, JANUARY 27

THE LONDON MAGAZINE has been born, *Scrutiny* has died, and *The Listener* has celebrated its 25th birthday with a coloured cover and 120 pages. This issue of *The Listener* contains an article by Sir Harold Nicolson pointing out that among the several good reasons for the printing of broadcast talks is that people of the most massive intelligence often have voices that suggest barges or distressed gentlewomen.

No such genialities soften the valedictory message of Dr. F. R. Leavis in the final issue of *Scrutiny*. Nor could they well have been expected there. For 21 years this magazine has been the vehicle for the rigorous critical values of Dr. Leavis and his followers, canvassed with a belligerence which is both a result and one of the causes of the considerable hostility that has been directed at *Scrutiny* in both the academic and literary worlds. In his final message Dr. Leavis remarks characteristically: "The intellectuals of literary journalism will not make public lament for *Scrutiny*. But they will not be unaffected by the loss. At one time the lag with which the perceptions and promptings put into currency by this review percolated to the world of literary fashions was six or seven years. Of late, as anyone who looks at the weeklies and listens to the Third Programme must have observed, the effect has been telling much more rapidly." This claim for the increasing influence of *Scrutiny* in its last years is, as far as my observations go, quite justified.

Encounter has now been followed by another new literary monthly, *The London Magazine*. If the sponsorship of *Encounter* was novel, that of *The London Magazine* is downright bizarre, being given by the Chairman and Directors of Daily Mirror Newspapers. Needless to say, *The London Magazine*, edited by John Lehmann and carrying a recommendation from T. S. Eliot, is as far as printed matter can be from

having the qualities that bring *The Daily Mirror* into so many English homes. *The London Magazine* seems both more English and more exclusively literary than *Encounter*—whether or not as a result of this, I felt that the first (February) issue was less interesting than that cosmopolitan journal which has in its sails, for good or ill, much of the spirit of the age. In his foreword Lehmann asks readers not to judge the magazine too soon—"It may be that the last few years have been a time of creative ebb in literature; but it may also be that the tide is at last turning."

... No ideologies are likely to help writers today to write. It is the obstinate will to create, whatever form it takes, that must be fanned and fed, like a fire when the rain has been coming down the chimney all night." The first issue contains work by some young writers as well as by Louis MacNeice, William Plomer, L. P. Hartley, Tom Hopkinson, and other established names. A letter from James Michie describes well the impact here of the death of Dylan Thomas—"His death was a major disaster and, incongruous as the comparison may seem, it leaves English Poetry as desolate as did the death of Pope. The gloom it has caused is almost patriotic."

The weeklies confirm the suggestion that the pulse of literary creation is rather slow in England just now, and also give reminders of the continuing practical anxieties that may partly explain this slowness. A series in *The Spectator* entitled *Is Britain Finished?* includes (January 1) a striking article by the Australian historian, Sir Keith Hancock, discussing this question in relation to the Commonwealth. He stresses the decline in relative importance of "The Commonwealth," since the phrase was first given wide currency by Smuts in 1917, but goes on to consider one of the less gloomy aspects of its situation, one which seems to me to have cultural as well as political implications. After mentioning the remarkable industrial progress made in Canada during the last decade and quoting a remark by Colin Clark that "India is likely very

soon to 'pierce the super-sonic barrier' beyond which lie rapid accumulation of capital and massive industrial strength," he says: "It is ... all to the good that Ottawa has its own special contact with Washington and Delhi with Peking. The Commonwealth is doing something to keep communications open in this divided world, and in doing so is strengthening its own communications. It is buying time both for others and for itself." I quote this because it has overtones which correspond with a state of feeling that seems to me very general here—one that includes waiting, foreboding, but at the same time, receptivity and the sense that fruitful as well as destructive forces are obscurely at work.

—Hubert Witheford



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