

# THE HEART'S EXILE

KATHERINE MANSFIELD, by Ian A. Gordon; Longman, Green and Co., English price 2/-.

(Reviewed by David Hall)

THE latest addition to the excellent series on British writers sponsored by the British Council, Professor Gordon's short critical study of Katherine Mansfield is lucid and perspicuous. We are lucky at the present time in the amount of new material on Katherine Mansfield which has recently come to light—the letters to Middleton Murry, Sylvia Berkman's thorough and painstaking critical study, and finally Antony Alpers's biography. Professor Gordon has made good use of these new tools, and his pamphlet admirably sums up the state of critical opinion in regard to K.M. at what is, I think, the end of a chapter. For it seems doubtful that she will ever again be a field for exploration or conjecture. Reassessments of her work there may well be, but little can now be added to our fund of information about it.

Ian Gordon states the dilemma of Katherine Mansfield with characteristic clarity and insight: "... She came to recognise that a New Zealander can be as much an exile in England as an Englishman on an island in the Pacific. From the moment of this discovery a

note of elegy entered her work, and she turned for her themes to her origins." He points out how much can be gained "in force and significance" from reading the stories in the order in which she wrote them. Throughout he relates her work to her life with rewarding perceptiveness, and his own knowledge of both hemispheres stands him in good stead. The key period of her life was near its end, after illness had laid its hand upon her, and she must have realised, even if subconsciously, that what she had to do must be done soon—two years of writing with "concentrated fury" in two separate "bursts of febrile activity." It is always attractive to speculate, chicken and egg fashion, whether illness comes as the way out of a psychological impasse, or whether the psychological malaise is in fact created by the illness. Did Katherine Mansfield die because fundamentally she wanted to die? Her life was an unhappy one, but the unhappiness fed her art.

Perhaps the greatest strength of Professor Gordon's well-proportioned study



Spencer Digby photo  
Professor Gordon

is its statement of the skill of Katherine Mansfield as an artist. "She is assured in her craft, and knowledgeable even to the placing of a comma. She writes with precision, knowing the effect she intends..." He comments, too, on the evocative poetic quality of the fabric of many of her stories, creating an immediate effect of a sort of shimmering iridescence, a sensuousness of detail which contributes to a total effect but which is detachable like a flower plucked from a bush.

## AND THE GLORY

POWER AND INFLUENCE, by Lord Beveridge; Hodder and Stoughton, English price 30/-.

At last there is a saint on earth  
An angel he would be,  
If only he could have his will  
And make the Commons pass his Bill

THIS verse was sent to Beveridge by an old age pensioner after the publication of his famous report on Social Insurance at the end of 1942. It was a prophetic verse—and it also provides the theme of this book. Lord Beveridge is a great man, but he can't help feeling bitter about the actions of men with power—the power of government. He says that power "appeals to that which men share with brutes, to fear and to greed," and that influence "appeals to that which distinguishes men from brutes," and influence must be enthroned over power.

Beveridge's bewilderment at Churchill's boycott of his report and at the order to Government departments ban-

ning conversations with him (Beveridge) on the maintenance of employment seems to show that Beveridge, despite his years of being the influential Director of the London School of Economics, really lacks an understanding of politics. This is a surprising statement to make about a man whose work and writings have profoundly influenced both the opinions about and the administration of social security in several countries in and outside the British Commonwealth. But it also seems to be the view of the British economist Roy Harrod, who said: "The book is written with a beautiful simplicity, which makes it fully revealing."

Though we are aware of Beveridge's world eminence in social security and full employment, we are also uncomfortably aware of his own self-appraisal. Beveridge is apparently one of those who feel that the detail of his life and thoughts is also interesting to other people, or perhaps he is merely being his usual scrupulously honest self. At least some of the detail shows significant aspects of his personality; for example, on his first visit to the Tyrol he records that he climbed 72,000 feet and spent his nights at an average height of 5540 feet; and "in the Lake District alone there were some sixty-five points marked on the ordnance map as above 2500 feet, and I set out to climb them all. I have now climbed all except five, and these I have given up."

—W. B. Sutch



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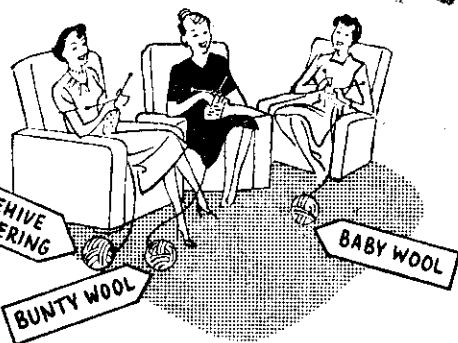
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