

simplest form this essay may be found unsatisfactory, since the facts of history are apt to grow less simple the more carefully their various aspects are examined.

—R. M. Burdon

EXCURSIONS AND ADVENTURES

RITCHIE, or *Behind the Tartan Curtain*, by John B. Zutter; Jonathan Cape, English price 12 6. **FALLING STREAM**, by Hester W. Chapman; Jonathan Cape, English price 10 6. **THE WILD HONEY**, by Victoria Lincoln; Faber and Faber, English price 12 6. **GENERAL IN THE JUNGLE**, by B. Traven; Robert Hale, English price 10 6.

FIRST the worst. *Ritchie* is a feeble comedy about a young art critic who is sent by his principal to darkest Scotland, there to value an alleged bust by Leonardo. Missing his station and his step he falls into (in order) a deep stream, unconsciousness, a bed, trouble, and love. Assorted Scotch types circulate for the sake of local colour. The bust is of no importance either to the novel or to the canon of Leonardo. The author's fourth novel, so one can hardly even call him promising.

Falling Stream is a comedy, too, but the writing is better and the author has a grip on human situations. It is a triangle, a married couple and the lady friend. What makes the triangular situation more interesting than most is that all three members are middle-aged and have contrived to live in a delicate and decorous balance for twenty years. A threesome voyage to the exoticism of Southern Italy lets a few inhibitions out of the bag. Husband has an affair of a moment with the lady friend. Wife falls for a delightfully portrayed Anglophile Italian aristocrat, who sighs in pre-First-War slang for grey skies over Piccadilly, and who, in his turn, falls for an improbably Russian lady. It is all rather a romp, but written with serious overtones, and the central figure, for whom romance comes too late to be other than a nuisance, is extremely well done.

The Wild Honey is a collection of short stories. One need hardly add that they are American. The insatiable American appetite for weekly and monthly magazines keeps many a writer in fulltime employment, and the quality of the best is at present as high as is to be found anywhere in the English-writing world. Miss Lincoln's work is mainly concerned with women and children, and she is skilled both in plotting and in the evocation of atmosphere. On quality, this is the best volume so far, and I recommend it.

Finally, the best book of the quartette, *General in the Jungle*. Readers of *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, *The Rebellion of the Hanged* and *The Bridge in the Jungle*, will need no further recommendation. The author, Traven, is a mysterious figure. I have been trying to get information on him for years, but when the dust jacket of this volume tells me that neither his publisher nor his agent has ever seen him, I cease to be despondent about my own researches. Traven writes mainly of the Indians in Mexico, and alternates between pity for their plight and savage anger at what they endure. In this novel his mood is lighter, in that he concedes a kind of grim humour can be wrung from situations that in his earlier books he regarded with horror. *The General from the Jungle* needs a strong stomach, but it is none-the-less a fine piece of work. This story of a group of Indians who rebel against their masters is a kind of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in reverse.

N.Z. LISTENER, NOVEMBER 5, 1954.

and is a notable addition to Traven's unblinking yet somehow sensitive studies in violence.

—I.A.G.

DESPERATE SINCERITY

THE INWARD JOURNEY, by Doris Peel; Victor Gollancz, English price 13/-.

HERE is a distinctively feminine kind of writing which one finds at its best in Virginia Woolf and Katherine Mansfield, and at its worst in Wilhelmina Sticht; in the former case, feminine sensibility sharpens, clarifies, illuminates; in the latter, sensibility gives way to gush, and content is submerged in a welter of rhetoric. In both cases, style indicates the calibre of mind. Regrettably, style detracts from Miss Peel's account of her experiences at the Berlin Peace Conference. What can one say of: "O beautiful sight!—the lemony glow of lighted windows"? Or of the breathless parentheses of: "Kathe. I believe what you say, I believe you care, with your whole heart. And I honour that caring—I want you to know that, because that's where we can meet; where we are meeting! But the way you've chosen, that's something else." Or of the repetitive "one thought," and "one couldn't," and "one's heart."

Miss Peel is an American of emancipated background and romantic disposition, eagerly searching for significant personal relationships among the jarring sects of post-war Europe. Drago, Viktor, Miloje Koca Dimitri, Katya, Nadya and Kip are among her collection on the road to Trieste, none of them as significant as Liesl, Kathe and Ernst, "chief of the border police," whom she met at the Peace Conference. Through her contact with these three convinced Communists she explores the enigma of Bach and Buchenwald, and the practical problem of co-existence, both of which she tries to solve on the level of evangelism and change of heart. Miss Peel has the power to convey her own desperate sincerity, at times; more often she oppresses. Nevertheless, she gives an interesting subjective account of types behind the Iron Curtain.

—J.R.T.

A POET'S LETTERS

LETTERS OF WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, selected by Philip Wayne, the World's Classics; Geoffrey Cumberlege, Oxford University Press, English price 5/-.

ONE reads the letters of a great poet for various reasons—not least among them, the hope of discovering some part of the circumstantial scaffolding of his poems. In the case of Wordsworth there is added another main reason for scrutiny—to find a clue why poetry of a Lucretian magnificence gave place to verse of pedestrian bathos. These let-



WILLIAM WORDSWORTH
"A scathing exhortation"

ters do afford the hint of a cause. There are strong contrasts of style and content between the earlier and later letters of Wordsworth. In June, 1794, he writes to W. Mathews condemning "hereditary distinctions and privileged orders of every species." In December, 1821, he writes to James Losh: "When I was young, giving myself credit for qualities which I did not possess, and measuring mankind by that standard, I thought it derogatory to human nature to set up Property in preference to Person, as a title for legislative power. That notion has vanished. . ."

It is hardly the part of the literary critic to discuss in which view Wordsworth was nearer the truth. But after

(continued on next page)

WAKE UP YOUR LIVER BILE -

Without Calomel — And You'll Jump out of Bed in the Morning Full of Vim. The liver should pour out two pints of liquid bile into your bowels daily. If this bile is not flowing freely, your food doesn't digest. It just decays in the bowels. Wind bloats up your stomach. You get constipated. Your whole system is poisoned and you feel sour, tired and weary and the world looks blue.

Laxatives are only makeshifts. A mere bowel movement doesn't get at the cause. It takes those good old Carter's Little Liver Pills to get those two pints of bile flowing freely and make you feel "up and up." Harmless, gentle yet amazing in making bile flow freely.

Ask for CARTER'S Little Liver Pills by name. Stubbornly refuse anything else. Distributors: Fasset & Johnson Ltd., Lery Buildings, Manners Street, Wellington, C-3

Don't let this happen!



BUILD FIRE SAFETY INTO ALL
INTERIOR WALLS & CEILINGS WITH

GIBRALTAR BOARD

ITS THE PROVEN
FIRE-STOP

- WILL NOT WARP OR TWIST
- INSULATES • QUIETENS NOISE
- REDUCES BUILDING COSTS