

cal preacher in the Welsh village of his birth.

There, in a Jeffrey Farnol setting, his romance with a decorative film star whom he had insulted—but who is now also reformed—develops very charmingly and unselfishly on both sides. Naturally, there are troubles and some dirty work is done, but in the end there is general repentance and a moral life is lived by all.

Incidentally, if cunning Hollywood producers could make the religious theme convincing to this naughty world, "Hearts for Gold" would seem excellent fodder for the scenario-writers. The easy-flowing and sometimes humorous dialogue, the simplicity of the motives behind action, above all the alternate play upon laughter and tears, make the book read more often like a shooting script than a literary work. One can imagine boxer Roddy Gwynn being very effectively brought to shadow life by the broad-shouldered Joel McCrea.

All in all, "Hearts for Gold" is a good-hearted and moving little tale, not for a minute to be taken seriously and with plenty of faults, but good company, nevertheless, for an hour or two.

"Hearts for Gold," by Countess Barycynska, (Hutchinson and Co., Ltd., London). Our copy from the publishers.

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Generation

CHILDREN DECRY THE FATHERS

ONE of youth's dearest privileges is to be able to poke out its tongue at the back of its elders. That little surreptitious gesture of independence is a great balm for the pains of mind and body inflicted by people who are bigger and stronger, and say they are wiser.

As it is with individuals just so, it seems, is it with generations of individuals. For there was never yet an age of Englishmen that did not despise or pity the manners and thinking of its immediate forbears—no matter how ready at the same time to bow down in worship of a lot of disreputable early ancestors whose chief virtue was the dust of centuries that had made them legendary.

This British trait of character may be partly the reason why, in post-war years, the Victorian age has been the butt of so much scorn. The men and women who were children at the close of Victoria's reign have had no mercy on the stuffiness, the hypocrisy, the infuriating "smuggery" of their parents and grand-parents. In revenge for being repressed in youth, when they grew up they set the whole world laughing at the sex-phobias, the aspidochelons and "vapours" of Victorianism.

No doubt this castigation was healthy and often justified. Nevertheless, those mocking children of the Golden Age have rather made us lose sight of much that was good and sound, or merely human, under the frills of 1900. Silly and hidebound as those people of thirty and fifty years ago may have been, yet at root they were still people, with all the doubts and despairs and leaping hopes of people everywhere, in all the ages.

What literature needs now is not so much about the facade of Victorianism, but a good deal more about the vulnerable heart beneath. It is time the spotlight moved from the Age to the men and women who lived, feared and struggled in it.

Latest author to tackle this immense and difficult subject—and largely to fail—is Phyllis Bentley, whose "Sleep in Peace" is an attempt to portray her own generation: that generation which "made the transition from Victorian England—industrial, expanding, pious, a Great Power and proud of it—to the confused revolts and loyalties of to-day."

In some ways, one might have thought Miss Bentley's distinctive method, with its dependence upon the mass effect of piled detail, would have suited the theme. But Miss Bentley, like so many others before her, is too close to Victorianism to see it wholly. And no amount of literary skill or honesty can overcome that handicap.

"Sleep in Peace" deals with the dissimilar families of Hinchcliffe and Armistead, living in an industrial town in the West Riding, drawn unwillingly together by circumstance and strangely held in union, despite themselves.

The picture we are given of them is complete and no doubt accurate.

But for all that, even 560 pages of close print are not sufficient to bring about a dozen characters to full and vivid life, with the result that everyone in the novel—even Laura Armistead, the mild-hearted potterer in art with whom we spend most time—is insipid and pale-blooded and vaguely unbelievable.

As a picture of an important and strongly-marked era, "Sleep in Peace" is an interesting, painstaking and strikingly honest piece of work. As a novel, it holds interest only in the early stages, and thereafter cries aloud for the presence of at least one character sympathetically drawn or one situation humorously conceived.

"Sleep in Peace," by Phyllis Bentley. (Victor Gollancz, London). Our copy from the publishers.

CHILDREN'S BOOK TO PLEASE PARENTS

IN these days when literature for children is so plentiful that reading paternally-censored novels under the blankets, by torch-light, must be rapidly becoming an almost prehistoric crime, it is only the books of real merit that can expect to win much attention. Elizabeth Foreman Lewis's well-illustrated "China Quest" comes into that category, and should have the approval not only of parents, but of young readers themselves.

The author did mission work in China for some years, and has a profound admiration for Chinese civilization and the Chinese character. She knows what she is talking about, and writes of the Orient with an enthusiasm and understanding that is rare.

"China Quest" is the story of the friendship between an American boy in love with the East who goes to China as an assistant in his father's firm, and of a Chinese country boy who yearns to be an air pilot.

There is good measure of excitement and humour in this book, but the best of it is its unobtrusive schooling in international goodwill. For any child from 11 to 15 years old it would be a happy gift on that next birthday.

"China Quest," by Elizabeth Foreman Lewis. (Harrap, London). Our copy from the publishers.

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