

... With ... BOOK and VERSE

By "John O'Dreams"

Jottings

IN "Goethe, The History of a Man," Herr Emil Ludwig has written a biography of his illustrious fellow-countryman which is a worthy successor to the great German writer's study of Napoleon. Herr Ludwig is fortunate in his translator, Miss Ethel Colborn Mayne, and the book, so far as one may judge, loses nothing of excellence of literary quality in the form in which it is presented to English readers. It is an admirable and thought-provoking study of the life and loves, temperament, friendships and achievement of one of the most greatly gifted figures of all time; and from the opening paragraph, when we make acquaintance of the sixteen-year-old Leipzig student, "full of a confident omniscience," our attention is enchained.

The dual nature of genius is analysed with penetrative skill, the author depicting with sympathy and sincerity the diffidence, arrogance, quick responsiveness and wayward aloofness of him who was by turns absorbed dreamer, ardent romanticist, citizen of the world, and model of domestic virtue.

The book is dedicated to Mr. G. B. Shaw, whom Herr Ludwig hails as most eminent among authors of our own country. In his interesting foreword he explains that, because the Germans long have nourished the idea of a young Apollo and an old Zeus, Goethe has remained at an Olympian distance; but now a generation has arisen that loves the enigmatic sage and philosopher, not only for magnificent literary heritage bequeathed to his countrymen, but because of fluctuations of character, warmth and generosity of impulse, and motive forces of endeavour. The author hopes that, in this biography of between three and four hundred pages, he has displayed in moving panorama the "landscapes of the soul" of a great and lonely genius, and it would seem that he has succeeded well.

Politician and social observer, biologist, teacher, sceptic and prophet, Goethe wrote the most inspired poetry the German language has produced; and in his genius, felicity of portrayal and infinite scope is hailed as "brother of the great German musicians." For sympathetic interpretation and sound workmanship, this is a book to commend itself to the literary cognoscenti.

"THE Singing Wood," by Lady Frazer. Shades of Puss in Boots and all our other favourites—here are eighteen original fairy tales of great charm and wit, written in the good old-fashioned style. Illustrations by Mr. H. M. Brock. An ideal gift book for children.

Our Fortnightly Book Review

GRAND HOTEL

By VICKI BAUM

ARNOLD BENNETT exploited, with notable skill and audacity, fictional possibilities of the large hotel, its habits, management and psychology. But his method differed entirely from that employed in the novel under review, for there is the width of the poles between treatment of theme by British and German novelist. When "Grand Hotel" appeared in 1930 it took the fiction-reading world by storm. It was so original and arresting, so exceedingly candid and free from mauvaise honte that everybody read it, intended to read it, or knew someone who had just read it. Now that it is procurable in the Dominion there is much talk thereupon among those who keep their library lists up to date, considerable diversity of opinion existing as to its art and ethics, and justice of its undeniable pinnacle as one of the year's best-sellers.

The authoress, it is understood, in this novel makes her first bid for suffrages of the literary public; but there is nothing amateurish in its discursive and swiftly-moving account of the life that goes on inside revolving doors of a luxurious hotel in Berlin, which is typical of others in any large Continental city, with its thronging clientele in lounge, dining-room and private apartments. The whole vivid picture bears an extraordinary veracity of atmosphere, and it is not surprising to learn that the author, to attain literary verisimilitude, served as chambermaid in a large hostelry in order to study her quarry in intimate association.

A memorable set of puppets is presented, from the hall porter who, white about the gills, pursues his duties breathing hard and walking on tiptoe, in momentary fear of bad news of his wife who is going to have a baby and is dangerously ill, to a permanent guest at the hotel, a war victim, whose beautiful ascetic profile is coupled, on the other side of his face, with a confused medley of seams and scars, in the midst of which shines a glass-eye—a "Souvenir from Flanders," as the cynic, humanitarian and drug fiend who was Dr. Otternschlag described himself.

To Grand Hotel comes grotesque and shabby Krinkelkein, underpaid bookkeeper from a provincial town, who has come into a small legacy, which he desires to dissipate in seeing the world during the few months that remain to him of life. The poor little clerk, with his ragged moustache and shabby clothes, his blue eyes shining with a love of life and knowledge of death, is befriended first by the shattered doctor, and eventually taken in hand by Count Gaigern, a fascinating scamp, who introduces him to the gay world via motor-car, aeroplane, boxing match, night club and gambling hell.

Then there is Preysing who endeavours to put through a business deal, making one in the coterie of men who sit and conduct business in all languages, selling stocks and shares and even life itself, after making a heavy breakfast, strewing newspapers on every table, and beleaguering every telephone-box. In his own town Preysing is a successful citizen, family man, careful spender, and grinder of his employees, demanding and receiving the unwilling homage of the groundlings. When crisis comes, however, he of the moral maxims topples from Pharasaical height, lapses from commercial probity, plunges into erotic amour, and being discovered, ineffectually slays the debonair Gaigern, that engaging soldier of fortune, who having made burglarious midnight entry into Preysing's apartment, inadvertently interrupts an affaire de coeur, described with astonishing frankness and aplomb.

Another amorous episode, presented with realism possibly not wholly acceptable to English convention, is the passion that sprang up, with little preamble, between Gaigern, dandy, Quixote and crook, and the lovely dancer whose fame has declined with the swift passing of the years. Grusinakaya is vividly presented, with "her figure that seemed to be all joints, the unchanging beautiful oval of face. Her arms obeyed her will like wings, and the smile that shone from beneath her long eyelashes was itself a work of art." Exotic, temperamental, her body a miracle of grace, her long white throat, like a flower, adorned by those pearls that were a relic of the days of her Grand Duke, one suspects the swan-like beauty of being a portrait drawn from life.

Another type of Eve, the eternal, is the flamboyant Flammchen, who

MRS. FALCONER JAMESON, the novelist, who wrote under the name "J. E. Buckrose," died recently at her home at Wymondham, Norfolk. Mrs. Jameson, who was in her sixty-fourth year, was the author of several North Country novels, short stories and character sketches. Among her works were "The Wood End," "Little Green World," "Down Our Street," "The Grey Shepherd," "The Gossip Shop," "The Silent Legion," and "Payment in Kind."

BOOKS in letter form are often tedious. Miss Joan Haslip escapes this fault in her first novel, "Out of Focus," but by far the best part of the book is the description of Hungarian and English scenery and society, seen through the eyes of one who is a keen observer and has a passion for the beautiful in Nature. Lyneth Balfour tells the story of her disastrous marriage in a series of letters to an older male friend, who is used as a sort of safety-valve for the emotions of a very modern, self-centred, and self-analytical young woman.

IT is perhaps significant that Mr. John Drinkwater should have found it necessary to defend the subject of his latest book, "The Life and Adventures of Carl Laemmle." In a chapter that might have served as a preface he replies to Mr. Hugh Walpole, who had expressed his surprise in a New York newspaper. All that most of us knew of Carl Laemmle was that he was the head of Universal Pictures. Mr. Drinkwater paints a lovable portrait of the man who emigrated from Germany at the age of seventeen, and after twenty years of unspectacular struggle went into "the pictures," gave their first engagements to Mary Pickford and other famous film stars, and finally founded Universal City in California. It goes without saying that the book is well written.

supplemented tedious typewriting earnings by amateur excursions into the realm of the world's oldest profession, and whose undraped figure was so lovely that her photograph was sought assiduously, and secured to adorn advertisements for somebody's soaps and scents.

A mutable and kaleidoscopic panorama, this tale of teeming life behind the scenes, of fevered pursuit of will-o'-the-wisp of desire, the whole in unusual presentation of human beings in the grip of that fate which flings prizes to unexpected quarters; the novel in its entirety being of a quality and content that cannot fail to arouse controversy.