

strangely passive : they are at the mercy of circumstances and their uncontrolled selves.'

King John, *Richard III.*, *Richard II.*, 1 and 2 *Henry IV.* and *Henry V.* are grouped under the title *St. George for England*, and in them we find a renewed acceptance of the necessity of struggle, and a corresponding increase in the moral stature of the characters. A certain contempt for the first solution is in evidence : *Richard II.* sees that

God omnipotent
Is mustering in his clouds on our behalf
Armies of pestilence

against his rival Bolingbroke. But *Richard* himself is accused by *Margaret* of unmanly weakness. In *Mr. Knight's* words 'he has too little of the beast in him.' Yet along with this reinstatement of conflict as something to be valued we are given a new goal of advance instead of one of retirement into pastoral simplicity : in *King John* it is the Papal Legate who brings about the fulfilment of *Salisbury's* wish that

. these two Christian armies might combine
The blood of malice in a vein of league ;

Henry IV. purposes to atone for his bloodstained usurpation by a Crusade ; *Henry V.* who calls on the name of God before *Agincourt*, and gives thanks to him after the victory, is an attempt to portray the nobility of the Christian warrior. We may sum up the author's findings by saying that without the dragon *St. George* is a meaningless figure, while if *George* is not a saint the dragon will win. This theme the second half of the book works over again in terms of the later plays.

As a Shakespearian study this book is in no way unworthy of the author's previous ones : it is by far the most successful of his manifestos on England's destiny.

IVO THOMAS, O.P.

THE BEAR OF BRITAIN. By Edward P. Frankland. (Macdonald ; 9s. 6d.)

The figure of *Arthur* is hard to disentangle from the elaborate frieze of Arthurian legend, whether it be the rich tapestried version of *Malory* or the Tennysonian water-colour. Any attempt at re-establishing the *Arthur* of history must be ruthless. The muddled sources of sixth-century British history are scarcely promising for a plain story. But when so much fantastic speculation has passed for serious history, a novelist may be allowed the fullest liberty. He can at least make a fresh start.

This is what *Mr. Frankland* has done in his novel, *The Bear of Britain*. He has, in the words of *Mr. Lloyd George's* introduction, 'cleared away the lumber of incredible mediaeval fantasies' and has

substituted 'a character historically intelligible.' His Arthur is a warrior, a man of resolution, convinced of his mission of leading his people against the Saxon hordes threatening his country. No mystical obsession blurs that purpose, and the story is a likely one—a story of crude battle and treachery, of loyalties of place and time that are far more convincing, if far less elegant, than a vague chivalry.

J.E.

LOVE AND THE LOTUS. By Elsie E. Boden. (Sands; 8s. 6d.)

This is a novel of the war and its impact on ordinary people in an English village. Evacuees, the Vicar and his invalid wife, the girl who becomes a nurse, the Dunkirk soldier—here are ingredients familiar enough, but they are deftly made up into a convincing story. The spiritual issues that underlie a human situation are by no means evaded, and altogether *Love and the Lotus* is much more worth reading than its title suggests.

J.E.

FALL OF A TOWER AND OTHER POEMS. By Francis Berry. (Fortune Press; 5s.)

Fall of a Tower is a twenty-page sandwich of verse and prose. It records the dynamiting of a church tower which in the view of its destroyer kept the sun out of the town and out of his own life. In this and most of the shorter poems which follow, the 'Byron-like solidity. . . life-force. . . ample thews and rich colour' prophesied by the author for post-war poetry are undoubtedly in evidence, the *Benedicite* to the sun being an especially vigorous and poetic exaltation. But a greater discipline of workmanship is needed to make this energy permanently interesting. At present the symbolism is too obviously symbolic while the syntax occasionally lapses into obscurity, a combination which produces a crudity of finish. There is power and there is elegance in these poems, but they have nowhere been satisfyingly fused.

Ivo THOMAS, O.P.

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