
Review

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or deformity can be so funny as the mere fact of having two legs"; "Evolution (the sinister enemy of revolution) does not especially deny the existence of God. What it does deny is the existence of man"; "The British Empire may annex what it likes, but it will never annex England. It has not even discovered the island, let alone conquered it"; "'Tommy was a good boy' is a purely philosophical statement worthy of Plato or Aquinas"; "'Tommy lived the higher life,' is a gross metaphor from a ten-foot rule." Mr. Chesterton cannot abide total abstinence. "The only man," he proclaims, "who is, in the exact and literal sense of the words, making a beast of himself is the teetotaler." Such topsy-turvydom is too recondite for us.

W. S. K.

LALAGE'S LOVERS. By George A. Birmingham. (Methuen and Co.). 6s.

In this book Mr. Birmingham has given his readers another extravaganza after the fashion of *Spanish Gold*. Those who enjoyed the frolics and escapades of the Reverend J. J. Meldon will also enjoy those of Miss Lalage Beresford: the situations in the new book are, like those in the former, amusing and extremely improbable, the dialogue in both is witty, smart and somewhat unnatural.

We meet Lalage first as a flapper, precocious, but quite free from self-consciousness; as a flapper she is charming, and the abstract justice of the grievances of her governess fails to compel us to find a verdict against the girl. But when she re-appears from the obscurity of school life (an obscurity only slightly lighted by a couple of rather delightful schoolgirl letters) as an Undergraduate of T.C.D. going up for "Jun. Soph. Ord.," a member of Trinity Hall, "where we have our rooms, you know," then indeed we find her rather too much of a good thing, in fact what she would have herself described in some such phrase as "the absolutely frozen limit."

That an undergraduate magazine should libel twenty-three Bishops is sufficiently startling, but might be condoned—for undergraduate literature has been known, before now, to treat with scant courtesy personages in high places—but that a young lady should set a respectable Ulster constituency by the ears by speeches on public platforms, this does seem to outstep the bounds of probability. Nor is the improbability lessened when she hastens off to throw herself into the excitement of an episcopal election.

The other characters have their individualities well marked, but on each of them there rests the same touch of extravagance, of being highly coloured. There is the hero, the man, that is,

who tells the story, and who ultimately drops uncertainly, almost without any action of his own will, into the position of the regular hero of a novel. There is Canon Beresford, with his interminable quotations from Horace, and his readiness to flee from his responsibilities by going—not unlike Jonah—to sea in ships. There is the Archdeacon, champion of orthodoxy and candidate Bishop. There is the rough-spoken Northern who runs an election with but slight regard for the feelings of his candidate. There are the undergraduate youth and maiden, who play second fiddle to Lalage's tunes. They are all people whom you might have met, *nearly but not quite*.

But this may—indeed perhaps does—belong to the very nature of burlesque, and burlesque has, after all, its own place in literature as well as comedy or tragedy: and this one, at all events, if not read too seriously, provides an honest laugh.

J. P.

ACROSS YUNNAN. By Archibald Little. (Sampson Low, Marston.) 3s. 6d. net.

Yunnan is situated in the S.W. corner of the Chinese Empire. It is a mountainous plateau, 5,000 ft. above sea level in the central portion, with loftier steppes on the outward sides. Yunnan is the third largest province of the empire, practically the most resourceful, certainly to English people the least known. The French have recently opened a Grand Trunk Railway into its capital from Haiphry, between Burman and Yunnan, connecting the province with Tonking. English interests lie mostly on the Burman side, but at present the only means of communication between Burman and Yunnan is by a precarious mule track.

Mr. Archibald Little, whose death we deplore, has as his object, in the volume just published, edited by his wife, to show the importance of the development of the province as a link between India and the Yangtse. The book is extremely interesting as the record of an experienced traveller, and as an account of a little known but extraordinarily important French enterprise. The opening of the French railway into Yunnan marks a distinct advance in the development of China. It cost the French Government £5,000,000. Our Indian Government began a similar undertaking from Mandalay, but the rail head is lost in the jungle, one hundred miles from the border of western Yunnan.

If Mr. Little's statements (and they have the character of sober judgement) are to be trusted, it is essential to our commercial interest that the Burman-Yunnan line be completed, even if it has to be subsidized by Government for years.

As a book of travel, of interest and importance, written in a concise and graphic style, we warmly recommend *Across Yunnan* to our readers.

T. H. S.