

field will find the heaviest part of his task already accomplished. It is an inevitable reflection in reading those voluminous discussions that the House of Commons was all the time merely registering the decrees of outside authorities, political, military and financial, as must be the case when all checks on expenditure have rightly or wrongly been suspended. Even Chancellors of the Exchequer sink into insignificance; and it will be difficult for the historian to point to one of them during the War period, except Mr. McKenna, who rose above mediocrity.

AN AMBASSADOR'S MEMOIRS. By Maurice Paléologue (Last French Ambassador to the Russian Court). 3 Vols. (Hutchinson. 18s. a volume.)

MEMOIRS are the life-blood of history—enlivening and illumining the dull pages of diplomatic correspondence, and quickening the figures of monarchs and statesmen. Diplomat, man of letters, bearer of an historic name, M. Paléologue surveyed the Russian scene throughout the years 1914-1917 as French Ambassador to the Imperial Court. With pride he recalls that it was from Sophy Paléologue, niece of the last Emperor of Byzantium and wife of Ivan the Great, that the Russian Tsars derived their claim to Constantinople and to the double-headed eagle as their crest. Fortunate in his name, the Ambassador was no less fortunate in his literary and social gifts, and M. Paléologue speedily found himself a *persona gratissima* in the salons of the city. The Byzantinism and splendid ceremonial of both Church and Court in Russia have appealed, as might be expected, to M. Paléologue's eye for colour and lively historic sense. But of the Russians themselves he is keenly critical. What repelled him in Russian society was its superstitiousness, sensuality, and cruelty. Such a people—so it seemed to him—could only exist "to give humanity terrible lessons." Yet when in 1917 the time came for him to part from them he did so with regret, and as he crossed the frontier, leaving behind him the flaming ruins of an Empire, he recalled the prophecy of the village idiot in *Boris Godunov*: "Weep, my holy Russia, weep. For thou art entering into darkness."

FICTION

THE RED PAVILION. By John Gunther. (Martin Secker. 7s. 6d. net.)—This study of the psychology of modern marriage is not merely a brilliant first novel: it is one of the best, most cultivated and human of recent American books. Richard Northway, the hero, is displayed even down to his inmost thoughts and half-crystallized moods in a singularly clear way, and by most unusually simple, effective and unforced means. The reader gradually becomes familiar with his serious, cumbersome personality and realizes by a gradual process of enlightenment how strange a mixture of frustration and ambition, of humanity and individualism Richard really is. And then Richard's wife comes into the picture, with another half-dozen skilfully and economically drawn characters, each with his or her own problems, each subtly influencing the others. Richard's wife Shirley is the most charming and the least vividly displayed of them all. Mr. Gunther, no doubt deliberately, keeps her mysteriously feminine, withdrawn, enigmatic. That she should return to her husband seems natural enough despite the profound antagonism between them. It is the recognition of the antagonisms which do exist inside marriage that is the chief sex-problem of our age, after all, since to recognize enmity as well as attraction is not necessarily to create an armistice between men and women.

The Red Pavilion relates in a most natural manner the events which follow upon Shirley's return to Richard. Free in language perhaps, the book is in treatment and manner a model of decorum. It deserves careful reading, for it is a part attempt towards the solution of vital contemporary perplexities. Richard and Shirley seem forced to avoid each other in order to retain their self-respect, or perhaps rather to be able each to adapt himself to the other. In contrast to them are other characters who avoid rather than attack difficulties—whether by blindly hazarding themselves on erotic seas or by the too common experimental method which so often ends tragically, or by armouring themselves in cynicism or monasticism. Though they are some of them anything but admirable it is possible to maintain aesthetic sympathy with all, and the novel is unpretentiously planned, ably developed and pleasantly written. Ten years ago it would have needed expurgation, but to-day its occasional bluntness are presumably condoned by readers.

DESERT, A LEGEND. By Martin Armstrong. (Cape. 7s. 6d.)—Mr. Armstrong relates in almost conscientiously detailed manner the experience of a young Alexandrian sybarite who, recoiling from hedonism after an unfortunately terminated love affair, determines to follow the way of the Early Christian hermits. He sets himself to the long task of attaining freedom from the world's illusions by solitude, fasting and toil. It is perhaps not Mr. Armstrong's fault, for he writes scrupulously well and deliberately, if the temptations of the mind that assail Malchus do not exactly appal. The horror that walks by night has lost its fears for an age that babbles glibly in psycho-analytic phraseology: and in any case the temptations of the flesh which befall Malchus are so much more concretely described, or suggested, than are those of the spirit that one cannot but compare the book rather unfavourably to *La Tentation de St. Antoine*. Mr. Armstrong lacks the biting pen: he is too good-natured to his poor hermit, and there is at once more horror and more voluptuousness in the woodcuts by B. Ravillions, which handsomely decorate the novel, than in the letterpress.

THE GROOVE. By Dorothy Cosens. (Williams and Norgate. 7s. 6d. net.)—A competent attack on the familiar novel-form which introduces irreconcilable generations. Miss Cosens writes of the old type of English farmer, rigidly conservative and circumscribed in outlook and emotion, in relation to younger people. Here the aged slowly and wilfully subdue and embitter the young, who neither willingly conform nor openly and courageously revolt. The chief sufferer is not Maurice, the War-crippled hero, but his gentle, ignorant sister Harriet, who treasures pathetically a casually presented coral necklace from the only eligible youth she had ever been allowed to meet.

Maurice is an unpleasant, soured character in contrast to whom the vindictive old John Lawes, his father, appears admirable if hateful. John, the expert farmer, the domineering master of his own house, at least knew and demanded what he wanted, while his son hardly dared to want anything, and when he did venture was too vacillating to secure it. It remained to a succession of women, one a jilt and the other worse, to teach Maurice where his happiness really lay. The story leaves him married to a charming and generous girl, through whom he has a chance of making good in spite of the old ladies, his aunt, and his pitiful sister, who share their home. The novel somehow just misses being really interesting; it is a little too stark, the characters a little too conventional, the plot too merely probable to raise it to the level of value in literature.

STORIES NEAR AND FAR. By William J. Locke. (The Bodley Head. 7s. 6d.)—A collection of stories by Mr. W. J. Locke is something of an event for those multitudes of readers who have enjoyed and reread his numerous novels. But the present volume proves a little disappointing: the tales are less of Mr. Locke and more of the typical magazine story. No doubt he needs the compass of a full-length novel to unfold the proper adventures of his gay wayfaring characters and delightful children. He has certainly given a personal loveliness to the much less than characteristic persons of these present tales, but the tales themselves are hackneyed ones retold without genius. The best is a Lockian story of Mr. Paradyne, a successful and dry-as-dust barrister, who suddenly breaks the shackles of the Bar and a family in Ealing to go gipsying in Latin lands, a pipe to his lips. It is always good to read of others doing what all of us secretly wish we could accomplish.

THE TWO SISTERS. By H. E. Bates. (Cape. 7s. 6d.)—As Mr. Edward Garnett tells us in his preface, an element of poetic beauty, due to the elimination of non-essentials, pervades *The Two Sisters*, the first novel of a young man of twenty. The author has artistic perception and a sense of the dramatic. He has painted in black and white the lives of Jennie, Tessie and Michael: with a youthful dislike of compromise he has used no half-tones. The tense atmosphere in which this tragic story is enacted is not relaxed for one moment. This is exhausting, but it is a fault on the right side.

THE SILENT SIX. (Hodder and Stoughton. 7s. 6d.)—"Seamark's" thrilling new mystery story deals with honour among thieves and the price paid for the breaking of this law.

LECTURES IN LONDON

Monday, July 12th, at 3.30 p.m. Mr. F. G. Butler, I.C.S., will read a paper on SOME POINTS OF DIFFERENCE IN THE CRIMINAL LAW OF ENGLAND AND INDIA. Under the auspices of the East India Association, at the Caxton Hall, Westminster, S.W. 1.

Tuesday, July 13th, at 8.30 p.m. OUR HERITAGE: THE EMPIRE. By Commissioner D. C. Lamb. Under the auspices of the Royal Colonial Institute, at the Edward VII Rooms, Hotel Victoria.