

REVIEWS

hemiah, Blomfield. Then there is the contemporary 'world,' with its aimlessness and lucre lust, and its panaceas of Fascism and Communism. And behind all is the mysterious figure of the Rock. The Rock is Peter.

Mr. Eliot has always claimed that the poet should be in organic relation with the community: in this play he has achieved that relation, and without any loss to his poetry, for the great choruses which weld the play together contain some of the noblest poetry he has written. Only the language of the Cockneys is a little uninteresting: Cockney is more than misplaced h's, and Mr. Eliot would do well to rely on his own judgment in this matter, since the advice he says he has taken seems not to have been very helpful. But this is to carp at a work which as a whole is a magnificent and thrilling success. The temptation to quote is furious, but we must be content to conclude with the refrain which is the 'motive' of the entire play: '*A Church for us all and work for us all and God's world for us all even unto this last.*'

A.M.

THOMAS MANN. By James Cleugh. (Secker; 6/-.)

THE TALES OF JACOB. By Thomas Mann. (Secker; 7/6.)

Mr. Cleugh has provided an unpretentious and directly written introduction to the works of Thomas Mann. In the first part he describes Mann's life and the various influences—his bourgeois ancestry, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, and Wagner, which shaped him. In the second part he analyses the development of his works in detail and groups them under the idea of decadence, the problem of happiness, the adventure of beauty. He throws out many happy suggestions and makes one realize the importance of the change in Mann's views of the relation between the artist and the man of action. But he somehow fails to convey the precise *quality* of Mann's work, its total value and nature as a novelist's interpretation of the world. Undoubtedly this is a difficult task, but it is the critic's business.

In the first volume of his new trilogy Mann retells the old Biblical story. A precarious attempt in view of the eternal vigour of the original. Mann, however, prepared himself well by study and travel: at times one feels that the preparation rather drags on the novel. Three points strike us as the significant successes of the book. First, the author manages to communicate the sense of the immense distance in the past when the events took place: we travel back with awe into time that has gone. Secondly, he makes us realize dramatically the profound and wonderful newness and uniqueness of Jahwe amidst the multitude of the strange gods of Canaan. Thirdly, he has re-

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created with impressive vividness the figures of the women, Rebecca, Rachel, Leah, Dinah. As for Jacob, the whole book is an effort to recall the experience of that great life: some of the interpretations seem exaggerated and even false: but the effect of its entirety is magnificent and unforgettable. Perhaps the greatest compliment one can pay it is to confess that it forced us to re-read with delight the famous chapters of Genesis.

A.M.

THE LOST HERO. By Robert Speaight. (Peter Davies; 7/6 net.)

A book which is worth while. The author has artistry of word: his rhythm is dignified and smooth, his adjectives are always vivid (very occasionally a stricter economy would have avoided a momentary tendency to verbal exuberance), he writes with detailed knowledge and sympathy as well of South America as of Assisi and Rome. In contrast to the cruder realism which is the more usual medium of the modern writer, Mr. Speaight often adopts the method of a more delicate limning of a situation, achieving the same end without the possible danger of a too blatant brush.

The background of the novel is Catholic; the author deals with insight, through his characters, with many important issues (there is a fine paraphrase of a passage from the *Summa* of St. Thomas); the delineation of the character of Alvarez, the ex-priest, is particularly striking, and the main issue of the plot, the struggle between love and hate (of God and man), is finely and profoundly worked out.

L.S.G.V.

SEED OF ADAM. By Violet Campbell. (John Murray; 7/6.)

Sincere, understanding, strong; stronger had it been more pruned; valuable for its thesis, worked out with sense of drama to a powerful climax: that the inexcusable vice is that of the Pharisees (not, surely, the Sadducees, p. 132?), since sin and folly are in all the sons of Adam; while on the other hand the thought occurs that in the muddled disharmony of all our lives 'there is something grand . . . there appears the enormous significance of God' (p. 384). The character of the sadist-maniac finely drawn: the influence of birth, environment, on character, making the crime not a sin but a disease. An incidental discussion of comparative religion, stressing the parallel naturalism of all, presents the obvious appearance from the viewpoint of the unbeliever: one is anxious to urge in reply how from the opposite standpoint of the faith the parallelisms in other re-