



BY HENRY BRINSLEY

SONS AND LOVERS, by Mr. D. H. Lawrence, is not a great book in the genre I have been discussing, but it is certainly one to be taken seriously, for the author is imbued with sincerity and endowed with an unusual gift of patient observation of significant details. The book had been widely and appreciatively read in England several months before its recent issue by an American publisher. It emphatically is not a book for the "young person," and it is certainly a book that will make the older conservative idealist wince a bit. Whether or not the author's sincerity of treatment was coupled with a sufficient dignity of aim throughout I could not quite feel sure while reading certain chapters; but now that the book is laid aside, the total effect is one of fineness. The story concerns itself with a desperately poor family, the head of which is a collier, a simple, crude, negligible brute. The mother, a tragic little figure, centres all her love and thwarted passion on her two sons, the eldest of whom, after reaching manhood, goes to London, becomes neglectful of her, and dies. Her life then clings to her second son, and the bulk of the story deals with his youth and development in a factory, the growth of an artistic impulse within him, and a searching pathological study of his relations with two young women who love him. What he does is sufficiently normal in the sense of usual (the realism of the treatment is at times perhaps needlessly complete); it is rather his psychology, his inhibitions, and the antimony between his love for his mother and his feeling for these two other women that give the book its almost startling painfulness. Nevertheless it is a study that was worth doing, and Mr. Lawrence has done it well. He has dealt with very real things in a way that leaves a distinctness of impression unequalled by nine books out of ten one picks up nowadays.

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