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(page 28)

Louis Golding's New Novel and Other Fiction
Reviewed by Ethel Mannin

Originality of idea is the four-leaved clover of fiction, which makes it all the more remarkable that of the five new novels which come up for review this week, three—all by men novelists—are highly, and blessedly, marked by this precious quality.

First, in order of merit, in "The Camberwell Beauty," Mr. Louis Golding gives us a vigorous, adventurous novel in which a magician—on Alistair [sic] Crowley, not Maskelyne and Devant, lines—may be said to be the pivot of the action. Mr. Peveril, widower, scholar, butterfly collector, keeps open house for the "downstairs" folk, the servants and "lower orders" generally, of "Welkin-avenue."

Now, as those who know about butterflies are aware, the Camberwell Beauty is the name of a very beautiful and rare butterfly, and it was Mr. Peveril's pride that he had found one on a suburban railway embankment; but there was also another Camberwell Beauty, "Jinny," the blue-eyed, brown-haired girl who worked in the local sweetshop, and who, though she was so very different in quality, reminded Mr. Peveril of the girl he had married.

Jinny is carried off by a young Oxford undergraduate; she returns from her honeymoon in Sicily and bursts in upon one of Mr. Peveril's "evenings" with the dramatic news that her husband has been murdered by a "magician" they met out there. Her young husband's friend, Leslie Webster, and a young Cockney kennelman, Alf Tarleton, set out for Sicily on an expedition of revenge organized by Mr. Peveril. Leslie goes for love of his dead friend, Alf for love of Jinny, Mr. Peveril for love of Jinny, too, but a different kind of love because of the ghost she evokes of his dead love.

He Invokes a Magician!

In Sicily he finds in the magician a fellow butterfly enthusiast; he also discovers him to be a charming and intelligent

person very much persecuted by the adoration of his lady disciples, who refer to him as "The Master," and only in Jinny's hysterical imagination responsible for the young man's death. Alf and Leslie are kidnapped at a fair by the Mafia, a subtly working organisation which refuses to be stamped out by Mussolini.

They are kidnapped purely as a gesture and are treated with an almost overwhelming courtesy and consideration, but poor distracted Mr. Peveril does not know this, of course, and sceptic as he is, in his despair he is driven to appeal to the magician to invoke the powers of the spirit world to deliver his young friends.

More than this it would not be fair to reveal, but it all makes a thoroughly delightful story, amusing and exciting, and as a warm, living study of human nature may be said to be Mr. Golding at his most admirable best.