

REVIEWS

From the outside this appears to be stagnation, or at best superstition. But the defect lies outside and not inside. It lies with the Shaws and the Wellses whom Mr. Eliot mentions as types. Unlike many of his contemporaries he shows this sort of mature crystallization, a reverence for material detail; a step, in a sense the final step, in a development that few come to make, and certainly very few modern thinkers. In a confined literary sense it may be true that the Shaws and the Wellses belong to a past generation, as he suggests, but their approach has not gone out of fashion. It is not a modern characteristic to appreciate how "the spirit killeth but the letter giveth life." In fact the whole of the modern situation is diseased with an over-dose of the spirit. Everyone is anxious to construct his own world untrammelled. In these circumstances the spirit freezes instead of coming to a natural maturity, as Mr. Shaw and Mr. Wells have frozen. And even at its best and most attractive, as in Philip Leon's *The Ethics of Power*, this religion of the spirit absolute leaves a sense of mental indigestion, a sense of "too much of a good thing," apart from the lacunae that a metaphysical analysis would bring to light. These truths Mr. Eliot discussed from a literary point of view in his own analysis of the age, *After Strange Gods*.

The value of this book, then, is not that it shows forth the author as a fine piece for the literary museum, but that it is the work of a living and mature mind, not merely the author of the *Waste Land*, questioning and criticizing, but the author of *Ash Wednesday*, offering the synthesis for a solution.

MARK BROCKLEHURST, O.P.

THE ANGEL IN THE MIST. By Robert Speaight. (Cassell; 7/6.)

Le bien est toujours le produit d'un art, wrote Baudelaire; and one does not need to swallow *dandysme* whole to appreciate the truth in the statement. Baring, the fine Catholic in this novel, puts it thus: "The great man sees himself as so much raw material, rich or poor as the case may be, and he sets about the making of his soul. . . . The soul must be made, must be immensely artificial, but it must be moulded from its own nature. Nature by itself won't do at all. . . . Everything good in this world is artificial, and most exquisite, most artificial of all, is sanctity." For this moulding fortune provides a diversity of material and tools: joy, suffering, love; courageous effort, prayer, the intuition of the reality to which the made soul is to approximate. The art of living is complex of thinking, willing, doing, making; Helena Vaughan made herself through the love-catastrophe with all its implications, for out of these the art of the stage in its full splendour came to be revealed to her and expressed through her. "Her whole life has been a novitiate for the performance which we saw

BLACKFRIARS

to-night. It summed up everything she had learned of life; it showed her increase of knowledge. I don't pretend to know what experience her solitude gave her—that is her own secret—but it gave her an intuition of God."

Perhaps something similar applies to this novel when compared with the last: a deeper intuition, a surer grip. The psychological study of Helena is sensitively and surely done; the setting, the stage world, as was to be expected from the author, is utterly convincing; the incidental light on the art of the stage and the discussions of ideas, illuminating and valuable. Apart from one or two slips (one noticed "in the event of him dying," "he waived aside my arguments") the style is consistently attractive. And the main thought of the book, the value of art not only to audience but also and especially to artist who in making makes his soul, is in these days of ever-dwindling creativity invaluable. A book to read; enlightening, stimulating and profound.

GERALD VANN, O.P.

HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY

S. RAMUNDI DE PENYAFORT AUCTORITAS IN RE PAENITENTIALI.
By P. Angelus Walz, O.P. (Rome, "Angelicum.")

SAINT RAYMOND OF PENNAFORT. By Thomas M. Schwertner,
O.P. (The Bruce Publishing Co., Milwaukee; Geo. Coldwell,
London; 6/6.)

These two works are very different in their approach and their manner of treatment, though each in its own way throws light on St. Raymond as an outstanding historic figure. The first is written by a professor of history at the Angelicum College, Rome, and is an amplification of an address delivered to the International Juridical Congress held in the Eternal City in 1934. A great deal of valuable historical detail is compressed into the relatively few pages. In the first section the circumstances are recorded which opened the way to the work which was undertaken by Raymond. Under the influence of Gratian the practical theology required for the confessional naturally entered within the juridical sphere, and so the promoters of this study tended to gather at the University of Bologna rather than at Paris. The decrees of the recent Lateran Council made it needful to provide handy treatises for use in the administration of the Sacraments. Thus was St. Raymond enjoined under obedience to compose a work, even clearer and more famous than his collection of Decretals, the *Summa on Penance* or *Summa Casuum*. This was evidently intended as an informative aid for his own brethren and all those destined to hear confessions. The merit of the work