

Both are discerningly proud of a country that doesn't apologise for holding to the old ways—religion, the land, family life, individual independence. Neither of them is going to waste time raking up recent 'troubles' of any kind; though Mr Duff uses half his available space setting the historical stage for an imaginary English tourist who is then given a choice of ten centres, three in the North and seven in Eire, from which to explore the country. His is probably the better introduction to give a stranger starting out on his first visit.

Mr Taylor's book is the one that the lover of Ireland will want to keep. To begin with he is quite honest about Irish Christianity, which is all 'Christianity with a difference'. It is not only the Catholic who, however travelled, finds the climate trying. It is the unfortunate Anglican doing his best to hit it off with the Church of Ireland. It is the sober Presbyterian from Glasgow endeavouring to tune in to the Orange war-drums.

Both authors are candid about the Republic's main economic disability—a universal one, but peculiarly dangerous to Eire. Those who make the biggest money are not those who do the country's vital work. This is Mr Duff's verdict, and a sound one. Both writers give you an account of professional cultures. Mr Taylor is acceptably wanting in reverence for established idols; Mr Duff, as a schoolboy, knew Joyce. Neither gives its due to the admirable amateur drama, which—in the Dublin-Wicklow-Wexford area at any rate—does so much for creative enjoyment.

Both authors have collected what one may call the stock illustrations, which are fascinating if you have never seen them before.

The somewhat impish Mr Taylor, who enjoys dredging history for unlikely hauls, makes Bishop Berkeley, as the prophet of Sinn Fein, enquire whether a nation that can be clad in wool and eat good bread (pot-oven bread, not the Dublin baker's loaf of today), beef, mutton, poultry and fish, and keep out foreign imports, 'ought much to be pitied'?

HELEN PARRY EDEN

WILLINGLY TO SCHOOL. By Hubert Van Zeller. (Sheed and Ward; 18s.)

Most of this book is a sketch of life and people at Downside School about thirty years ago: a subject unlikely, one might suppose, to interest those who don't remember that extravagant and debonair world. Yet the supposition would be partly foolish. Certainly, Old Gregorians (of that vintage) will devour the book, even if they find its cheerfulness a little selective. But everyone who likes wit and kindness blended would enjoy this 'parade of personalities rich, diverse and not infrequently weird' (I quote the dust-cover). Moreover, this is something of an historical document: first-hand intimate memoirs of a little world within

the larger world of English Catholicism, a microcosm itself entirely English and Benedictinely Catholic and yet *sui generis*, unique. Here that small world speaks in its kindest and almost its wittiest tones; one recognises the serenity touched with irony, the wonderful tolerance, the blend—may one say?—of reverence and recklessness. Of course it is nostalgic, being a memory of happiness. It recalls things past; for that world had its time; it is not *simply* Downside. No doubt the tradition goes on, and the things that have been shed, more or less, were unessential as well as dangerous: I mean the air of great wealth and what Dom Hubert calls 'the tendency towards fastidiousness and grandeur'. But it is Downside in the 1920's, wealthy, self-contained, feudal and debonair, that is the setting for this portrait gallery; a setting that encouraged individuality because there seemed to be nothing to fear from it. Dom Hubert's portraiture, personal and humorous as it is, hardly exaggerates and does not distort.

So the general character of the place and the time vividly reappears here, especially in its virtues, in its happiness. And this (abstracting from Dom Hubert's charity) is natural enough. Every boy is sometimes unhappy at school; even the author suffered occasionally from something more than chilblains; but at Downside then, you were more likely to be unhappy if your parents were not well off, if certain social amenities were not what *you* could look forward to in the holidays. It was part of the character of that world: the shadow in its sunlight. Dom Hubert remembers the sunlight; and what a memory he has! Which reminds me that there is nothing better in the book than the memories of his childhood before he left Alexandria and Mr Carter.

K.F.

FLORENCE. By Edward Hutton. (Hollis and Carter; 21s.)

A SABINE JOURNEY. By Anthony Rhodes. (Putnam; 18s.)

Mr Hutton has long been known as the most authoritative of English guides to Italy, and there is scarcely a region of the country that has not been the subject of his exact and loving observation. He returned after the war to Florence to find it sadly scarred, but fundamentally unharmed, and his new book (for this is not merely an old guide-book brought up to date) is a mature and definitive account of a city of endless interest. Here is recorded not merely the immense wealth of Florentine art and the history of the city's greatness; there is also something much rarer to find in such a book, a sensitive *genius loci*, with a personal and always compelling account even of the author's prejudices. (A Dominican, for instance, will feel that Mr Hutton is much less than just to Savonarola.) The illustrations to a book about Florence are bound to be expected ones, but the twenty-two plates are excellently chosen and reproduced.