

S U P P L E M E N T
B O O K S F R O M F R A N C E

TROIS PENSEES INEDITES DE PASCAL. Extraites du Manuscrit de l'Abbé Périer. By Louis Lafuma. (Paris, Editions Littéraires de France.)

EN MARGE DU RECUEIL ORIGINAL DES PENSEES DE PASCAL. By Louis Lafuma. (Paris.)

The appearance of M. Louis Lafuma's book might be described as a fresh incident in the strange story of the publication of Pascal's writings. He left at his death a mass of fragmentary material: notes towards a great apology for religion, and several short treatises. The earliest publication, eight years after Pascal's death, the Port-Royal edition of 1670, was very cautious, consisting of a selection of reflections carefully edited. This was chiefly by reason of the Jansenist troubles, which long affected the history of Pascal's manuscripts; but also because his family and the Port-Royal editors did not see eye to eye, and because their unfinished state and frequent obscurity seemed to the taste of that time to detract from their literary value.

The work was recognised as a powerful defence of Christianity, and successive editors added further material. It was bitterly resented by the free-thinkers, who represented Pascal as mentally unbalanced and a victim of superstition. Voltaire, who attacked him three times, in 1734, 1743, and most virulently in 1778, wrote: 'Of all those eternal disputants he alone is left because he alone was a man of genius'. Condorcet, in 1776, published an *Eloge et Pensées de Pascal*, from which he eliminated the religious part. For these men the memorial is an 'amulet'. The abbé Bossut gave a Christian but uncritical edition in 1779.

Then came Chateaubriand. After his glowing pages in the *Génie du Christianisme* and Cousin's passionate plea in 1842 for an edition based on the MSS, Faugère brought out his in 1844, to be followed by Molinier in 1877, Michaut in 1896, Brunschvicg in 1897-1904, and many others.

All the editions of Pascal after the first made use of fresh material, taken bit by bit from the original MSS and early copies: a succinct account of these sources is a feature of the present volume. Condorcet in 1776 drew on a manuscript to which he refers in his preface (quoted by Lafuma, p. 133):

I thought it would be useful to make a new edition of Pascal's Thoughts, eliminating many of these Thoughts . . . and adding some which for particular reasons the editors of the first edition had withheld. A copy of these Thoughts rejected by the editors was found among the manuscripts of the abbé Périer, his nephew; and this authentic copy had been made from Pascal's original, deposited in the library of Saint-Germain-des-Prés.

This manuscript had apparently disappeared since 1776.

Faugère in 1844 consulted and described a *Little Octavo MS* lent to him by Sainte-Beuve, which (Lafuma p. 31) 'must have been copied for the use of some Jansenist, fervent in his faith and in his admiration for Pascal, and it contains a great part of the fragments set aside by the first editors'.

The evidence now arrayed by M. Lafuma goes to show that these two manuscripts are one and the same; and that he is in possession—he does not tell us how he came by it—of the precious leather-bound copy used and marked in the margin by Condorcet, and annotated in the handwriting of Sainte-Beuve. In it he has found three *Pensées* hitherto unpublished.

The book is addressed to all who look on Pascal as a friend. It will appeal more directly of course to the experts. But in many ways it can give joy to others also. The accurate study of detail and careful array of converging proofs is most interesting to follow—like a good bit of detective work! The author's war-time study of Pascal is humanly moving: 'Absorbed in this occupation I forgot there was no coal in the grate'. The facsimile reproductions allow us in imagination to watch the abbé Louis Périer in his quiet library: to see him poring over and copying in his beautiful writing the treasured MSS of which, after the death of Etienne in 1680 and of his mother Gilberte in 1687, he had become the family custodian. And after our complete privation of good print and paper, it is a joy to handle a book so beautifully produced.

There is a supplementary pamphlet, correcting certain errors of Pascal's modern commentators in the light of the re-discovery of Louis Périer's MS. The author justifies these minute rectifications by quoting Pascal himself:

'The least movement is of consequence to all nature; the whole sea changes for a stone. Thus, in grace, the least action is of consequence, by its results, to everything. Therefore everything is important'. (Br. 505.)

MARY RYAN.

MAURIAU ROMANCIER CHRETIEN. Par Georges Hourdin. (Les Editions du Temps Present; 50 francs.)

One of the snares besetting the path of literary enthusiasts holds them in the delusion that the reading public possesses an equal knowledge with themselves of the work they feel impelled to praise. M. Georges Hourdin has not escaped from this trap. Fresh from a comprehensive study of everything François Mauriac has so far written (exception made of his monograph on *Marguerite de Cortone*), he takes it for granted that the rest of us have read and re-read our Mauriac to the same extent and with an equally retentive appreciation as he has given to the master he defends. For *Mauriac Chrétien* is a defence, almost pathetic in its intensity, of an accusation which can only too easily be brought against the greatest living novelist.

Quand on accuse M. Mauriac de jansénisme—again and again in M. Hourdin's analysis the serpent hisses—to be driven away by

arguments not lacking in subtlety but with instances which require a further annotation than the swift, glancing references to characters in novels the defender targets to name, or to books long inaccessible to the general reader. *Ne lui reprochons donc pas comme un crime, pleads M. Hourdin, de voir les hommes laids puisque finalement il va les voir capables de Dieu.*

This habit of delivering judgments of great lucidity on unidentified causes, is not in this essay conned to the author under consideration. Again and again we are invited to consider situations developed by other novelists than M. Mauriac, or to revise our accepted ideas of the giants of French nineteenth century literature. For example, a long analysis of Mauriac's almost vanished novel *Mal* is interrupted by the swift anonymous reference: *Le meilleur historien de Port Royal a été en meme temps notre plus grand critique moraliste, notre meilleur amateur d'ames et le plus étonnant timide de qu'ait connu notre littérature.* This leaves the reader to decide for himself whether the rather disputatious reference is to Sainte Beuve or to some other apostate.

As a religio-psychological analysis of Mauriac's genius this book is at once a criticism and a reassurance: as a guide to his novels it will be sheer bewilderment to all but those of us who know most of them more or less by heart. That it must lure all his admirers back to Mauriac's earlier naïf-forgotten works and persuade others to read his still accessible recent books is certain; that it solves the problem it has set out to discuss is less clear, in spite of M. Hourdin's final word to the effect that Mauriac has completed for the wide non-Catholic public the example of Péguy and the lesson of Paul Claudel.

NAOMI ROYDE SMITH.

GOD AND MAMMON. By François Mauriac. (Sheed and Ward; 5s.)

The reprint of M. Mauriac's essay on the dilemma that faces the Catholic novelist should be very welcome now that his novels are to appear in a collected English edition. *God and Mammon* was never more needed, and it should help in that process of discrimination which criticism initially demands.

FREDERIC NIETZSCHE. Pages Mystiques. Extraits traduits et accompagnés d'éclaircissements par A. Quinot. (Robert Laffont, Paris; 210 francs.)

M. Quinot belongs most decidedly to what Professor Crane Brinton has called the 'gentle' interpreters of Nietzsche: he has presented the latter as, of all things, a 'theosophist'. It appears not only that Nietzsche's real, and indeed sometimes most hidden aim was to convey a new and esoteric doctrine of God, but also that he was a mystic who underwent states analogous to those of quiet, union and ecstasy. One would like to hear the reactions of Alfred Beaumler to such a reading of Nietzsche. Perhaps even the philosopher himself might have had some comments to make if he could have heard his doctrine compared to that of Schelling in his later years. However,

one more key to Nietzsche's thought adds to the fun, and it is pleasing to find Beaumler's tough geopolitician appearing as mystic and theosophist.

M. Quinot's book consists of selected extracts from Nietzsche's writings (including the poems) translated into French and furnished with preface, comments and an explanatory index. The extracts are arranged chronologically, according to the stages of Nietzsche's spiritual development, and there is a short introduction to each division. The explanatory index 'of the theosophical vocabulary of Nietzsche' is a valuable and useful feature of the book, even if one does not agree with all the explanations.

Pages Mystiques can scarcely be recommended to anyone who is simply looking for a single book from which he can gather a working knowledge of the thought of Nietzsche and an explanation of the profound influence it has exercised, as of its fascination for thinkers of very different types and traditions (though, to do the author justice, he does not pretend that his picture of Nietzsche is complete). On the other hand, the book will be of interest to students of Nietzsche who are already acquainted with the latter's writings, for they will recognise (or ought to recognise) that even if the author is guilty of exaggeration and over-emphasis, there is certainly an element in Nietzsche's thought which makes M. Quinot's presentation a possibility. Nietzsche was, in spite of all negation, preoccupied with the problem of God, and the very character taken by his denial shows that he was very far from being a superficial positivist or freethinker. Moreover, it seems to me to be true that the universe, as the developing Will to Power, especially when seen in the light of the Eternal Recurrence, took on the character of the Divine in the philosopher's consciousness and that he did regard himself as in some sense a prophet of this 'God'. He was not, of course, a mystic in the proper and Catholic sense of the word (even if he was *un mystique manqué*, as a Catholic writer has maintained), but he did think that in his philosophy Christian theism was *aufgehoben* (to use a Hegelian phrase) rather than simply denied. M. Quinot's book, then, will serve the useful purpose of drawing attention to the religious elements in Nietzsche's thought, and it will perhaps serve this purpose all the better precisely because the author's picture of Nietzsche is, in the reviewer's opinion, set in an exaggerated light. M. Quinot hopes to provide us with further and complementary works on Nietzsche: one might suggest that a detailed commentary on *Also sprach Zarathustra*, with account taken of other and different interpretations, would be of interest.

F. C. COPLESTON, S.J.

PEGUY AND LES CAHIERS DE LA QUINZAINE. By Daniel Halévy. (Dennis Dobson; 12s. 6d.)

SOLITUDE DE PEGUY. B. J.-P. Dubois Dumée. (Plon; 65 francs.)

Since his death, at the age of 41, in the second month of the first World War, Charles Péguy has become increasingly famous in France. His works, ignored or belittled in his lifetime, are now praised and

quoted; though it is possible that the majority of readers dip rather than plunge in them. In England his name has begun to be known, but the *Mysteries*, *Tapestries* and fervid apologiae which released his genius can hardly be said to have crossed the Channel.

Monsieur Halévy's book, now translated by Mrs Ruth Bethell, was published in 1940: a thoroughly revised version of his *Charles Péguy et les Cahiers de la Quinzaine* which appeared in 1918.

It is a complete biography but, as the title suggests, more especially concerned with the period, 1900-14, when Péguy was editing his *Cahiers*. We are given *précis* of nearly all Péguy's own works, and in addition, of the more important works which others contributed to his paper. This might easily have been tedious; as might the details of the French political scene at the turn of the century, even though Péguy's socialism, Dreyfusism, and republicanism were like nobody else's. But M. Halévy has an exceptional gift for lucid exposition, which is applied both to external circumstances and events and to the more complex story of Péguy's inner life. As an introduction for English readers to the man and his background, this book is a most fortunate choice.

Solitude de Péguy is rather a commentary than an introduction, and presupposes acquaintance with its subject. Monsieur Dubois-Dumée was not, like M. Halévy, a close friend of Péguy's, nor is he such a vivacious raconteur. For all that his study, which is the fruit of sustained reflection, enlarges and deepens our understanding of Péguy and illumines much that is enigmatic in his thought, character and behaviour. It examines the knotty problem of Péguy's final orthodoxy; and wisely avoids a positive conclusion.

On ne peut pas dire que Péguy ne serait jamais devenu intégralement catholique, on ne peut pas dire non plus qu'il le serait certainement devenu. Ce qui est sûr, c'est qu'il était bien près de l'être.

It is also certain that at most periods of the Church's history Péguy would have been in conflict with his superiors. He was too fond of bombshells, of which one example will serve:

Ne peuvent pas mener une vie chrétienne, c'est à dire ne peuvent pas être chrétiens, ceux qui sont assurés du pain quotidien. Je veux dire temporellement assurés. Si ce sont les rentiers, les fonctionnaires, les moines.

His 'savage independence', whether as a humanist or as a Catholic, may have contained a strand of wilfulness, but its main fibre, was a heroic sincerity. Péguy's fidelity grows grander in retrospect.

COLIN SUMMERFORD.

LES CHRÉTIENS DANS LA CITE. By Jacques Madaule. (Editions du Sagittaire, Paris; 140 francs.)

'En apprenant la France, on apprend l'homme.' Although we are all familiar with this view and admit that there is much truth in it, it is perhaps a little misleading to give so general a title to a book which—though not exclusively concerned with French

problems—considers the attitude of the Christian towards the State in the light of French history, especially of the recent past. With this qualification in mind, the book is to be welcomed; for the author brings out the main trends of the relations between Church and State in France with admirable clarity, based on a deep understanding of his fellow-countrymen and the essential demands of the Christian faith. The origins of the conflict as a specifically French problem go back to Philip the Fair, the founder of the modern state, supported by the newer nobility and the bourgeoisie; the more open conflict, also complicated by a deep cleavage on the very constitution of France, broke out in 1789. It persists and cries urgently for a settlement today. Its typical expression lies in the educational system in which there are two classes of schools: the confessional, supported by the Right; the state-schools, supported by the Left. A division which is as disastrous to the welfare of the nation as it is to the rights of the Church; a division which is perpetuated less by ill-will than by a rigidity too often mistaken for loyalty to tradition and by the lack of real interest in politics which is characteristic, not of Frenchmen only, but of ordinary human beings everywhere, still—in spite of more abundant resources—under considerable strain in providing for the basic necessities of life:

‘Tout le monde respecte un homme qui pense comme les siens ont toujours pensé. Aucune surprise à craindre avec lui. On sait toujours dans quel sens il va réagir. Ses adversaires l’estiment et, quand ils sont en veine de générosité, font son éloge, ce qui démontre la largeur de leur esprit. Car le plus beau est d’avoir l’esprit large et des opinions arrêtées. Mais à la rigueur, et pour le commun des mortels, les opinions arrêtées suffisent.

‘Même dans les périodes de grande crise, on voit des gens, beaucoup plus nombreux qu’on ne pense, continuer de vaquer à leurs propres affaires. Ils achètent et ils vendent, ils se marient, ils aiment comme si de rien n’était. C’est la vie, dit-on’.

EDWARD QUINN.

PRINCIPES D'UN POLITIQUE HUMANISTE. By Jacques Maritain. (Hartmann, Paris.)

Readers who have been dissatisfied with translations of Maritain may be glad to have this collection of essays in French, all of which have already appeared in books or reviews published in U.S.A. and England in recent years; the first and last of them, *La Conquête de la Liberté* and *La Fin du Machiavélisme*, may not be already known to readers on this side of the Atlantic. These are excellent examples of Maritain's method, his intellectual patience and careful distinctions; he understands the desire for quick results which leads to Machiavellian policy, the laudable pursuit of natural justice, but points out that the destruction of nations and even civilisations is no infringement of divine justice which works itself out in human history in a way which—in the last resort—can never be understood by man.

E. Q.

BILAN DE L'HISTOIRE. Par René Grousset, de l'Académie Française. (Paris; Plon.)

This is a remarkable book. The eminent historian, specialist in oriental studies, has undertaken something almost impossible, and succeeded. The book gives a synthetic view of the history of the West since prehistoric times, a similar view of the history of the East, another of the relations between East and West. The arts and civilisations of thousands of years are passed in review. A task evidently impossible to fulfil unless the historian has the erudition that Grousset displays. What is more remarkable is the way Grousset has succeeded in composing such a panorama, writing genuine history, without deviating into the style of a school manual nor into a philosophy of history, in which history is sacrificed to a preconceived philosophical system. Grousset gives us the reflections inspired in him by the spectacle of the history of mankind, but he is scrupulous on every page to state first what that history was.

The interest of the book is double. First, the wealth of historical information, especially on the East, and religion, philosophy and art receive as much, or more space, than politics and war. Second, the conclusion that derives from Grousset's meditation on human history, seen against its background of cosmic forces. Grousset expresses it in a chapter entitled: *On one of Pascal's Pensées*. Human history (and the survey is brought down to the present day), is a long series of efforts and cataclysms that, superficially regarded, and for all its transitory splendours, is not unaptly symbolised by the dance of Siva, the cosmic god, with a necklace of skulls, who treads down the generations of gods and men. There is no alternative to intellectual despair—except the Cross. *Ave Crux Spes unica* is Grousset's conclusion, and it strikes home with peculiar cogency after the learned historical syntheses so brilliantly sketched. The work is not, however, a piece of apologetics. It is the quintessence of a life-time's study of history distilled into a brief but rich panorama, vivified by the reflections that this study was inspired.

W. J. O'HARA.

ERASME DE ROTTERDAM. Essai sur le Libre Arbitre. Traduction par Pierre Mesnard. (Les Editions Robert et René Chaix, Algiers.)

This is the first French translation ever to be made of one of the most important and at the same time most forgotten works of Erasmus. *The Praise of Folly* has come to be the best known work by which Erasmus is judged. Yet he was essentially a theologian, a Catholic theologian. This stands out with all desirable clarity in this calm essay which he published in 1526 against Luther's views on Christian liberty. It would be hard not to agree with Mesnard's judgment: 'The essay on free will is a particularly useful sign-post on the road that leads from scholastic philosophy through the classical Catholicism of the French seventeenth century to the most important avenues of contemporary thought'. It is scarcely possible to

understand Renaissance Humanism and, by contrast, the Reformation, without knowing Erasmus. His essay reveals better than a dozen academic commentaries what was in dispute between Luther and his Catholic contemporaries. It throws light on later controversies on grace. Mesnard's translation and adequate introduction, which places the Essay in its historical context, can therefore serve a useful purpose.

Erasmus deliberately restricts his argument to the field of Scripture and Christian common sense. He points out the monstrosity of Luther's principles of Biblical interpretation, and indicates the overwhelming weight of tradition in favour of the freedom of the will even when moved by grace. He aims at offering Luther a doctrine commonly accepted, firmly based on Scripture, but avoiding ambitious philosophical systematisation. In consequence, as Mesnard remarks, his essay belongs to a different genre from St Thomas's treatise on grace.

He gave an example of Christian charity and intellectual good taste, by adopting a moderate tone (which Luther himself praised), by seeking to understand the reasons that led Luther to exaggerate the rôle of grace, and giving full credit for what good intentions there were. Pierre Mesnard's translation and introduction make this valuable document more widely accessible.

W. J. O'HARA.

RETROUVER LA FOI. By Jules Romains. (Flammarion, Paris; 80 francs.)

Almost any book about France, especially when written so lucidly and persuasively as M. Romains', prompts one to pour out at length one's own views on France which, because it is, in some sense, universal, is also the possession of all. France, at once intensely national—Frenchmen are nearly as bad at speaking foreign languages as the English are—and keenly aware of the contribution she has to make to the world, is the thermometer of Europe. When France is uncertain of herself, Europe is in confusion, and what happens in France is usually the mirror, and sometimes the prophecy, of what happens elsewhere. By these standards, both Europe and France are in a sad condition. All the more reason, then, for France to recover her faith in herself and for us to understand her.

This book is unfortunately a war-time book and is concerned as much with justifying the past as seeking remedies for the future. M. Romains, of course, makes out a good case for France and defends her policy leading up to the war, with dignity and a restrained passion. And the Englishman, with his unconscious air of moral superiority, has not yet, and probably never will, give France her due. To him, France was not the victim of his and American shortsightedness but of her own incompetence. The views of enlightened men like M. Romains need a wider publicity in this country. Yet, even he, so clear-sighted and honest, does not seem to realise the psychological effect abroad of the moral decline of France *before* the war. France may have been right all through, but her lack of

faith in herself and her own ideals, almost nullified her good intentions.

What, then, according to M. Romain, are these ideals? Respect for the dignity of the person, for the essential freedoms, for the pre-eminence of reason, the need for clear ideas, a passion for culture 'Greco-Latin-French', to which France has made so notable a contribution in thought and letters—these are some of the things he conceives to be characteristic French ideals. And who shall deny him? Nor must it be imagined that he swallows the old clichés whole. Indeed the most welcome and, it must be confessed, the most surprising feature of this book, is the keen criticism and re-valuation of such ideals as democracy, personal liberty and social morality that fill the latter half of the book. There is a striking criticism of the Socialist State which M. Romain sees as but another version of totalitarianism. When the 'patron' is replaced by the universal employer, the State, he is clear that so far as freedom is concerned, it is a change for the worse; and his remedies for that are, most surprising of all, exactly those of *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno*; diffused property, small savings, and the general building up of the small man. He knows that he will be scoffed at for these *bourgeois* ideals, but he retorts severely to the intellectuals that they, if they had the foresight to save, would have been less the creatures of the invader than they were. For they had to scribble despicable columns in controlled papers to get their bread.

All this is to the good, and if there are more voices like this among the Left, to which M. Romain belongs, the hopes for France are brighter than they seem. However, it cannot be disguised that the chief weakness of this book is that M. Romain falls into the old secularist error. Oh, there is no anti-clericalism here; all is calm and reasonable. But that is just the trouble. M. Romain's 'foi' is really 'reason', or no more than confidence in reason. The restoration of the rule of reason in public affairs would of course be a great advance, but there are two fallacies lurking in the background. First, it is difficult to understand how anyone can imagine that reason alone can find remedies for a world that has rejected it and is passing through a hell of wickedness and suffering. Secondly, how is the reign of reason to be set up? M. Romain seems unconscious of the existence of a higher law and a weightier sanction. He makes three unenthusiastic references to Christianity and seems to be unaware of what the *Faith* has meant to France in the past, and what the Church is doing for France now. If France is to recover her former greatness, it will be through the Faith rather than through any naive Greek confidence in the power of human reason.

J. D. CRICHTON.

JEAN COCTEAU. Par Roger Lannes (Poètes d'Aujourd'hui; 4. Pierre Seghers.)

The most interesting thing about Jean Cocteau was (is?) his interest in angels. It was in the '20s, when Maritain's *Art et Scolas-*

tique was being passed from hand to hand, that people began to surmise that Jacques the metaphysician's discovery of angelic levels of existence was perhaps being echoed by Jean the poet's jerky, puzzling, impudent, and perhaps inspired, utterances. Jacques himself thought as much. Someone in the *Dublin Review*, I remember, writing of *Le Rappel à l'Ordre*, compared Jean's style to a snowball: not that it swelled by rolling (it emphatically had no 'roll' at all), but that it resembled crystals packed tight. St Thomas saw in crystals the sign of a star-driving intellect, less than divine but incredibly more than human. And Cocteau seemed to be fretted by the same idea. He kept trying to crystallise new forms out of the void left by some preoccupied angel's exit.

That was some time ago. But the poet went on trying to catch his crystals. It always seemed to be a race with something wonderfully speedy just ahead of him—an intellect already there, look, in the clouds, in plate-glass window reflections, in the angles of walls and floors, on the Eiffel Tower, everywhere; resolving the obvious into mysteries which were yet as logical as lifts and yet again as personal as free choice or sorrow. Who could catch such a creature? Jean tried the poet's everlasting method—mimicry. Had not Dante said that Art was Nature's son and God's grandson? and Jean, I think, had a grain of Dante in him (see M. Lannes's book, p. 13, par. 3).

If you want to speculate on Cocteau, read very carefully M. Lannes's first chapter and then skip to p. 103 where Jean's poems begin. K. F.

L'ÉCLAIRAGE DES ÉGLISES. (Cahiers de l'Art Sacré; Blackfriars Publications; 3s. 3d.)

The lighting of churches is too often an afterthought, unrelated to architectural design. But it is of the greatest consequence; the *lux lucet in tenebris* of Christian revelation has its discernible form in the candles and lamps about the altar, as well as in the subtleties of modern systems of illumination.

The present *cahier* should be of great interest to those who are concerned with the care of churches. Apart from articles on the liturgical requirements for lighting (accompanied by excellent illustrations), there are practical suggestions—with measurements and voltage and wattage, which should be taken into account in the building of a new church, or in the improvement of an old one.

A. A.