

## *Blackfriars*

Reason and court the ultra-modern Muse of delightful Speculation, but meanwhile let us thank our stars that Father Knox is at hand to remind us of our old allegiance.

S.G.U.

CRUMPLIN'. By Mary Sturge Gretton (Mrs. R. H. Gretton, J.P., B.Litt., Oxon). (Ernest Benn, Ltd.; 7/6.)

The fascination that the end of the fifteenth century presents to the historical novelist is the thoroughly romantic fascination of a period of lost causes.

' . . . The straining game  
Of striving well to hold up things that fall '

—a game immortalized by William Morris in *Sir Peter Harpdon's End*—monopolizes not only Red Rose and White Rose but the very civilization in which both roses burgeon. And the approaching submersion of the largely decayed faith and almost wholly decayed chivalry of the Middle Ages, the rapid approach of the flourishing era of sophists, economists and calculators initiated by the Tudors, has inspired Scott, Lytton, Miss Yonge and Father Benson with some of their most characteristic work. The historical novel is nowadays a more exacting feat, fuller knowledge and a greater degree of sophistication having to a certain extent stifled artistic liberty; and that is why Mrs. R. H. Gretton is to be congratulated on having invented a new technique, which incorporates fragment on glittering fragment of historical certitude and speculation with the cumulative effect of a fine mosaic.

Drawing on an unrivalled knowledge of that Cotswold history and tradition which centre round the Burford of the fifteenth-century wool-staplers, Mrs. Gretton has discovered (it jumps to the eye, of course) that, after the battles of Bosworth and Stoke, the Burford merchants were heaven-sent agents between the defeated Yorkist party in Oxfordshire and their exiles and sympathisers in Bruges. Lord Lovel, the escaped adherent of King Richard, has the name of haunting his manor of Minster Lovel on the Windrush. Tradition says he died in the secret room there. But here he is depicted exiled in Bruges, where Margaret of York, Duchess Dowager of Burgundy, kept up the Yorkist end and furnished the sinews of war for 'Perkin Warbeck' who was (or was not?) the younger of the 'Princes in the Tower.' It was with the Yorkists and their hopes, and these hopes as making perturbing music on the tranquil strings of 15th century Cotswold life, that Mrs. Gretton is deftly and beautifully

## Book Reviews

concerned. All lost causes live in a past and future which are infinitely more important to the life of the imagination than the unseizable present; and she rightly leaves no opportunity for retrospect and reverie unfulfilled. Her titular hero, 'Crumplin' is dead before the story opens; for 'Crumplin' was Yorkshire's affectionate nickname for the little son of Richard and Ann of Gloucester, whose idyllic princehood, passed among the chivalry of Middleham and the burgesses of York, is kept green here in the memories of his Benedictine tutor. If the book were written primarily as the story of its personages, it would be permissible to suggest that its characters—especially the two small princes—have a way of usurping each other's primacy of place as the chronicle unfolds itself. But although all its intricate threads are gathered into a final skein, I do not feel that 'Crumplin' is a book to read for its admirably-solved enigma, It is a book to read for its atmosphere of place, period and personality, and that unforgettable fecundity of human action which the historian's cunning sees as distilled from all three. A word should also be said for the grace of its narrative style, and for the entirely happy compromise that has solved its problems of dialogue.

H.P.E.

PAGEANT OF LIFE. A Human Drama. By Owen Francis Dudley. (Longmans; 6/-.)

Fr. Dudley's many readers will welcome his new novel. It is worthy to rank with his trilogy and Catholics and non-Catholics alike will find much in it both to interest and amuse them. The author presents us with an antithesis to 'the modern vogue of the vague and non-committal' and the lives of his three chief characters are unusually full of incident. Still, although the heroine is blinded by falling on some barbed wire and the hero crucified by 'red reptiles' near Archangel, we are glad to state that their friend and counsellor survives to become a masterful monk.

G.M.

TUDOR SUNSET. By Mrs. Wilfrid Ward. (Sheed & Ward; 7/6.)

This historical novel describes the Catholic life in England in the last years of Queen Elizabeth with a combination of deep sincerity of purpose and subtlety of thought which lend distinction to an absorbing book. The wide knowledge of the Catholic sources for this period is everywhere apparent and certain of the character sketches, notably those of Lady Arundel