

and one might say of *Antony and Cleopatra* as of Lear and Cordelia that 'ripeness is all.'

There are many points in Mr. Traversi's essay that I have not touched upon here, but it is throughout persuasive, original and gracefully written. I commend it to anyone who wishes to penetrate further into the greatest mystery of literature.

ROBERT SPEAIGHT.

RECUSANT POETS, 1535-1633. Vol. I. From St. Thomas More to Ben Johnson. Edited by Louise Imogen. (Sheed and Ward; 18s.)

The present volume has an almost unique value for the study of the formative period in the old Catholic tradition. It is a collection of Catholic verse between the middle years of Henry the Eighth and the middle years of the reign of James the First. For a great part they were previously inaccessible and they illustrate the changing Catholic reaction to contemporary fashion as well as to contemporary event. Technically the title is inaccurate. Neither the second Lord Vaux nor the eighth Lord Morley were ever recusant, the Catholic sympathies of Surrey were probably tenuous and certainly restrained, and Nicholas Grimauld prudently conformed to the old religion at the height of the Marian reaction; yet all are represented. Still it is at least tenable that there was a continuity between much of the poetry of Elizabethan recusants, the officially pamphleteered verse of Mary's reign and the rhymed moral aphorism which had been in fashion with a 'Catholic' section of the Henrican ruling class.

For one grouping, at least, the links were reinforced by a strain of blood; the literary inheritance of the More circle were transmitted through all three phases by John and Jasper Heywood and by the Clements, Prideaux and Copleys. The tradition of devotional verse, maintained among the exiles and growing increasingly sophisticated was to reflect minutely a changing culture. It was to find expression not only in Verstegan, but in Robert Southwell and in Henry Constable.

It is in many ways a contrast to the anonymous Catholic verse of the time; popular in origin, controversial in its implication sometimes rudely, always buoyantly spontaneous. As a background to this popular tradition lie the marching songs of the pilgrimage of grace, the monks of St. Mary's, York, and the Dominican John Pickering. It is allied with the writings of such country squires as Tregian of Golden and Blundell of

Crosby. It was to find its perfect expression in *Winter coulde into Summer hoate*.

It is to be regretted that such verses are not more fully represented in this anthology. The ballad on the Lancaster martyrs might well have been included if only to reflect the granite self-assurance of the Catholicism of the North and the British Museum Add. MS. 15, 225, might have been further utilized. But such omissions seem slight compared with the achievements of this volume. It is characterised by careful editing as well as by the clear scholarship of the biographical notes, and it will remain one of the most significant of recent contributions to the study of the primary sources for the history of English Catholicism.

GERVASE MATHEW, O.P.

NOTICES

IN VICTORIAN DAYS, AND OTHER PAPERS. By Sir David Hunter Blair, O.S.B. (Longmans; 6s.)

Abbot Hunter Blair is inexhaustible in his anecdotage, a born story-teller with a gift of easy style, who has many volumes of racy reminiscence to his credit. His present modest and unpretending work, slighter in scope than its predecessors, is a kind of Paralipomenon, *Lines Left Out*, supplementary recollections that perhaps have come to the author's mind since his earlier books were given to the world. It is eminently readable, a good book for the bed-side, full of naive pleasure in life, and large-hearted charity for all sorts and conditions of men. And it deepens our respect and affection for the writer, who (if we may adapt a historic utterance) has always done so much 'to increase the gaiety of the nation, and add to the public stock of harmless pleasure.'

The most valuable (as it will prove the least ephemeral) Essay in the volume is the one on 'Oscar Wilde as I knew him.'

R.B.

FLOWERING RIFLE. By Roy Campbell. (Longmans; 7s. 6d.)

There has been a great flowering of warlike poetry during the last decade or so. Perhaps verse has taken on this predominantly political colouring as a reaction to the poetry of escape. One remembers the enormous success of Picasso's *Ger-nika* for a parallel in other arts. Why has this political renaissance produced nothing of value? Is it not because literature is becoming a department of politics, which is as fatal as making it a department of theology?