

## BLACKFRIARS

### EDUCATION

THE STORY OF THE WOODARD SCHOOLS. By K. E. Kirk, Provost of Lancing (Hodder & Stoughton; 3s. 6d.)

The present Bishop of Oxford, who is also Provost of Lancing, explains what the Woodard Schools are, by whom they were founded and why, and discusses the problems which face the Woodard Corporation to-day; problems which are common to all Christian men and women who have the responsibility of middle-class education in Schools that draw no financial support from the State.

The Woodard Schools are a Corporation of sixteen Schools, eight for boys and eight for girls, devoted to the education of the middle classes. They are professedly Anglican and are High Church, in so far as these terms signify a loyal and wholehearted adherence to the Book of Common Prayer and the current trend of religious worship to be found in most Anglican Cathedrals to-day. In general they are to be classed as Public Schools, but with this distinction, that they aim corporately at informing their education with definite Christian principles according to the Anglican formularies. In this they bear some analogy with our Catholic Public Schools.

Dr. Kirk in the opening Chapter, describes the deplorable condition of education for the middle classes in the first half of the nineteenth century. The upper classes were already provided for, and schools were springing up in large numbers for the poorer classes. By the 1840's a few Public and Proprietary Schools were coming into existence to cater for the needs of the middle classes, by the adaptation of the older endowed Grammar Schools and the foundation of new Schools which were generally modelled on the handful of Public Schools then flourishing, in particular Rugby under Dr. Arnold. Anglicanism at this time was developing an increasing impetus from the Oxford Movement, but only one man seems to have been alive to the importance of systematic and well endowed religious education for the Anglican middle classes.

Nathaniel Woodard was never immediately associated with the founders of the Oxford Movement, but he must have been directly affected by it, since he was in residence at Magdalen Hall in the late thirties of the century and was ordained in 1841. After an unfortunate passage with his Bishop concerning a sermon he had preached advocating Confession as recommended by the Book of Common Prayer, he left London and took a curacy at Shoreham in Sussex. What first struck him there was the absence of any schools to provide for the needs of the professional and trading classes, and he set about at once to fill the gap. He soon realized

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that the need was not local but universal, and set about to remedy it. Personal poverty and obscurity were outweighed by an indomitable resolution, an attractive personality and unbounded vision.

As his plans took shape, he foresaw the creation of a Corporation of boarding schools for three different "classes" of the middle class, the upper middle, the professional and the trading classes. In all these Schools the Christian religion should be the dominant informing principle; and this should be expressed too by the mutual help that the schools should give one another, by money grants, the provision of Scholarships from lower to higher grades, and the organization of a common training system for masters who would receive a Diploma and be awarded an academic hood "perilously like that of Cambridge." Two great assets helped him to put his plans into execution. He had the capacity for gathering a group of first-rate men as his first masters, and a positive genius for raising enormous sums of money from the wealthy to carry out his ambitious building schemes.

In many respects Woodard's plans have had to be modified. He had failed to grasp that the traditional system of education at the time when he founded his schools was breaking down, and refused to include any of the newer subjects as an essential part curriculum. To bring this into line with current practice has been the work of those who succeeded him in the government of his schools. A further difficulty was caused by his insistence on a "dyarchy" whereby the Chaplains of the schools were virtually independent of the Headmasters. A period of acute administrative difficulty at Lancing led to a change in the Founder's original plan, which has put this right. Other schemes, such as the training scheme for masters, have had to be dropped. So too has the plan for grading the schools according to "classes," since such a distinction to-day is invidious: the only difference between the schools to-day is that of fees, which in all cases remain moderate by present-day standards. The education is the same in all, though the amenities may vary slightly.

The encroachment of the State was always regarded by Woodard with suspicion, as it would infallibly tend to secularize education, and treat the Christian religion as a school subject rather than an informing principle. Furthermore he realized that the introduction of a "conscience clause" would lead to a religion "so innocuous, tentative and undogmatic that no parent except an avowed atheist could reasonably wish to withdraw his child from its influence" (p. 109). He clearly recognised the vital distinction between religion and religiosity, and Dr. Kirk's development of this essential factor in Christian education can hardly be bettered.

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Dr. Kirk clearly states the problems of the Corporation to-day, and in no way minimises the gradual disappearance of Christian standards in contemporary society. The danger involves all of us who are engaged in the work of Christian education; and it is worth noting his own words on this vital point; "the Woodard Corporation is the only system in which the policy of basing a middle-class boarding-school education on definitely Anglican principles has been and is being consistently maintained on any impressive scale" (p. 218). "To be able to offer an education on these lines to something like twelve hundred newcomers every year is no mean thing" (p. 222). "There is much in contemporary life to daunt and depress us. But the Woodard Society presents the spectacle of a piece of idealism in action, which, despite all its inadequacies and limitations, will give assured ground for hope so long as its constituent schools survive" (closing words).

The reviewer's strong recommendation of this stimulating and attractive account of Woodard and his work for education has a confessedly personal interest. He spent four very happy years at a Woodard School, and still recalls with gratitude the religious inspiration of Woodard's *chef d'oeuvre*, the Chapel at Lancing.

AELWIN TINDAL-ATKINSON, O.P.

## DRAMA

LA SOIF. (Pièce en Trois Actes.) By Gabriel Marcel. (Collection *Les Iles*.) (Desclée de Brouwer, 24 frs.)

It would outrage the delicate and tragic dialectic of Gabriel Marcel's new play to attempt to disengage from its complex unity a single formula that would make of it a mere framework of events. The dramatist is here acutely conscious of the crisis in which the modern world finds itself, fundamentally, a human crisis, because men come to consider themselves as despiritualised functions within the wider social economy, and because scientific positivism (rejuvenated in Carnap and Wittgenstein) is utterly ignorant of any values that refuse to submit to the categories of statistical psychology. The present-day anarchy of thinking and feeling is nowhere more evident than in the glitter of the contemporary theatre, living parasitically on a dead tradition, and touching nothing which it does not make superficial.

What the modern dramatist ignores, Gabriel Marcel puts right at the forefront of his programme. He can say with Baudelaire: "*Te ne vois que l'infini par toutes les fenêtres.*" Precisely because a person is a person every situation in which he is involved points beyond itself: at the core of his history there is always a