

BLACKFRIARS

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

REVIEWS

problem which he must find it impossible to formulate except as a mystery. The old Aristotelian exegesis made Aristotle say that the failure of his central character was simply a moral defect, instead of an error of judgment on account of the mysteries of human motive; peripeteia is really a volte-face of intention in the pressure of events; anagnorisis becomes the recognition of the situation as it exists, due to "weaving a fiction that unravels as you weave." (T. S. Eliot.)

While a drama like *The Ascent of F6* is more comprehensive than any work of Gabriel Marcel (fluctuating between the gloom of the *Chapelle Ardente* and the comparative light of *La Soif*), its problems are trivial, even if they are stated with sensitiveness and originality; its psychology is exact, but never existential enough. Though penetrating and profound in its statement of the situation, even Claudel's *L'Otage* seems forced, too largely a thesis. There is nothing more desperate in its wrecking of intelligence, undermining it in its highest functions, as this vogue of clear and distinct ideas going under the name of scientific humanism; it stifles the spirituality of mind and heart by simplifying under one head all human problems and providing a fictitious average to cover every type and situation.

Against a psychology whose ideal is to approximate to the quantitative, Gabriel Marcel sets the metaphysical thirst, even the theological thirst, of human beings, not considered as functions or as tractable laboratory material, but as minds that are substantially free of space and time. The best recent drama in England has tended too often to the charade; the characters remain masks to the end. Tchekov's solution is to provide a sequence of moods until he achieves a moment where the conflicts cancel out, as in music "where everything is forgiven, and it would be strange not to forgive." All the world's a stage until in the moment of self-revelation the masks are torn off and we see face to face. Gabriel Marcel engineers his crisis by no sleight of hand; the characters find themselves in a new context that breaks down their defences and confronts them with a mystery in which everything is understood. The paradox is that they see with clairvoyance and yet that what they see implies more than they see; their speech is inadequate to that unspoken, their quotidian life inadequate to the life revealed in them.

It seems clear that only poetic drama can explore such fields and lay bare the logic of the mystery competently. Gabriel Marcel very properly states that the situation is not so much summed up in a series of metaphors as of symbols discovered in the situation itself: he provides the very symbolism of tempest resolved in music that Shakespeare employed. Amédée, Eveline,

BLACKFRIARS

Stella are all at conflict so long as they remain spiritually in splendid isolation; only charity at length takes them out of themselves, their selves as functions, into their selves as essences or persons. There always remains the chiaroscuro of true metaphysical vision, instead of the selfish and *simpliste* formulas with which we bolster up our ignorance. *Devant la vivant qui péröre et gesticule, si nous savions évoquer le gisant de demain!*

JOHN DURKAN.

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

JANE AND TOMMY TOMKINS. By Vera Barclay. (Herbert Jenkins; 2s. 6d.)

HALF-DECK OF THE "BRADSTOCK." By Douglas V. Duff. (Burns, Oates; 3s. 6d.)

THE HIDDEN VALLEY. By Eileen Marsh. (Burns Oates; 3s. 6d.)

THE DRAGON AND THE MOSQUITO. By R. J. McGregor. (Burns Oates; 2s. 6d.)

TOB AND HIS DOG. By Guy Rawlence. (Burns Oates; 3s. 6d.)

The new adventures of the very human and wholly delightful Jane will give great satisfaction to the many "Young People and their Elders" who have already made her joyful acquaintance in earlier volumes. It is, indeed, probably now unnecessary to remark upon Miss Barclay's intimate and unerring appreciation of the characteristics of boys and girls which her wide experience (especially amongst guides and scouts) has given her, and even less necessary to call attention to her mastery of the technique of writing for the younger generation. But she gives notable proof of these qualities in this fresh chronicle of Jane aided and abetted by Tommy, a typical Cockney youngster with whom she scraped a characteristic friendship during a visit to the coast as companion to her neurasthenic uncle, Bungo. Their adventures are numerous and amusing and even exciting, and yet there is nothing forced or artificial about them or the actors. That is probably the main reason why *you* will enjoy this book, as well as the young ones to whom you will want to give it for a Christmas present.

For adventure of the more vigorous or hectic type, Messrs. Burns Oates have added two excellent stories of that genre to their already long list of splendid Books for Young People. The first is a real "boy's yarn" packed with action and thrills in which the leading part is played by three cadets in the merchant service who occupy the *Half-Deck of the "Bradstock"*—or would occupy it if the unbroken chain of adventures allowed!