

hood, but the blind destruction of sightless forces, 'blind winds', and the melancholy fate of the frustrated and the unfulfilled. Impotent pain, the fear of the ignorant and unenlightened mind. the swift terror of the lark that has no logical explanation, the haunting sense of guilt, agony, in fact, that is 'monstrously disproportionate, and dumb in the poor beast, and wild in the old decorous man, caught, overcome', are fearful enigmas that can alone be solved by the humble submission of man's mind and will to God.

When her mood is most despondent she derives consolation from what she has failed to achieve rather than in the triumphs she has won. Like St Paul, she is only too willing to confess her faults and misdeeds, since their recognition fills her with profound humility and makes her recognise man's dependence upon God and profound need of his mediation. Life is beautiful if dedicated to God, and when she remembers what Christ endured for man and the sublime solitude of Calvary, she shouts triumphantly 'Oh, how divine, divine, divine'.

Her poems are monuments erected in simplicity and inspired by a profound piety. This book, which includes many poems hitherto unpublished, should be especially welcome to lovers of her work because it shows the growth of her talent and still more the moving and constant development of her understanding and imagination. One could not better epitomise the quality of her work than to apply to it the lovely words that she employs in one of her most perfect lyrics, 'oh innocent throat! Oh human ear'. After the self-torture and conscious abstruseness of most modern poets, to read her is like admitting a breath of cool and refreshing air into a close and musty room.

DAVID LUTYENS.

FOUNTAINS ABBEY. By E. K. Ellis. (Cambridge University Press; 1s. 6d.)

Towards the end of his poem Mr Ellis disarms all criticism by saying '. . . the candid mind forbears "To taunt a soaring lark with his descent".'

And particularly because not only the theme but also the rhythm and structure of the poem are of exceptional quality and have earned it the Setonian prize for 1947 it would be presumptuous on the part of a purely subjective reader to attempt to assess it in detail. But because to the subjective reader, against the vital background of rhythm and structure it is the theme of poetry that must make a primary and individual impression, insofar as the vivid merits of Mr Ellis's poem are concerned one is tempted to believe that for the majority, these may be marred by a sense of frustration that

the theme was not further developed. Perhaps the poet himself anticipates it when he describes his impressions as 'These faint memories of a life half guessed'.

For in the poem, through lines and verses of extraordinary serenity and a searching stillness Mr Ellis conveys the music of past history and of present inspiration. The past history of Fountains Abbey is one of the epic stories of all that was finest in medieval monasticism and in the poet's interpretation there is little weakness.

Like men that rose awe-stricken from the dead

They took the Gospel for their daily bread.

It was from such men that the stones of Fountains took life and harmony.

As kindlings of the spirit clarify

The half-seen vision and the seeing eye

When inspiration moves the hand to draw

These lived and built and patterned what they saw.

And it was part of their achievement that even today the ruins of all they created console a generation whose hunger and anguish for serenity symptomises a veiled supplication to an unacknowledged God.

Yet as the theme of the poem develops into the Fountains of today it appears to dissolve into a descriptiveness of natural beauty which is as mentally moving as it is spiritually passive and acquiescent. Can it be true of the message that such dedicated warriors as the Cistercians laboured to instil that now—

They are at rest—else would their spirits haunt

This ruin still with murmured prayer and chant.

There are, after all, so very many who would interpret the atmosphere and character of the ruined Fountains as little else but the haunted shadow of former inspiration and these cannot fail to regret that Mr Ellis has not taken the opportunity to etch this aspect in a mood less elusive and more compelling.

ANTONELLA LOTHIAN.

ARTHUR QUILLER COUCH: A Biographical Study. By F. Brittain. (Cambridge University Press; 15s.)

It is never easy to know the real man behind a public figure and often enough it is not particularly important. 'Q' however was obviously such a whole person that whether we met the novelist the professor or the politician it was clear that our knowledge could only be completed by discovering the man himself. And this was no easy task. Compared with the vast numbers who must have known his writings few people could ever have known the real Q—his personal friends, neighbours at Fowey and perhaps a few of his students. Mr Brittain's work is therefore of unique value because