

## BLACKFRIARS

Puvis de Chavannes; at his most interested, in the Stanza del Fregio, he is a good deal superior to good Romano.

Yet the value of Dr. Saxi's work, we feel, lies in its method quite as much as in its results. Only on a basis of specialized study such as this is it possible to generalize round a period that is characterized by its inveterate passion for detail.

JOHN POPE-HENNESSY.

### NOTICES

IN THE PRE-NICENE CHURCH, which contains the Summer School Lectures for 1934 (Burns Oates; 7/6), we must not look for any new addition to our knowledge of the subject; it is intended as an introduction for beginners, and some of the lectures, notably Abbot Cabrol's on *The Eucharist during the First Three Centuries* and Fr. Philip Hughes' on *From St. Ignatius to Constantine*, will serve that purpose admirably. One or two of the other lectures are by no means so good. It is very regrettable that in a book of this kind the proofs should have been read so carelessly. There are many misprints and not a few that will be an embarrassment to the beginner. There are also some sentences apt to mislead him. Fr. Leeming, for example, says of St. Cyprian's reasons for his view in the famous re-Baptism controversy that they "were theoretically very strong." "Theoretically" is hardly the word here; it suggests that Pope Stephen's view was simply more convenient in practice. Or again, what will the beginner make of the chronology apparently implied in Fr. Lavery's statement: "Before the time of Claudius no direct act of Roman officialdom against the Christians is recorded; on the contrary, Felix and Festus showed themselves to be rather favourable than otherwise"? Abbot Cabrol refers us several times to an (evidently carefully compiled) bibliographical Note, but we have looked for it in vain; if it was sacrificed for want of space, we would rather have sacrificed instead a few pages of the Editor's Preface.

L. W.

FOUR INDEPENDENTS. By Daniel Sargent. (Sheed & Ward; 7/6.)

Animated sketches of four Catholic rebels, not rebel Catholics. Charles Péguy, whose poetry was likened to a mixture of petrol and holy water, who put scholasticism among the arms of Satan and praised the sacraments he did not use: Paul Claudel, who broke out of the prison of mechanism into the world where God writes straight with crooked lines: Gerard Manley Hopkins, the poet that want the yield of plushy sward in community socks at Manresa, the Jesuit who spent himself in sacrifice for the beauty of the world, the poet who made friends with Scotus: Orestes Augustus Brownson, the Yankee Veuillot, who reached the Church from New England Calvinism through Boston Uni-

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tarianism and was bothered because the Pope seemed friendlier to the Confederacy than to the Union; belligerent alike in his attack on Protestantism and his defence of Protestants. T. G.

**ATHENS, ARGENTINE, AUSTRALIA.** By C. C. Martindale, S.J. (Sheed & Ward; 7/6.)

A book for the modern hurried man. No long thesis to follow through noting each step in a long exposition, but full of all sorts of wisdom, every point seldom more than a page. The points will stick too; for it is a long personal letter written hurriedly to the reader. It shows incidentally that Fr. Martindale can write refreshingly about anything, even an Hellenic Tour. In fact when there is nothing very notable happening and the main task is the avoidance of the dread museum, he writes to us perhaps more interestingly than when there is such a lot to be done and seen as at the Buenos Aires Congress. The *Argentine Actuality* is indeed actual, and the reader is left almost as exhausted as Fr. Martindale undoubtedly was. Then he writes to us from Australia, where he had gone for another congress at Melbourne. This is not quite so exhausting in spite of the many speeches and lectures. Here we are often reminded of the former visit recounted to us in *The Risen Sun*. All Fr. Martindale's judgments on what he sees or remembers are valuable and often entertaining, but it is impossible to convey any idea of their scope and wit, so numerous and varied are they. C. P.

**THE CRAFT OF PRAYER.** By Vincent McNabb, O.P. (Burns Oates; 2/6.)

This collection of Conferences on Prayer given in recent years and revised for publication by the author is a fitting companion to his other beautiful work, *The Path of Prayer*. This latter work has already seen many editions; we are confident that this new volume will be in much greater demand. Those who assisted at these Conferences were indeed privileged: simple and direct in approach, profound in concept, consoling and eminently helpful to all seriously concerned about Prayer, they manifest a deep understanding of the noblest of all prayers—the Our Father. The bearing of this Prayer of Petition on the spiritual or interior life is admirably delineated. The author, though reluctantly releasing these Conferences for publication, will earn the prayerful gratitude of a vast unseen congregation. S.W.L.

**LITTLE ANNE.** By Uncle Simon, of the *Universe*. (Burns Oates; 1/-.)

Here at last we have a really satisfactory account of that saintly child, Anne de Guigné, for those who need it and desire it most—the children. It is satisfactory because it is brief, beautifully printed and cheap, but most of all because it is written by “Uncle

Simon" who has a way with him where children are concerned; he loves Anne and understands the heroism of her holy life, and he presents her to his young readers with a vivid simplicity that will make her live for them and perchance will help them to live, like her, for Our Lord. The little volume is based upon that excellent and justly popular life, entitled *Anne*, by a Benedictine nun of Stanbrook Abbey, also published by Messrs. Burns Oates & Washbourne, and obviously owes much to it in a material sense. Yet it is Uncle Simon's own, and the children will love it.

H. J. C.

**A MURDER MAKES A MAN.** By William Walsh. (Longmans, 8/6.)

An astonishing achievement. The author seems to have saturated himself in Dreiser: Dreiser's matter, Dreiser's manner, even Dreiser's technical faults—his crudities, his unharmonious combinations of "ruthless realism" with fantastically improbable situations and coincidences. Then, apparently, Dr. Walsh sat down to write a "Catholic novel"—and, incredibly, gets away with it. This is a novel with a punch; sometimes approaching Greatness—the greatness of *American Tragedy*, and greater in its possession of the "tragic theodicy." The blurb says truly: "It too often happens that the novels that are not afraid of sex are afraid of religion and vice-versa; that is not the case with this one." And for Mr. Walsh sex means Sex (not romance nor salacity) and religion means Religion (not religiosity)—the Religion of the Cross. Unlikely, therefore, to be a popular book; but will do a power of good. If not "the Catholic Dreiser" (a self-contradiction) Dr. Walsh is certainly a potential American Undset.

V. W.

**FEERIES.** By Henri Ghéon. (Desclée de Brouwer; 10 frs.)

Three admirable fairy stories translated into word and action which will commend them at once to dramatic societies, professional and amateur. *La Belle au Bois Dormant* will have a particular appeal to those who specialize in dance, while the producer delighting in stage effects will have much to work on in all of them. The author has a delightful humour. My one criticism is that such delicacies as these should be rendered in verse.

H. D. C. P.

#### THE PLAY

It is a good proverb that one should not look a gift horse in the mouth. For the Group Theatre, now in possession of the *Westminster*, presents itself to us as a bringer of notable gifts. Its production of Auden's *Dance of Death*, especially written for it, is superb, in acting, choreography, and diction—one may note the impressive use of speech choruses, some of them spoken from the audience. The play itself has proved what a vital contribution the poets can bring to modern drama; loosely con-

structed though it is, without formal plot, dispensing with ordinary emotional appeal, but bristling with ideas, it holds the audience uninterruptedly excited. It would therefore be ungracious to dwell on any inconsistencies of symbolism, or to harp on the fact that not all its ideas seem equally sound. But if the doctrines of Karl Marx move us somewhat differently than they move the author, it is no matter. Poets are poets and inspiration often overflows theory. And so the Red Flag that waves triumphantly at the end, when the execrated Middle Class has crumbled into its grave, seems rather the flag of every "peerless passionate good cause," and the new era it inaugurates no dictatorship of the proletariat but the "brave new world" of which everyone (and not only the middle-classes Auden satirises at one point for a feeble effort to reach "the inner reality") has dreamed since Eden was lost.

The argument of the play is thus summarized in the programme:

Death appears as a dancer. The Announcer is fate and also Death's mouthpiece. Death symbolizes that decay which exists within a class of society. Always inspired and always betrayed by death inside them, this class pursue at first one Utopia and then another without really wanting new life because secretly they desire the old.

The insistence on a "class" is a limitation, but none the less Auden's satire is more often than not shrewdly sound. Take the opening scene, so amusing to ear and eye, where he attacks the modern cult of the body—the sunbathers, whose aim in life is a "splendid physique," while all the time they are following the lead of Death, who appears in their midst grimly attended by hospital nurses. (The part of Death is finely danced by Rupert Doone, one time of the Diaghelev ballet, and choreographer to Nigel Playfair and Max Reinhardt.) Equally admirable in their humour and irony are the later scenes where the sun-bathers (in their search for "one Utopia after another") array themselves in black shirts and discover in Fascism the "revolution suited to English conditions to abolish class," and then, by superimposition of khaki shirts, reveal themselves as back-to-the-landers, seeking escape from machine civilization—and it should be noted that in each case Auden gives depths to his satire by giving it the full value of its romantic appeal.

A queer "mystical" interlude follows, not very clear in its implications, when Death is summoned to be a pilot to the "very heart of reality," but collapses through the "inanition of the class." After which there is nothing left but the night-club—treated with fine restraint—and disintegration. It is time for the Red Flag and the new age.

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The *Dance of Death* was preceded by T. S. Eliot's fragmentary *Sweeney Agonistes*, in which the producer, Rupert Doone, reads a criticism of the "conventionalities of modern behaviour with its empty code and heartiness . . . decaying, but so long in dying." A kindred theme to Auden's, but with no hope of miraculous restoration; it is the world that is ending "not with a bang but with a whimper." But the dramatic effect was terrific, the emotional tension almost unbearable, in spite of its translation to an aesthetic and at bottom non-realistic plane. And it showed how verse, in the hands of a real dramatic poet concentrates and vitalizes, where verse less skilfully used, the verse to which we have hitherto been accustomed on the modern stage, usually dilutes.

In the programme, Auden publishes a most interesting declaration of principles. He holds that

Drama began as the act of a whole community. Ideally there would be no spectators. In practice every member of the audience should feel like an understudy.

Drama is essentially an art of the body. The basis of acting is acrobatics, dancing, and all forms of physical skill. The Music Hall, the Christmas Pantomime, and the Country House Charade are the most living drama of to-day.

The subject of drama on the other hand, is the commonly known, the universally familiar stories of the society or generation in which it was written. The audience, like the child listening to the fairy tale, ought to know what is going to happen next.

Dramatic speech should have the same confessed, significant, and undocumentary character, as dramatic movement.

Drama in fact deals with the general and universal, not with the particular and local, but it is probable that drama can only deal, at any rate directly, with the relations of human beings with each other, not with the relation of man to the rest of Nature.

Some of these dicta may at first seem questionable, but I believe them fundamentally sound; they are in any case justified by the greatest tradition. One may jib at "Drama is essentially an art of the body," unless one happens to stumble on Cicero's praise of Roscius: "*ille corporis motu tantum amorem sibi conciliarat . . .*" While the third point carries one's mind at once to the Mystery Plays and the Greeks; but it was also admitted among the Elizabethans. These revolutionaries with their "ultra-modern" technique are in reality returning to the dramatic ideals of the classics.

The Group Theatre is following up the *Dance of Death* by a play by Rudolf Besier, *Lady Patricia* (October 15th to October 29th), and then by a three weeks' run of *Scatterers of the Seed*, the *Lanceurs de Graines* by one of the finest of modern French writers, Jean Giono. They should not be missed.

BARBARA BARCLAY CARTER.

## NOTICES

### GRAMOPHONE

Dvorák numbers *éclat*, brightness of orchestration among his virtues, padding among his vices. Both sides are exemplified in the *Scherzo Capriccioso*, issued this month by H.M.V. The Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra plays it with fitting vigour; the excellent recording does full justice to the brilliant contrasts and combinations of orchestration (DB2520). Last month, H.M.V. produced Albeniz' *Sevilla* as piano solo; now they issue a perfect recording of a perfect-fiddle rendering by Heifetz, with the *Gypsy Andante* from Dohnanyi's *Ruralia Hungarica*, played by the same great artist, on the other side. (DB2220.) Paul Robeson sings the famous *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot* and *On Ma Journey*, a welcome addition to his gramophone repertory (B8372). Contrast: Nelson Eddy richly sings *Auf Wiederseh'n* (from the *Blue Paradise*—not the song the earlier number of the same title was), and *When I Grow Too Old To Dream* (DA1435). Further contrast: Noel Coward sings his own song, *Mrs. Worthington*—with such kindly conviction (kindly at least until the end, when patience suddenly snaps) and such cumulative wealth of argument that one comes to feel most strongly that the lady addressed really ought not to dream of putting her daughter on the stage (B8369). But why the sentimental ballad on the other side?—sweet cocoa after the bracing *Worthington*. Of swing music there is *Squareface*, a good number, better if the local refrain were clearer; and *King Porter Stomp*, good stuff if there were sufficient melodic strength to give it purpose (B8374).

*Let's Go to Paris* is a series of practical travel talks. The first record provides an introduction to the question of pronunciation—vowels, etc.; and the journey to Paris. Clear and easily intelligible. This should be a useful series for those who want to talk every-day French as far as possible like Frenchmen (B8354).

(Key.—DB series: 6/-; DA, 4/-; B, 2/6.)

Records released by *Decca* arrived too late for review.

G. V.

### BOOKS RECEIVED

- BURROW & CO. (Cheltenham): *An Adventure in Social Work: Recollections of the work of St. Hugh's for boys from 1899 to the outbreak of the Great War*, Norman F. Potter (2/-).
- BURNS, OATES: *Must War come?*, John Eppstein (3/6); *The Spiritual Combat together with The Treatise of Inward Peace*, Lorenzo Scupoli (new translation) (2/6); *The Attack on Lourdes*, Chanoine E. Duplessy (5/-); *The Complete Collected Ballads of Padraic Gregory, 1912-32* (7/6); *Educating Joanna*, Ruth Godring (5/-); *South Country Secrets*, "Euphan" and "Klaxon" (3/6); *The Seventh Daughter*, "Euphan," Ill. Ernest H. Shepard (3/6).