

respect and indeed the affection of his fellow Servicemen. 'You came to regard the men in your barrack-room as brothers more than anything else.' His simple conclusion is that 'if you are a religious man and profess certain principles of conduct, then you are expected to live up to them. . . . They may not agree with your religion, but they will respect you for sticking to it.' Gerry Lynch's contribution shows that a well-instructed Catholic can do much to influence his fellows, and it raises again the perennial problem of providing a Catholic education—at home and school—that really fits a boy for the hard facts of the world he finds outside. One must hope that the virtual absence of the chaplain in these varied accounts of Service life does not altogether reflect a true picture. The opportunity to transform National Service into something more than a two-years' military interval, so often pointless as it seems, and to use its discipline as a positive education for responsible adult life, is obviously worth making, and nothing less than this can justify the Christian tolerance of its continuation.

ILLTUD EVANS, O.P.

THE SINGULAR HOPE. By Elizabeth Sewell. (Chatto and Windus; 12s. 6d.)

Joan Crusoe is deformed, and for her the painful process of growing up has its special anguish. Sent to a special school, she has to learn much more than to correlate her body's movements: intelligent, absorbed in a private world, her need for love is terribly real. She finds it, in the person of a cousin thirty years older than herself, a casual visitor to the school whose kindness becomes for her the understanding love she has needed. But it is otherwise interpreted, and tragedy seems near. It is averted, and Joan has learnt how much the sacrificial meaning of her life must now involve. She has grown up indeed.

Miss Sewell's novel is a sensitive treatment of a theme that could so easily turn to the sentimental or the pathologically awry. Written with a purity of style that matches the singleness of its purpose (no novel was ever better named), *The Singular Hope* is altogether serene. We find ourselves so identified with Joan's generous yet troubled acceptance of her own situation, that to read this novel is a purification of the mind and of the emotions that happens very rarely in usual fiction. But apart from the inspired understanding of suffering which gives such light—and such joy—to the novel, Miss Sewell brings an acute and humorous observation of place and person. Bylands Cross comes to life with all the acute and intriguing detail of all schools everywhere. The Principals—High Church, professionally arch and understanding; the crippled children—so individuated, with their deformities not stressed but made significant all the same; Cécile, the assistant mistress,

whose convent-bred scrupulosity so nearly brings disaster to Joan: all are wonderfully observed and move within the complex trivialities of school life most authentically, and often most amusingly as well.

Sometimes it happens that a novel, like a fine day or a perfect flower, achieves all that it can hope to be. *The Singular Hope* is such a novel. One can only urge that it should be read—for its integrity, its skill and its deep understanding of the truest human need.

I.E.

THE LAYMAN IN THE CHURCH. By Michael de la Bedoyère. (Burns and Oates; 10s. 6d.)

WE ARE MEN. By John M. Todd. (Sheed and Ward; 7s. 6d.)

It is not to be expected that a theology of the laity should spring fully armed as Athene from the brow of Zeus; the subject is only beginning to be studied seriously. However, Count de la Bedoyère in his *The Layman in the Church* has been remarkably successful in assembling an armoury for it. Such a work must be a perilous enterprise, and a preoccupation with safety-catches seems to be inevitable. The author sees as central to his subject the Christian layman's participation in Christ as priest, prophet or teacher and King. These offices which belong in a direct way to the teaching authority of the Church and its hierarchical function, are analogically applicable to the layman. In practice this will consist in his giving witness to Christ in his daily life. Because these analogical concepts are differently realised in the layman, it is a mistake to suppose that the ideal layman is a cleric manqué. Count de la Bedoyère is so insistent on this point that he requires a distinctive lay spirituality to replace the monastic or clerical spirituality up till now offered to the layman. Historical reasons have made it necessary to emphasize the juridical and hierarchical character of the Church perhaps at the expense of the aspect of community in a common life, so that the layman has felt himself to be united to the Church by external links rather than by a consciousness of a shared life. The implications of the layman's sharing in Christ's priesthood, his kingship and his being a teacher are worked out in terms of parents and children, of social and international relationships. The liturgy provides the realization of community in Christ.

One begins to realize just how well Count de la Bedoyère has done his work when one turns to John Todd's *We Are Men*. This is advertised as a book for the Christian layman. The publisher's puff admits that the book is experimental and that the author cannot be equally competent in every sphere he covers. Unfortunately the author seems to have felt called upon to be informative in a small book on matters where information could scarcely be available to him. The