

BOOK REVIEWS

A COMPANION TO MR. WELLS' OUTLINE OF HISTORY. By Hilaire Belloc. (Sheed & Ward; 3/6 net.)

It is a pleasant thought that possibly posterity's gratitude to Mr. Wells will arise from two main facts. He is the creator of innumerable short stories that are masterpieces of their kind, and he was the cause, unwilling cause no doubt, of Mr. Belloc's writing *A Companion to Mr. Wells' Outline of History*, that is even now a classic. The work has received countless reviews, and there is little to be said about this cheap re-issue, except to welcome it. Apart altogether from the references to Mr. Wells, it deserves to be read and studied for the vast amount of instruction it affords. For many Catholics it may well be the starting point for more extended reading on the scientific points raised. A Catholic grounded in this work, and intelligently responding to the stimulus given, will be equipped to fearlessly do his part in spreading the light of Catholic Faith. No need is greater to-day than the need for keen and instructed Catholics.

F. B.

THE MONSTROUS REGIMENT. A Book about Queen Elizabeth. By Christopher Hollis (pp. 235; Sheed & Ward; 7/6 net).

'Is it a good title?' a reader may ask as he lays down this fascinating book. All sorts of variations on the theme will suggest themselves: 'Women in politics,' 'Who pulled the strings?' 'The Sixteenth Century Catholic.' None of them will do, and the reader will keep looking at the present title and saying: 'Yes, it is the right one after all, but it ought to have been in inverted commas.' Could one pay a greater compliment to a book than to worry over its title after having read it?

The book is 'about Queen Elizabeth'; it is not a portrait; nor is it a 'study.' It is rather a series of vignettes, thumb-nail sketches of a number of characters who figured on the English stage in the sixteenth century—and left it worse than they found it! For that is the fact that emerges. First of all comes the Queen herself. An atheist in practice; in theory—what? Unscrupulous, untruthful; none dare deny it. Yet possibly the victim of her age and environment, or should we say

Blackfriars

her background? For ever, behind the scenes, is the figure of Cecil with his dark and sinister purposes always before him—the de-Catholicizing of England. Then comes Walsingham, the plotter and contriver, hardly the politician—unless the terms are interchangeable. Behind these the host of profiteers; still deeper in the background the relentless Puritans, who were to win in the end and leave their ineffaceable mark on English history.

Apart from the style which carries you on from stage to stage, what gives real force to Mr. Hollis's pages is the knowledge with which he writes. One feels that he has steeped himself in the documents, in the State Papers and all the real literature of the period. Would that he had given us references! But perhaps in a volume of this size that would be too much to expect. There is much to criticise of course. For example, is he right in saying that Henry's changes were not much resented? According to Chapuy's informants he was within an ace of losing his crown because of them.¹ Then the Bull of Deposition: was it really such a blunder? It certainly clarified the situation, which to so many Catholics was a puzzle; perhaps without it the number of our Martyrs would have been considerably less. For the Bull provided just that stiffening which saved the Catholic body from an unintelligent acquiescence in a situation which we perhaps see clearly, but which was too close to the actors for them to form an unbiassed view.

The 'Catholic Problem' as here presented is one which every Catholic who is proud of our Martyrs should read if he would grasp the nature of the mental trial they went through. In fact, the main thesis of Mr. Hollis's pages might be given in his own words (p. 143): 'This essay is . . . concerned with an estimate of the attitude of the Government towards the Catholic and of the Catholic towards the Government.'

H.P.

THE MIND OF THE MISSAL. By C. C. Martindale, S.J. (Sheed & Ward; 7/6.)

Fr. Martindale has written a book that should make every reader realise the truth of the saying that it is the Mass that matters. The object of the book is to make Catholics understand and love the Missal, and so love the Mass. The way to learn to love the Mass is to *use* the Missal and to *pray* the Missal

¹ See Henry VIII, *Papers Foreign and Domestic*, Vol. VIII, Nos. 1, 279, 609, etc., and especially Gairdner's *Preface*.