

perfect in its conception and its style than his way of rendering the suspense of Troilus; the slowly rising doubt and despair keeping pace in the mind of Troilus with the equally gradual and inevitable withdrawal and alteration of love in the mind of his lady, till he comes to the end of his love-story in Cressida's weak and helpless letter of defence and deprecation" (pp. 85-6).

We would like to know, in passing, what Mr. Ker thinks of Chaucer's embarrassed appeal to his story-books when he comes to the fickleness of Cressida, which is not perhaps perfectly made ready for us. When we find Mr. Ker calling on us to notice the lovely wordcraft and songcraft of the often overlooked "Anelida," and reviewing Chaucer's prose, we incline to quote his remark that "nothing represents Chaucer except the whole body of his writings," and to ask for an essay on all Chaucer. The same power to describe imaginative charm is found in his paragraphs on Malory, which occur in the well-known preface, here reprinted, to Sir Henry Craik's "English Prose Selections." In the paper on Gower, fuller than that on Chaucer, are well brought out the colours, a little sober and faint, but clear and true, that touch the margin and capitals of Gower's long, moral love-missal, the "Confessio Amantis"; and this is done without any "attempt to find unappreciated genius." The critic lets us into the bent of his own taste when he explains how Gower's poetical style is founded on that of the French short verse.

"It is this quality of style, this perfect ease and freshness, that makes old French literature what it is—a land of rest and solace, where nothing glares, nothing dazzles or stuns the sense—where the weary reading man may escape from the thunderings and trumpeting of more vehement literary schools" (pp. 108-9).

Mr. Ker is ever on his guard against "rhetoric"; while it is still a long way off, he hears the sound of a going in the trees. Certainly a medievalist has a right to satiety in this matter, and a Renaissance student too. The prose of Berners translating ("there is nothing remarkable about this sort of English, except that it cannot be bettered") is well contrasted with his too "facundious" original pre-faces; and the "Wooing of the Soul" in the "Ancren Riwle," with the later "Wooing of our Lord" and its "dissolute ostentation of sentiment." There is, of course, rhetoric and rhetoric; we are just as much on the bedrock with Sir Thomas Browne, and with de Quincey at his best, as with Gagamen and with Malory; this Mr. Ker would never deny. But in facing the prose of the dark or middle ages, the love for the literary mother-speech, nearest to life and primitively or classically simple, is a precious Ariadne's clue in the maze of unreal styles. Mr. Ker seems to feel his feet firmest when he is reading prose of the best saga type, or the report made to King Alfred of the sailor Ohthere, with "the clear northern light on his reindeer and walruses, and the northern moors and lakes." At the same time, as the essay on early English prose testifies, he can perceive and value things that are not so salient, that are not illustrious in any way. He brings out the "derivative and educational value" of the mass of our prose from the origins to Malory, prose which fares in hodden gray and is as far below "Njal's Saga" as it is above the "Tale of Melibeus"—an extreme case of Chaucer's sympathy with the platitudes as well as the brilliance of his time, if indeed it is not rather a great practical joke on Chaucer's part. The same essay makes us realise both the long struggle of our prose to wrest from verse the right of doing the work of prose, and the steady influence of the Latin syntax and ordering, to which our prose nevertheless refused to forfeit its independence.

The essays in this volume are republications, and are happily brought together, including the note on "Dante's Similes," which well shows their vital aptness in contrast with those of the lyrical and courtly fashion. The longest paper is the "Froissart," which fills a third and more of the pages, and includes an ample study of Lord Berners as well as of Froissart. Other articles came out first in the *Quarterly Review*, like the admirable "Boccaccio," and include the tribute to Gaston Paris, which it was right for an English critic to offer, and which touches with all grace on the great medievalist's labours, achievement, and rare character. "There was no display, no emphasis in his style." So much may be said of Mr. Ker's own, which, if somewhat deliberate and compressed, often also has fine traceries and tints, like a drawing by Ruskin. We like

best, perhaps, the passages where the critic lets himself and his rhythms go. "To study the edifying dulness of some Middle English prose," he says, is to "acquire an invincible appetite for the glory of other countries not quite so tame, for the pride of life of the castles and gardens of Languedoc or Swabia, for the winds of the forest of Broce-liande." Surely: let Mr. Ker "trille a pin" in Cambuscan's horse of brass and escort his readers thither, some day.

OLIVER ELTON.

A SAINT OF JANSENISM.*

Severe cutting down would have given this large volume a chance of being read more widely. It has a cultivated style and exhibits knowledge of the vast literature which has gathered round Port Royal. Its tone is deeply religious, of the devout Anglican sort, equally removed from elder Protestant and modern critical ways of dealing with problems as abstruse as they are unpopular. But who could afford the leisure which these four hundred pages demand, either to study or to appraise them? Jansenism never was anything but the pale reflex of the great Calvinistic tragedy; and Mother Angélique is not St. Theresa. The author evidently wishes that she had been. It is a vain hope. For the Spanish heroine wrought her splendid work of reformation upon Catholic lines, and therefore succeeded, while Angélique ran counter to certain elementary principles of the religion she was born in, and so accomplished only strife and confusion. A sombre story! Port Royal leads us into the darker recesses of the French character, veiled for most of us by a grace and lightness of speech that belong chiefly to the surface. But think of the implacable St. Cyran with his terror-striking attitude; consider Pascal, whose ghost haunted Voltaire and made the smiling old man shudder. Go through the martyr-record of poor Sister Agnès, as told in the eleventh chapter of this book. "Darkness visible!" we may say with Milton. A version of the Gospel so forbidding that, in comparison, the plenary indulgence given by *les philosophes* to human frailties would seem not altogether diabolic. The last touch of irony is added when critics argue from brilliant satires like the "Provincial Letters" and "Tartuffe" that Port Royal may claim for its own productions men of genius such as Pascal or Molière. What it could produce this painful introspective chronicle shows. To the real Jansenist literature and civilisation were so tainted with evil that he fled from them into the wilderness. He had even a suspicion of "good works," and let them alone whenever it was possible. The logic to which he ruthlessly bound himself made straight for Quietism, or as we now say, Nirvana. So much, wittingly or unwittingly, the present writer brings out beyond mistake.

But she would have been well advised, before trusting the Jansenist account of the other side, had she consulted a living Jesuit. She recognises, being a High Anglican, that St. Cyran, as well as his disciple Arnauld, would have thrown out of working order the sacramental system on which all Catholic piety is nourished. But she accepts without question the really amazing idea that there were clergy who taught people to receive the Sacraments though not repenting of their misdeeds, and that such was the orthodox belief. How singular a transposition of historical facts! Was it the Council of Trent, or was it Luther, that held a doctrine of justification by faith without works, before works, and in spite of works? There is no need to pursue the enquiry just now. But on this head, as on many others, it would be well to learn from those who teach and practise a system what it is that they do. Repentance is the necessary prelude to all profitable reception of ordinances in the Roman Church. Had St. Cyran merely protested against abuses he might have suffered at the hands of Richelieu, but he would never have come down to posterity among the heresiarchs.

We have not found here much narrative to light up a collection of extracts from correspondence, and certainly not one pictured page. Two things, neither of them easy, were wanted to give the volume a lasting value. It should have set out in sharp lines the contrast between Jansenist and Catholic views on the matters in dispute, which it has not done. And it was bound in fairness to judge Port Royal

* "Angélique of Port Royal. By A. K. H. (London: Skeffington.)

not as if an independent religious centre, but as a convent subject to all the rules of Catholic tradition. If Mother Angélique did not know how to submit her conscience to the Holy See, what does this amount to except that she put herself outside the pale? Sad and regrettable in every point of view, no doubt; but is there not also something grotesque in these nuns of Port Royal taking the word of their dead director, St. Cyran, against the decision laid upon them by what they admitted to be supreme authority? The ways of any French Government in dealing with convents, under Louis XIV. or M. Combes, are open to criticism. Yet, if St. Cyran was in the right, all the Roman condemnations of Luther and Calvin would have been plainly in the wrong. How could Rome admit such a thing?

WILLIAM BARRY.

HENRIETTA MARIA.*

A husband religious by temperament, but whose character was marred by a fatal and irresolute pertinacity; a queen, foreign in birth, blood and tastes, frivolous, obstinate, and indiscreet, who from the moment she set foot on English soil made herself the leader of an unpopular party and the cabals of an intriguing Court, commonly regarded as the chief supporter of an administration as weak as it was tyrannous, as the opponent of the national and capable leaders, as in league with the traditional enemies of England—in a word, the evil genius of her husband—are we not apparently reading in these sentences the verdict of history on Henrietta Maria? As a matter of fact, the verdict in question is that which has been passed by weighty authorities on Margaret of Anjou, the queen of the unfortunate Henry VI. But it is certainly striking that so many counts in the indictment against the one queen can so easily be preferred against the other, and even if we push the parallel further, the resemblance between the careers of these two royal women continues to be singularly close. Both were French, both became identified with all that the nation hated, both were regarded as responsible for the worst evils that befell the crown, both lived through a period of remorseless civil war, and saw their husbands lose their thrones, and their dynasty expelled and dishonoured; both were loyal and devoted mothers of indomitable will, courage, and self-sacrifice, loving and loved by their husbands, and for both the greater part of life was little better than a tragedy long drawn out. With Marie Antoinette of France, Margaret of Anjou and Henrietta Maria of Bourbon have passed into popular tradition with the common title of “la reine malheureuse.” Is the verdict just? Miss Taylor’s two volumes are a new and reasoned examination of the case for and against the queen of Charles I. It is, perhaps, somewhat surprising, considering the tons of ink spent during two centuries in denouncing or defending the Stuarts, that Henrietta Maria herself has attracted so little individual attention. Lives of her, good and bad, can be counted almost on the fingers of one hand. Miss Taylor, therefore, has a double advantage—the field is wonderfully clear; the subject, an unfortunate woman and queen. And apart from the remarkable work that has been done on the seventeenth century since Miss Strickland wrote, the Comte de Baillon and M. Ferrero in particular have by their researches enabled other workers to combine a more exact knowledge of the queen and woman, with the results of the great historians like Gardiner. But there are two obvious difficulties. Is it possible to write the biography of such a queen in such an age, without sacrificing the biography to the general history, or sacrificing the general history to the biography? At any rate, between 1625 and 1649, the life of Henrietta Maria is inextricably bound up with the whole history of England, and what a history that is, we all know. And even if this difficulty be overcome, is it really possible to disentangle the queen’s share in policy, to measure precisely the exact amount of her influence, or to determine as justice requires the exact amount of her responsibility? Take one crucial example. From the impeachment of Strafford to the failure of the attempt on the five members, the web of intrigues and counter-intrigues, at Court, at Westminster, and in the City, of plans, schemes, resolves, hatched, begun, dropped, is indescribably complicated and obscure. Was the

queen the real centre of the party of reaction in despair? Did she try to save Strafford? Did she really plan the abortive arrest, and then by her mad indiscretion ruin her own plan? Now, the difficulty here does not simply arise out of the historical material at the researcher’s disposal. It is at bottom psychological, and rests on the eternal problems of human relations. In the life of a devoted husband and wife, who will be so bold as to pronounce with confidence that this comes from the man and that from the woman?

It is only fair to say that Miss Taylor frankly recognises these difficulties, and has done her best to overcome them. She desires to do her heroine—a phrase, by the way, she never employs—justice, but she is an inquirer and a judge rather than an advocate, one who is almost too severe on the disadvantages the queen owed to her sex. Miss Taylor has studied the authorities carefully and with discrimination, and has endeavoured, so far as I can judge, to find and state the truth. The book, therefore, enhanced by its copious illustrations from contemporary portraits, is a welcome contribution to a better knowledge of an attractive and important historical figure. It is not, I fear, an ideal nor a final biography; perhaps the subject is partly responsible for that, for though Miss Taylor writes with great directness and commendable simplicity, which make her pages easy and pleasant reading, she has, I think, failed to impart to them just that combination of literary skill with vivid vision which historical biography of the first order requires. There is also too much self-restraint in the avoidance of the picturesque, of the colour in the background without whose discreet and skilful use no portrait can live. Would historical truth have suffered had the ample opportunities for such been more fully utilised? Could any critic reasonably have complained had the writer here and there “let herself go” a little more? Take, for example, the Court at Oxford in the civil wars. The material for a picture of the Queen’s life and her surroundings in the University is temptingly plentiful. It is a pity that here as elsewhere the biographer has too sternly passed by with averted eyes, and thereby missed what would have been very helpful in the final estimate. It is regrettable also that, throughout, the original authorities are quoted without page references. True, we are given a general list in an appendix of authorities consulted, which would have been still more useful had the particulars of each been more fully given, but in the text of the two volumes the footnotes do not number more than a dozen. Miss Taylor is well aware that the value of a statement turns practically on two factors, the person who made it, and the date at which it was made. The general reader, we are often told, is frightened by footnotes, but I doubt it. In any case the serious reader—and this is a serious book—is entitled to know upon what authority a conclusion is based, and where, if necessary, it can be tested. It is not a little hard on those who wish to examine disputed points to be obliged to identify for themselves the authorship and date of many of the quotations in the text. Take, for example, Pepys’ opinion as to the alleged marriage with Jermyn. To have inserted “2, 398, 434 (1662)” at the foot of the page, would have been easy, and would have saved one reader at least half an hour. Miss Taylor, therefore, will be well advised in a second edition to annotate carefully throughout. A few inconsistencies in spelling might, at the same time, be corrected. The text, for example, gives Cosin, the portrait Cosins; the text gives Trémoille, the two portraits Trémouille; and there are others of a like character.

Miss Taylor discusses at length the disputed question of Henrietta Maria’s alleged secret marriage to Henry Jermyn, and practically leaves it as Pepys puts it, “How true, God knows.” But there are really two questions—was the queen ever secretly married to Lord St. Albans? and was he her lover, even if never married to her? Obviously a negative to the first is not a negative to the second. Certainly; as regards the marriage, the evidence is inconclusive, scanty and suspicious; and, following Gardiner, we may unhesitatingly reject the conclusion that prior to 1649 the queen had been unfaithful to her husband. But after that date the evidence almost points cumulatively to a presumption that between herself and this life-long friend there did exist “a special relationship.” Disagreeable as the whole problem is, some answer is essential if we are to judge the Queen fairly.

On the general verdict, Miss Taylor’s book does not

* “The Life of Queen Henrietta Maria.” By J. A. Taylor. 2 vols.; 24s. net. (Hutchinson and Co.)