

over the hedge and hides, nose between paws, under the yews. English place-names mumble by in the wind. English odors drift or dart close along the ground. And always there is this running ribbon of English earth, four feet wide and thick with the green-brown sod of English verse. It is a triumph for meter, for the poet who is not ashamed to stand and sing in uniform.

MARK VAN DOREN

Martyr or Felon?

Debs: His Authorized Life and Letters. By David Karsner. Boni and Liveright.

THE conviction and imprisonment of Eugene V. Debs was the symbol of our war madness. His imprisonment may have been necessary to silence a propagandist whose accusations the Administration would not or could not answer. His continued imprisonment now must serve to silence any who proclaim that democracy is the governing motif of the present Administration. There are hundreds of persons in the prisons of this republic because they committed the "crime" for which Debs was convicted. Their names are unknown; the world is indifferent to their existence. They, too, are witnesses to the false pretense of our democracy. But Debs is the flaming witness.

Was the purpose of Debs's imprisonment to impress upon his mind the fact that he had committed a crime and that he must pay the legal penalty? But how can you punish a man with so compelling a consciousness of the right? In what way can you impress the thousands of his followers with the fact that he is a felon, not a martyr? Imprisonment has neither degraded him nor diminished his influence. Once more in the remorseless conflict between lovers of liberty and the state the lovers of liberty have proved that the state is powerless against them so long as it tries to suppress and destroy their ideals.

"Lift him up so we can all see him," shouted the workers of Woodstock as they pressed about Debs on the day of his release from Woodstock prison, November 23, 1895. And so his imprisonment a second time has served to lift him that all might see him. It has offered the occasion for this volume about him, a *cri de cœur* from one whose love for Debs is very deep and strong. With a modesty becoming the true biographer, Mr. Karsner has permitted Debs to speak for himself and to show us, through his letters and addresses, that a man may grow to maturity without permitting the cowardices and compromises of life to corrupt him. Debs stands before us crystal-clear. He has no pretensions. He may be wrong, but he knows—with the certainty of an apostle—that he is right. He convinces others by the force of his own conviction, which none can doubt, not even his own persecutors. The jurors who tried Debs probably feared him too much to set him free, but after he had made his address in court, a Department of Justice agent (so Mr. Karsner tells us) said: "You've got to hand it to the old man. He came through clean."

Debs speaks with a burning unequivocation. There is neither a "mayhap" nor a "May I not" in his words. He speaks with the candor of the man who knows—not merely acknowledges verbally—that he is serving a purpose which transcends himself. There are a few persons in each decade to whom the assurance of that idea lends a fire vouchsafed to no parliamentarian. That assurance gives Mr. Snowden a power that Mr. Clynes can never possess. "We are, by chance," says Debs, "the mere instrumentalities in the evolutionary processes in operation through which industrial slavery is to be abolished and economic freedom established." With what refreshing frankness he declares: "I do not consider that I have made any sacrifice whatever; no man has, unless he violates his conscience." "I spoke the truth," Debs simply declares in his address to the jury which found him guilty.

HARRY SALPETER

Denmark's Heroes

The Heroic Legends of Denmark. By Axel Olrik. Translated by Lee M. Hollander. The American-Scandinavian Foundation.

THIS fourth volume of the handsome monographs published by the American-Scandinavian Foundation will be very welcome to the constantly increasing numbers of students of Scandinavian literature who wish to form an acquaintance with the work of brilliant investigators like Axel Olrik. Even to those who read Danish with facility so excellent a translation will be a convenience; to students of Old English literature who read Danish with difficulty or not at all the present book will be a revelation. But the reader should be warned that this is not a collection of legends, but rather a book *about* legends—a searching critical analysis. Almost one-third of the book is devoted to direct discussion of the famous Biarkamal, of which Olrik offers a brilliant reconstruction based upon all the surviving data. Other chapters take up the legends of Hrolf's warriors and of the race of Halfdan. Particularly illuminating is the discussion of the baffling question concerning the site of the royal residence of Leire. In the ancient heroic lays all the Danish kings of the Scylding line have their residence at Leire, but how to identify this locality with certainty amid the scanty remains of ancient sepulchral mounds and barrows still existing is a problem that has received widely varying solutions. Olrik's conclusions are largely negative, but at all events they are eminently sane. After weighing all the evidence he concludes: "We have, at present, no means of deciding with certainty whether popular tradition is right or wrong in maintaining Leire village and its environs to be the site of the old castle." Hereafter we may hope to see fewer confident identifications of the sites traditionally associated with this region.

To the specialist in Northern literature there is at every turn much in this book of interest and importance. But to the far larger number of English readers the most welcome chapters will be those that discuss the obscure problems of Old English epic literature.

Beowulf naturally receives most attention, but there is also incidental treatment of Widsith, of Havelok, and even of Hamlet and Macbeth. As every student of Beowulf knows, there are numerous passages that take for granted or directly refer to the existence of Scandinavian legends and heroes more or less remotely connected with that great poem. To many readers the tangle has seemed inextricable. One can hardly say that this book authoritatively solves every disputed question in this field, but it would be difficult to point to any recent contribution dealing with these problems that is more suggestive and helpful.

The book is full of illuminating comments that cannot be dwelt upon here, but we may venture to cite one or two that are peculiarly typical. One of the most famous passages in Beowulf is the scene in which Queen Wealhtheow, decked with her golden diadem, deals out wine to the warriors and incidentally refers to Hrothgar and his nephew Hrothulf. Olrik remarks: "There can be no doubt then as to the real purpose of the episode: it is intended to form the introduction to a lay about their feud and is borrowed by the poet of Beowulf only as a kind of accessory to his picture." A little later we are told concerning the quarrelsome Unferth that his "name represents no historical character but, on the contrary, embodies an idea. He is personified 'unpeace,' that is, a 'breaker of peace,' an inciter to quarrel. . . . Heroic names of such abstract meaning are never met with in Scandinavian sources though they are familiar enough in Anglo-Saxon lays. Hence his name likewise argues purely Anglo-Saxon origin."

Very suggestive is the further conclusion: "To sum up: we have in the Anglo-Saxon Scylding traditions a theme of heroic poetry derived, in the main, from actual events and reflecting them on the whole in a trustworthy fashion, but limited to a

small number of plots: each of them sufficient to be the contents of a single lay."

Perhaps the most interesting chapter in the book is that in which the author traces the genesis and development of the famous legend of Scyld, arriving at a very different conception from that romantically pictured by Kemble and Müllenhoff. Olrik finds "the best proof of the falsity of the current Romantic conception of Scyld . . . in the fact that one can draw his picture or, rather, read off his life, from the sources in such fashion that it will at every point agree with the general conceptions and ideals of our heroic poetry. To assume any symbolism behind this legend is altogether superfluous."

It is too much to expect that this and a score of other conclusions will win universal assent, but they are in every case based upon a thorough sifting of all the available material and illustrate the penetrating commonsense that the author uniformly displays.

W. E. MEAD.

A Survey of Rural Churches

6,000 Country Churches. By Charles Otis Gill and Gifford Pinchot. The Macmillan Company.

THIS is a book which must be reckoned with. In it the laboratory method is applied to the church problem. Its forerunner, "The Country Church: The Decline of Its Influence and the Remedy," published by the same collaborators in 1913, summarized the results of a survey of church conditions in Windsor County, Vermont, and Tompkins County, New York. So startling were the conclusions reached that there was formed a Commission on Church and Country Life of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America. This commission decided to extend investigation to an entire State. Ohio was selected, because it was central and representative, had had churches for a century, contained many strong churches and thousands of rural churches maintained by strong denominations, and because several of its counties already had gathered the necessary data. The plan of procedure was formulated jointly. Mr. Gill, with the coöperation of thousands of helpers, performed or supervised the field work and tabulated the results. Mr. Pinchot composed or finally revised the manuscript in the same lucid, compact, cogent style which lends charm to his earlier books, for example, "The Training of a Forester."

Ohio contains 41,060 square miles, 1,388 townships, and over 6,000 rural churches. The townships average 1,448 inhabitants, and five churches, or one church to every 280 persons. General experience proves that churches having less than 100 members do not prosper. In Ohio more than 4,500, or 66 per cent of the rural churches, have less than 100 members each; 3,600, or 55 per cent, have 75 or less members; while 2,400, or 37 per cent, have 50 or less. Church attendance falls far below membership, averaging about fifty per cent of the members. One obvious defect in the present competitive denominationalism in Ohio is that 27 per cent of the rural towns, and more than 4,400, or about two-thirds of the rural churches, have no resident pastors. Over 5,500 country churches receive only part-time service from their ministers. Large circuits prevent pastoral visitation. Moreover, short pastorates are the rule, and ministers are unable to become intimately acquainted with their parishioners and communities. In the fall of 1917, 48 per cent of Ohio's rural clergymen were entering upon their first year of service in their respective parishes, and 74 per cent their first or second year. Many of the ministers eke out their meagre salaries with non-ministerial work. An appallingly large number of the ministers may be classed as uneducated. Not a few are actually illiterate. That two millions of rural people in Ohio are without public libraries shows the failure of the country pulpit to stimulate the intellectual life. In certain sections the church and the community seem to have broken down. The ambitious

young people are forsaking the country districts, which offer nothing but material and intellectual and social poverty, and are flocking to the cities, thus leaving the mentally inferior to carry on rural community life.

Church efficiency is lowest, in Ohio, in the southern and southeastern parts of the State. In these sections the American stock predominates, the foreign-born population being very small as compared with those counties which contain such cities as Cleveland and Youngstown. Yet in this section the failure is pathetic. After a hundred years of church work there is revealed by the recent survey a noticeable decline in the social, economic, political, moral, and religious welfare of the people. The death-rate from preventable sickness is abnormally high, illegitimate births are excessive, illiteracy exists, venereal diseases abound, mental and moral delinquents are numerous, political life is notoriously corrupt, the per capita of crime runs high, schools are badly managed, and the attendance is very poor.

Yet these same counties are overchurched, having more religious societies and meeting-houses in proportion to population than the other counties of the State. Unhappily, also, a low and unworthy type of religious life is sanctioned by the various denominations, intense emotionalism being the goal aimed at in the scores and hundreds of religious revivals conducted. Not only the Holy Rollers—the only sect that has increased in these eighteen counties during the last fifteen years—but other denominations countenance the promiscuous rolling on the floor by men, women, and children in a primitive delirium of religious ecstasy.

Such conditions as these are a challenge to the church. There is an evident and crying need for a better program, a higher and clearer conception of the function of religion, a better ministry, more generous support, closer and more intelligent relations between pastors and parishes, a re-arrangement of circuits, fewer absentee or non-resident ministers, inter-church federation, community churches, and non-sectarian maintenance. The chief remedies for the application of which the book pleads are federated churches and community churches. In the brief but valuable appendix is presented a resumé of the action of the Committee on Interchurch Coöperation of the Ohio Rural Life Association, embodying the measures which were agreed upon as being demanded by the exigencies of the situation. This is a comprehensive, open-minded, and promising policy.

The true condition of rural Ohio, as revealed by this religious survey, had not been suspected by the various denominational leaders. Each official was occupied with the details of administration of his own sect. But there proved to be an increasing number of people outside of all the sects. Only a comprehensive, standardized, scientific investigation, like that instituted by Messrs. Gill and Pinchot and their army of helpers, could bring to light the actual and alarming facts. Now that the facts are known, and the causes defined, adequate measures can be adopted in Ohio. But, as Mr. Pinchot reminds us: "The task of ascertaining with accuracy the conditions of the country church in other portions of the United States still remains. The remedies are yet to be applied."

Happily, these volumes of Gill and Pinchot necessarily must lead to a re-alignment of the religious forces for a more efficient work throughout the United States. Already surveys are being made in other States. And it is significant and prophetic that the problem of the country church is receiving special attention in some of the theological seminaries. For example, Drew announces a new department, the Department of the Rural Church. Certainly everybody who is at all concerned for the cause of morals and religion, every student of sociology, and every believer in the laboratory method, must feel under deep obligation to the painstaking authors of "6,000 Country Churches" for the statesmanlike survey which they have given to us.

CHARLES E. BEALS