

istic of the decadence and the pathology of art." If this sort of writing and thinking about art spreads, what will happen to the old-fashioned art critic with Roget's "Thesaurus" under the arm? Will he go the way of the old-fashioned preacher?

BENJAMIN GINZBURG

## Notes on History

OF the three extremely interesting studies gathered together by Vladimir G. Simkhovitch under the title "Toward the Understanding of Jesus" (Macmillan) the first, which gives the title to the book, is the least valuable. He brings vividly before us the situation in ancient Palestine, when the orthodox Jewish element was confronted with two enemies, Hellenistic culture and Roman power. The whole content of the nation's thought was polarized by the ensuing struggle, and it is only in this environment of rebellion and tense Messianic expectation that, as Mr. Simkhovitch argues, the message of Jesus can be understood. Jesus's solution of the problem, which the author considers a highly intellectual one, was to transcend it; to advance the claims of another kingdom than that of Rome and to put in place of a culture a religious morality. Much that the author says is true, but the scholar must note that he knows very little of New Testament criticism, that he grossly misprints Greek words, and that he offers such specimens of Latin as "scitarii" for "sicarii," and as "post facto." Far more impressive is his second essay on the fall of Rome, a phenomenon due, as he has convinced many scholars, more to the exhaustion of the soil than to any other one cause. He shows that nearly all the agricultural writers of antiquity believed that the soil was exhausted or, as they put it, had grown barren with age. Italy, at one time teeming with armies in the face of constant wars, became unable to support a diminished population during an age of peace. The latifundia, or great estates, so much blamed by contemporary moralists and statesmen, were the result, not the cause, of the abandonment of the soil. Rome was forced to import grain first from Sicily and then from Egypt. The swamps bred hordes of mosquitoes which caused, as the Romans very well knew, the malaria noted by some modern writers as the cause of Rome's decadence. In his final essay, Hay and History, he explains the life of the medieval village community as due to the cultivation of a poor soil by inadequate methods. In fact, the whole of history is largely explained in terms of the abandoned farm, the search for new soil to replace the skimmed glebe of virgin fields. The fall of Babylon and of the ancient and rich civilizations of Asia Minor and Africa, the social upheavals connected with inclosures in sixteenth-century Europe, and many other revolutions have been due to this one constant phenomenon. It is certainly a suggestive, an important, and a convincing argument that is here presented to the consideration of historians and economists.

The content of Maurice William's "Social Interpretation of History" (Sotery Publishing Company) is revealed by the subtitle, "A Refutation of the Marxian Economic Interpretation of History." But even the subtitle does not indicate exactly the purport of the book, which should be called "The Manner in which Socialism will Conquer." For Mr. William accepts practically all the principles of the Gospel according to Marx, including the theory of value finally abandoned by Marx himself, and the fundamental basis of the materialistic interpretation of history. The author takes exception only to one part of the latter, its corollary of class-war and of violent expropriation of the capitalists by the state. In this narrow line of argument the criticism is well taken and convincing. The author shows that Marx was illogical in arguing that whereas all epochs previous to his own had meant advance, the regime of the bourgeoisie meant retrogression. He shows that if Marx was right in concluding that the bourgeoisie tended to appropriate an ever greater share of wealth, leaving less and less to the prole-

tariat, the former class would get stronger and the latter would finally become so weak as to be unable to wrest power from it. Secondly, he objects that Marx's theory that progress in a socialistic direction is impossible under the bourgeoisie has not been borne out by history. He thinks that many reforms of value to the proletariat have been accomplished by the bourgeoisie in their own interest, as, for example, the care for the health of the poor, better popular education, and a high taxation of the rich for the benefit of the poor. He points to ante-bellum Germany as the ideally socialized state, and attributes all her economic progress and supremacy to her good labor laws. Having established to his satisfaction the theses that Marxian principles are not scientific but Utopian, that they are not social but anti-social, and that they are inferior as a practical guide to the doctrines of St. Simon, the author draws a terrible picture of the chaos caused by the application of them in Russia. He predicts that Germany will pay her indemnity in full and in the course of doing so become efficient and Socialist, that England will follow her, and that in other countries, without a class-war, there will be a gradual approximation to the Socialist ideal. Incidentally he brings in much apt illustration from recent American history, and much keen criticism of Hillquit. With the pure Marxians of the *Liberator*, on the other hand, he has nothing to do.

A lively controversy, a war of books and ponderous erudition, has been waged for some twenty years in Germany over the question whether Luther was a medieval or a modern man. Somewhat analogous is the question whether he was a radical or a reactionary, which Dr. George M. Stephenson now undertakes to answer in "The Conservative Character of Martin Luther" (United Lutheran Publication House). His position is that the Reformer was "sometimes destructively radical yet always constructively conservative," but that his "real attitude" was conservative rather than liberal. Dr. Stephenson's sympathies are evidently with the conservatives; in what amounts to a short biography up to the year 1530 he apologizes for Luther's break with the church, his opposition to the Anabaptists, his harsh words to the peasants, and his intransigent hostility to Zwingli, by trying to show that his acts were all consistently and conservatively motivated. In his last chapter, on the Augsburg Confession, he is mistaken in saying that Luther was responsible for and approved of the form read before the Diet. This form is not now extant (unless a manuscript very recently discovered by Professor Ficker turns out to be a copy of it), and Luther did not even know what it contained, Melancthon making it irenic and Catholic to a point quite irreconcilable with Luther's views.

Starting from Creighton's maxim that "English history is at bottom a provincial history," R. R. Reid has made an important contribution to the understanding of local government in his study of "The King's Council in the North" (Longmans, Green). He shows that the Wars of the Roses left the administration of the North practically unchanged, and that the need for strong government was great because of the venality of the local judges and the intimidation of juries by men in power. In that age men worshiped "Meed the maid" to such an extent that it was almost impossible to get a verdict against any man "well kinned and allied." The inadequacy of the common law placed the poor at the mercy of the rich just as the social changes of the age made it imperative that they should be adequately protected. The evils were partly remedied by an act of 1487 giving the King's Council extraordinary criminal jurisdiction. But the Council made itself odious to those in power, and it was suppressed in 1509. Partly restored after the fall of Wolsey in 1530, it was reconstituted in full vigor in 1537 as a result of the Pilgrimage of Grace. That rising, which Mr. Reid considers more agrarian than religious, fully brought home to Henry the necessity of strong government, and he showed high statesmanship in choosing for the membership of the Council those very "personages of honor, worship, and learning" who had been most conspicuous among the ranks of

the disaffected. But though he managed to control the revolution he had started, his successor was too weak to do so, and anarchy ensued in the North as elsewhere. From this time forth the functions of the Council began to decay, and although it maintained a moderate vigor at York during the reign of Elizabeth, it declined thereafter to its fall under the Stuarts and the Commonwealth.

PRESERVED SMITH

## Items of Science

ON the title-page of "The Glands Regulating Personality" (Macmillan) the author, Louis Berman, has a thirteen-word quotation from Francis Bacon: "The passage from the miracles of nature to those of art is easy." This may well be taken as the text in any estimate of this volume, wherein the passage from nature to art is altogether too easy and plausible. The book is divided into very unequal parts. The first seven chapters, dealing with the history, physiology, and activities of the glands of internal secretion, are excellent. We have thoroughly correct accounts of the thyroid, pituitary, adrenals, and thymus, together with a discussion of the mechanics and rhythms of sex. But from here on we observe an infiltration of art and imagination, subtle internal dictional secretions of theory, glandular classifications of historic personages, exact physiological accountings for most delicately complex mental and spiritual characteristics, and we hesitate and finally refuse to follow the author to his final conclusions, his theoretic convictions, his rushings in where the most profound believers in the tremendous effects of these glands as yet fear to speak with certainty. The serious study of this immensely important phase of scientific investigation is not furthered by such statements as that "the rise and fall of Napoleon followed the rise and fall of his pituitary gland" or that "Caesar was . . . only a rather muddled careerist because he had too much adrenal and post-pituitary." It would be difficult to believe that the excellent knowledge of physiology possessed by Mr. Berman could be wholly explained by the greater or lesser activity of one of his internal secreting glands.

In "Within the Atom" (Van Nostrand) with fourteen chapters and with the aid of diagrams John Mills has attempted to interpret our present knowledge of atoms and electrons to the non-scientific reader. He has done his best, and is armed with an adequate background of knowledge, but he has been too conscientious in the scope of his subject. He has successfully translated the technical terms, the arithmetical formulae, into intelligible language, but the pages fairly bristle with an unending, unrelieved succession of facts. The result, after a chapter, is mental indigestion and the average reader will shrink at the prospect of two hundred pages more. There is and should be such a thing as double translation; and just as double staining will clarify tissues on a microscope slide, so this resimplification is equally important. The first elimination is of the obscurely technical, the second of the obscurely verbose, complex-worded, lay English. I quote a single paragraph: "When we observe the gravitational tractation of body and earth we speak of a force of gravitation as acting on the body. Bodies upon which the earth under similar conditions exerts equal forces we call equal in weight. Unfortunately weight is but a particular kind of force and force itself is an entirely subjective concept without any objective reality. Whatever may be the character of the alteration in the relative motions of the bodies of a system, the alteration is but the manifestation of a change in the disposition and availability of that uncomprehended motive power of our universe which we call energy." Careful second translation or rewriting would make of this a fascinating phenomenon, a thing to consider and to use at a crisis in conversation, where it would be as effective as an apt story or a perfect impersonation. There is a wonderful, romantic, striking idea hidden within it. But in Mr. Mills's language, while the letter of the physicist's technology

has been avoided, yet the spirit of obscurity still dims it for the layman.

"The Mechanism of Life" (Longmans, Green) by James Johnstone is rather unexpectedly by a professor of oceanography, who explains his title in his preface; but its misleading character will give many prospective readers a totally wrong impression of the contents. He does not mean to indicate that he thinks life is mechanical, but only that his subject is a scientific analysis of the activities of living animals. He adds that his scientific investigation is the observation of space-time coincidences in a four-dimensional manifold. This does not represent the general diction, however, and the eleven chapters are well and clearly written. They are chiefly a résumé of the fields of the sensori-motor system, the principles and sources of energy, brain and nerve, the analysis of behavior, etc. Especially valuable is a close correlation of the physical make-up of an organ or tissue with a brief discussion of its function from the philosophical and often psychical point of view. If psychologists knew more of dissection and anatomy, and anatomists more of abstract psychology, we should have better balanced books. Henri Bergson's stimulating chapters would gain if we knew something of the muscles and nerves which react to our sense of humor, and Fabre, had he not so despised book learning, would have presented his marvelous observations with tenfold more force. Johnstone's book is valuable both as an object lesson and for its intrinsic thought.

"Earth Evolution and Its Facial Expression" (Macmillan) by William Herbert Hobbs is a history of the most important thing in the world, the earth beneath our feet. A history with no mention either of man or god or devil is a refreshing change, and we open this volume with enthusiasm. It is by a picture book, however, that our interest is attracted and held, for the text, while accurate as to fact if not theory, and full of solid information, is too much of the professor, professorial, rather than of the earth, earthy. It is enlivened by neither contrasts, similes, nor volcanic outbursts of literary effort. It flows along rather too much like the lava of which much of it treats. Unless intended solely as a textbook, of which there is no evidence, it fails of direct appeal to the layman, save only for its abundant, novel, and excellent illustrations. The author has the courage of his convictions and thrusts aside not only the theory of a molten interior of the earth but also that of a subterranean zone or universal reservoir of lava flow. Mr. Hobbs believes that all volcanic phenomena and all surface lava may be explained by "fusion of shaly sediments beneath rising anticlines and beneath upthrown blocks of the fault mosaic." His final conclusion, drawn from all his studies, is that "it has been customary greatly to overestimate the span of geological time," and that this is "a fraction only of that which it is now supposed to be." This is wholly at variance with the views of many geologists and of almost all zoologists.

The "Life of Elie Metchnikoff" (Houghton Mifflin) by Olga Metchnikoff has strength, candor, and balance, and is presented with simplicity, directness, and a charm of diction which is sustained to the end. We visualize the nervous, high-strung boy who, when cautioned not to disturb the people in the room below, seized a whistle and with face to a crack in the floor deliberately blew blast after blast. Then, in full manhood, we find him a worthy pupil of Pasteur, giving twenty years of his life to the development of one of the most important theories and practices of immunity. As Sir Ray Lancaster says: "The recognition of the validity of the doctrine of phagocytosis in relation to wounds, disease, immunity, and normal, healthy life is the triumphant result of the scientific insight and boundless energy of Elie Metchnikoff." Mme. Metchnikoff, as a result of her own researches when a pupil of her husband's, and later, as co-worker with him, is able here clearly to set forth in popular language the more important achievements of this great Russian scientist. Moreover she has given us invaluable sidelights on men such as Pasteur, Kovalevsky, and others. The volume is a graceful, worthy tribute.

WILLIAM BEEBE