

The Middle Ages

The Middle Ages. By Frantz Funck-Brentano. G. P. Putnam's Sons. \$3.50.

THIS is the volume on medieval France in the notable series known as *The National History of France*. The author, M. Funck-Brentano, who is also the editor of the series, is one of the most distinguished of living French critics and historians. From him we may expect an authoritative treatment of that picturesque and romance-laden age in which the culture of France was much the most attractive and significant.

As one might expect from the characteristic traits of French historians in general, and from the interests and earlier achievements of M. Funck-Brentano in particular, a large portion of the book, nearly one-half in total aggregate, is devoted to cultural, social, and economic history. The early epics, the culture of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the universities, the cathedrals, the minstrels, the work of architects, copyists, and painters, the manors, towns, and guilds are treated with remarkable charm, insight, and discrimination, and on the basis of the most evident acquaintance with the sources and mastery of the latest researches. Of these chapters, that on the medieval ecclesiastical architecture is, perhaps, the most adequate and illuminating.

The political history begins with the story of the evolution of the feudal monarchy out of the anarchy which followed the disintegration of the Roman power in Gaul. Unfortunately the author does not exploit the works of Fustel, Jullian, and Flach to indicate the continuity of Gallo-Romanic institutions in medieval France. The chapter on the evolution of feudal institutions and the feudal monarchy is notable for the emphasis placed on the family background of feudalism. In no other place has the reviewer noted so clear an exposition of this important point of view. In treating the details of political history, M. Funck-Brentano wisely organizes the majority of his material around the reigns and work of the great monarchs—the consolidation under Louis the Fat; Philip Augustus, Saint Louis, and the perfection of the feudal monarchy; Philip the Fair and the struggle against the Papacy; and the administrative reforms of Charles VII and Louis XI. In dealing with the Hundred Years' War the author has once more to consider the case of Jeanne d'Arc. She is justly portrayed as a patriotically inclined paranoiac who, after having rendered the indispensable service of uniting French sentiment behind Charles VII, became a nuisance by refusing to cease her military exploits, and who paid with her life for her irresponsibility and lack of self-control. While there are many entertaining anecdotes introduced in the narrative, the main purpose and net result of these chapters is to make clear the genesis and mutations of French political institutions during the medieval period.

The book is clearly and vividly written. It does not possess the severe analytical tone of some of the German and English works, nor is it distinguished for a continuous and smoothly flowing narrative. Rather it is written in the characteristic and delightful style of the French historians, well planned and organized chapters, profusely illuminated with countless illustrative episodes and anecdotes, usually drawn from contemporary chroniclers. What is lost in continuity of thought and logical marshaling of facts is gained in pictorial intensity and compelling interest.

While the author is appreciative of the beauty and romance of medieval French culture and portrays most effectively its major outlines, he does not hesitate to reveal beneath its chivalric, mystic, and romantic externals a basic sub-structure of shocking brutality, revolting cruelty, and repelling coarseness. While he is justly proud of *la Belle France* of the Middle Ages, there is in his narrative little of the nationalistic obsession of Raynouard. A national history of France from the pen of contemporary scholars like Funck-Brentano and Louis Madelin

means something quite different from what it did a generation or two ago when produced by Jules Michelet and Henri Martin. For the first time we have available in English an up-to-date, reliable, and readable history of medieval France. Those who have been compelled hitherto to rely upon such books as Kitchin's *History of France* will best appreciate what this means.

HARRY ELMER BARNES

Culture and Civilization

Kultur un' Civilizacia. By William Nathanson. Chicago: New Society.

THIS book is more significant for its implications than for its achievements. One of the earliest original works in Yiddish in the realm of aesthetics and metaphysics, it is to be welcomed as an expansion of the literature beyond belles lettres: "Culture and Civilization" is the first of a proposed "neo-socialism" series. It is, in the main, a revised version of a number of articles which the author published in the Yiddish press, unified by a definite thesis and supplemented by popularizations of Spinoza, Kant, and of contemporary philosophers. Mr. Nathanson's title might well have been "Culture versus Civilization," for he bases his critique of society and present-day institutions on the distinction between culture, the spiritual expression of mankind, and civilization, its physical and intellectual development. On this ground he points out the inadequacy of Marxian socialism as well as of the capitalistic organism. To those who are aware of the principles of the Russian Social-Revolutionary party the author's position will be familiar. Mr. Nathanson was a colleague of Dr. Jitlowsky, the intellectual leader of that party, and carries on his theories, tempered, to be sure, by the philosophy of Bergson, whose influence is evident throughout the volume.

J. J. SMERTENKO

A Pleasant Essayist

Occasions. By Holbrook Jackson. Charles Scribner's Sons. \$2.

HOLBROOK JACKSON set himself a harder task in the production of a collection of miscellaneous essays than in the writing of his well-known book on "The Eighteen Nineties." In the latter case he was dealing with a singularly colorful period in English literature and art and with names that blazed like oriflammes—Beardsley, Wilde, Dowson, Symons, Crackanthorpe. The subject matter in itself was almost sufficient to insure the success of the book.

But to produce a distinctive book of essays on stock subjects—that is another matter. Most essays suggest antimacassars and polite conversation by ultra-respectable people sitting stiffly erect on horse-hair sofas and munching muffins. Or they throw up a picture of an old gentleman with his feet in carpet slippers, and a glass of hot toddy at his elbow, thinking aloud. A rich and virile talent is hardly likely to turn to essays on such standard topics as reading, gardens, fishing, or the town versus the country.

Mr. Jackson has divided his essays into four groups headed Landmarks, Prejudices, Adventures, and Books. In the first group we find our old friend Town; in the third such good old standbys as Woodfires and Talking About the Weather; the third division consists of the stock subjects Bookmen, The Uses of Books, Of Cheerful Books, and On Reading Aloud. It is difficult to say anything new on such matters. However, Mr. Jackson writes gracefully and lightly, shows a nice feeling for words, and frequently, as in his sketch of Marseilles, evokes atmosphere with considerable subtlety.

The publishers carefully printed the book on beautiful paper, chose the clearest of types, used a binding in excellent taste—and then clapped on a jacket containing a blurb which refers to the author's previous success, "The Eighteen Hundreds"!

REX HUNTER

Books in Brief

The Bonadventure. By Edmund Blunden. G. P. Putnam's Sons. \$2.

Edmund Blunden went down to the sea in a coal tramp. He details the phenomena of a strange milieu with a gusto that is partly childlike joy and partly conscious quaintness. Throughout, the effect produced upon honest sailors by the young literary person in their midst bulks larger than his own reactions to them, to the ship, and to the ocean. They discuss art, literature, religion, the universe with him. They bring him poems of their own. He is asked to pass judgment upon drawings. Thus we are not allowed to forget that this journey from Cardiff to South America and return was undertaken by the poet and reviewer to recover his health which had been lost in the trenches. It is herein that the charm of the book lies, and it would be churlish not to yield to it. The reward is ample: a full share of Mr. Blunden's boyish delight in his adventure and a glimpse into the minds and the habits and the haunts of sailors on sea and ashore.

Free Thought and Official Propaganda. By Bertrand Russell. B. W. Huebsch, Inc. 75 cents.

This is a brilliant lecture by one of the few outstanding men in the world who have something of the mental outlook of the inhabitants of H. G. Wells's latest Utopia. With rapid vigor Mr. Russell traces, from his own life, the practical penalties England inflicts upon the religious freethinker. He suggests a "wish to find out" instead of William James's harmful "will to believe." He pays his respects to the late New York statute which would have debarred Washington or Christ from teaching in this advanced commonwealth. Education is briefly exposed as one of the chief obstacles to intelligence and the freedom of thought; propaganda—statements designed to make people believe such absurd propositions "as that Blank's Pills cure all ills, that Spitzbergen is warm, and that Germans eat corpses"—earns a merited castigation; and economic pressure is isolated as the chief preventive of freethought. It is the scientific temper that the author desires. From its use he foresees a serene skepticism which will render humanity immune from those "appeals to idealism by which decent people are induced to further the schemes of scoundrels." The study is brilliant, temperate, and sound.

Mystics and Heretics in Italy. By Emile Gebhart. Translated by Edward Maslin Hulme. Alfred A. Knopf. \$4.

The author of "Mystic Italy," a title twisted into "Mystics and Heretics in Italy," looks like a president of a Rotary Club, and writes like an inspired bookworm. He pictures Italy thrilled by the false dawns of that harsh day that came in with the Reformation. The quiet saint, Joachim of Flora, with his devastating "Third Testament," revealed after his death; the gentle son of Assisi, who preached to the grasshopper and the little birds; Gerard de Borgo-San-Donnino, whose "Eternal Gospel," blent of Joachim's words, was an earthquake throughout Christendom; Pietro the peasant, who hung up his cloak on a sunbeam in the presence of Gregory X; the rhapsodic poet Fra Jacopone of Todi, who walked, half naked, on all fours, saddled and bridled like an ass, and flung all his venom against the established church; Dante, shrewd dispraiser of institutionalized religion—these are the chief figures that wind through his thronged pages. There were as many wild voices then as today; but there was a silence beside them, where we have voices not so wild. The book is an authoritative and valuable summary of an hysteric age.

Behaviorism and Psychology. By A. A. Roback. University Bookstore, Harvard.

This is an impetuous scattering assault upon all forms of behaviorism—that modern interpretation of psychology which, in its purest form, holds that science is concerned not at all with

mind, but that things called mental are properly reducible to a study of movements of limb and muscle and gland. It lacks clearness, taken alone; its points are only understood by the person familiar with the divergent nomenclatures and attitudes of the motley crew of behaviorists. Point after point is touched upon and dismissed in brief unpersuasiveness. The book lacks interest, except to those already upon the wordy battlefield to which it belongs. The chart at the end of the volume is more illuminating than many pages of text.

Galimathias. By Matthew Josephson. Broom.

These weird verses will be hailed as one of the masterpieces of today, as were "The Waste Land" and "Ulysses"; they are as grotesquely scrambled as either of them. There is a fascination about a poem concerning "The Goatherd with the Goiter"; and who can remain unmoved by lines as stimulating as:

You are a sweet girl

And I shall throw you into the river.

my mother said to me my what flat feet you have Alfred

my brother said to me my what flat feet you have Alfred

o the sad bad glad mad never seven o

o the ever why when where whither bother o

O wheels that do not turn. O wheels in the brain cease to turn.

This gesture of my hands was to crush yesterday the bald head of the man which is the prow of a ship with warts upon it.

It is original, ultra modern, and full of a cerise *Weltgeist*. It is magnificent—from the standpoint of the new non-intelligence; to sane people it is unimpressive raving.

Our American Humorists. By Thomas L. Masson. Moffat, Yard and Company. \$2.50.

Commercialized American humor is as deadening a thing as Billy Sunday or appeals to the flag. One of its gentle ringmasters crudely pastes together his minor recollections of our well-paid funny men in this unimportant study.

Music

The Elder Singers

THE four most stunning song recitals (I use that tarnished term of musical commerce in its wide, inclusive sense, and I put aside those specimens offered by Feodor Chaliapin as *sui generis* and *hors concours*) that I heard amongst the innumerable entertainments so styled in the course of the music season of 1921-22 (for the four-part illustration circumstances compel me to hark back a year) were given, in the order of the giving, by Emma Calvé, Edmond Clément, Emilio de Gogorza, and Ernestine Schumann-Heink. Now, none of these singers was a recent "discovery" of manager or public. Mme Calvé had begun her career as a professional singer (according to the book) in 1882; the year of Mr. Clément's debut was 1889(?), of Mr. de Gogorza's 1897; Mme Schumann-Heink's emergence (as the contralto member of the solo quartet in the Ninth Symphony) dates back to 1876! I will not go into the delicate subject of the veritable ages in years, months, and days of these four singers, though the books give them specific birth-days and gossip gives them others. The truth may rest untroubled between them and their maker. But the length of a singer's career, like the reign of king or pope, is common property. Suffice it that at the time I am speaking of, Mme Calvé had thirty-nine years of public singing behind her, Mr. Clément thirty-two, Mr. de Gogorza twenty-five, and Mme Schumann-Heink forty-six!

These four veteran singers (for even Mr. de Gogorza, though a mere babe in comparison with the others, may be permitted on the strength of five and twenty years of service to qualify