

Books of Special Interest

Catholic Life

THE SPIRIT OF CATHOLICISM. By KARL ADAM. Translated by JUSTIN MCCANN. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1929. \$2.

Reviewed by THEODORE MAYNARD

MANY books have been written in an attempt to explain the essentials of Catholicism to an unbelieving world, but most of them fall definitely into the category of apologetics: their purpose is to defend the Faith. Dr. Adam, the Professor of Catholic Theology in the University of Tübingen, has a somewhat different object: he writes in order to discover the governing ideas, the distinguishing characteristics of Catholicism, and the forces that are consequently set in motion by them. His book is made up of a series of lectures delivered to an audience of mixed religious beliefs in his university; and the fifth (enlarged and revised) edition follows the original scheme. He writes in a wholly admirable spirit, and carefully avoids all temptation to the mere scoring of points, than which nothing is more easy to a Catholic controversialist—or less effective. His erudition is apparent on every page; his mind is profound, candid, and subtle; and an air of charming tenderness is everywhere. If he does not make any very novel contribution to religious thought, such was not a part of his plan. His method of approach is decidedly new and stimulating. Nobody is so well read in this field that he can fail to learn much from this happy and luminous presentation of Catholic concepts.

As a matter of fact the vast majority of people are badly informed on the subject of the Catholic religion, which, is perhaps, not to be wondered at seeing that the average Catholic is insufficiently instructed. And even learned men outside the Church commonly make, with a comically misplaced confidence, most egregious mistakes when they write or talk on this topic. Dr. Adam quotes Harnack as remarking of the students leaving German Protestant divinity schools:

Some of them know something about Gnosticism, or about other curious and for them worthless details. But of the Catholic Church, the greatest religious and political creation known to history, they know absolutely nothing, and they indulge in its regard in wholly trivial, vague, and often directly nonsensical notions.

Educated people can usually be counted upon to be sceptical about the grosser sort of calumnies against the Church that continue to flourish in the more backward parts of this country; and Catholics would do well to ignore these absurdities instead of using up so much of their energy in refutation. What are needed instead of expert ecclesiastical lawyers and detectives are a few first-rate theologians who would devote themselves to a popular exposition of the Catholic system in its unity. The modern world is, I believe, ready to listen very eagerly to them. I also believe that an exposition of the Faith devoid of the strident note of argument would possess a compelling force that hardly anyone suspects. Dr. Adam has done just the sort of work that is wanted. Every intelligent man should read him.

Yet it may be that the book would be more useful in Germany than in England or America. There is very little, if any, Teutonic flatfootedness in it: on the contrary, with all its soundness it succeeds in being brilliant; but Dr. Adam, when dealing with Protestantism, very naturally has the German brand in his mind, and most of the contemporary authors he cites are his fellow-countrymen. The one most frequently quoted is Friedrich Heiler, the Professor of the Comparative History of Religion in the University of Marburg, but a writer practically unknown in the English-speaking world. In this connection, however, it should be said that it is interesting to learn that there is a "high church" trend in present-day Germany, and that a Lutheran theologian has said that "Protestant worship is at bottom Catholic worship . . . with the heart taken out of it."

Addressing himself to an audience largely composed of Lutherans, Dr. Adam found it necessary to contrast the total-depravity theory of original sin with the Catholic doctrine. He has also dealt with the official Protestant teaching of justification by faith alone. How far this prevails today in Germany I am unable to say, though, judging by the space Dr. Adam gives to the question, it must still be generally held. But in England and America the vast majority have thrown the chief plank of historic Protestantism overboard. The proper thing

to say now is that what a man believes is of no consequence; all that matters is what a man does. I am not concerned to examine the truth of the proposition here; but it is entertaining to note the right-about turn; and to point out that the Catholic position remains what it always was.

Dr. Adam has been deeply influenced by Newman's "Development of Christian Doctrine." He urges that the Faith, being a living thing,

cannot be comprised within a few written sentences. Only that which is dead can be adequately delineated in writing. The living thing is continually bursting the temporary form in which literature must perforce embody it. At the very moment that literature is endeavoring to arrest and fix it, the stream of life is escaping and moving swiftly on. Therefore all literature, and even the Bible itself, is stamped with the character of its time, and bears a form which, however vital its content remains, yet too easily seems stiff and strange to later generations.

This is, of course, the stumbling-block to Modernist and Fundamentalist alike. Both are too narrowly bound by documents; both fail to understand the continuous life of the Church. "Ye search the scriptures," said our Lord, "because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me; and ye will not come to me that ye may have life." It is that Catholic life which is the theme of Dr. Adam's engaging eloquence, a life which has its motive in love, a love which the sacraments create or foment, a love which all the intricate machinery of authority was erected only to conserve.

The translation by Dom McCann of the Benedictine studyhouse at Oxford has been excellently performed; and the index is a model of what an index should be.

Custom and the Greeks

THE WAY OF THE GREEKS. By F. R. EARP. New York: Oxford University Press. 1929. \$3.

Reviewed by ELMER DAVIS

AN author who observes at the end of his book that too much weight must not be attached to his arguments deserves the confidence of the judicious. Mr. Earp contends that "the way of the Greeks" was normally the way of tradition; law, *nomos*, was primarily custom, the *mos maiorum* of the Romans, the way things had always been done. Conceding that the Greeks were less enslaved by tradition than any other race so recently emerged from a primitive state, he maintains that the influence of traditional custom in the life of the ordinary Greek is habitually underestimated, especially by those who get their ideas from the poets and philosophers who were very far from the average man. A better guide, he thinks, may be found in the orators, who when they addressed juries, had to appeal to the ideas and prejudices of the majority.

With the limitation he suggests his argument seems sound, and should, as he hopes, counteract the tendency to regard the Greeks as if they were moderns. The Periclean age was only a few centuries removed from barbarism, and Greek thought had not been colored, as is ours, by nineteen centuries of the Christian experiment. Mr. Earp's analysis of Greek morals, theology, and esthetics could be summarized in a sentence—the Greeks were objective. If a thing seemed beautiful they took pleasure in its beauty, not in reminiscences which it suggested, and they depicted it as and for itself. They observed that human life is affected by influences too powerful and too obscure for human control, which do not operate in conformity with human ideas of justice; hence their conception of gods who, to the modern notion, lack respectability. "The belief in the moral perfection of God," says Mr. Earp, "does not rest upon experience, for observation of the world could never lead to it." It depends on revelation, and the benighted Greeks had nothing to go on but the evidence of this world as they found it, and as most other people have found it too.

So their jurisprudence was slow, for instance, to distinguish between the degrees of homicide. If you kill a man he is dead, whether you meant to kill him or not, and your intention makes no difference in the consequences to his wife and children. This indeed is not quite the same as the primitive idea of a pollution attached to homicide, but it works out to pretty much the same effect. In this and other points Mr. Earp might have found an instructive parallel in the more archaic portions of the Old Testament.

In detail, his corrections of the common

view do not always command confidence. He wastes some space on an argument (started, to be sure, by no less a person than Gilbert Murray) as to whether Sophocles believed that Oedipus was morally guilty. Aeschylus may have been primarily a moralist but Sophocles was primarily a playwright; when he found a story that would make a great play he probably did not worry much about the intellectual or moral validity of its presuppositions. Nor can the author be followed altogether in his argument that marriage in Athens was not the dull and saltless relation that is commonly supposed, though he remarks with truth that the average hetaira of the Periclean age was not an Aspasia, but was very much like the average hetaira of our own time or any other. It is true, as he says, that the Athenian got his education from life, and that nobody but the Socratic faction then dreamed of admitting women to civic activity. Still the fact remains that Spartans frequently fell in love with their wives, or with other men's wives. That may have happened in Athens, but we do not hear of it.

However, his book will be useful for the public to whom it is addressed—"neither scholars nor the wholly ignorant." The ignorant had better read something else first, for Mr. Earp has deliberately left out those aspects of Greek life that are common knowledge in order to concentrate on some which he thinks have been overlooked.

"This Freedom"

EX-WIFE. Anonymous. New York: Jonathan Cape & Harrison Smith. 1929. \$2.

Reviewed by ROBERT B. MACDOUGALL

THE publishers are sensible in calling this anonymous narrative a "sociological document." It certainly ranks higher under that classification than under any other possible one, such as, say, novel or autobiography. The book is evidently not intended to, and does not, shock or amuse. We suspect that the author thought that her life had been interesting as a sample of the conduct permitted to a modern woman under certain specialized circumstances. And she was right; the only important contribution of "Ex-Wife" is to show the unbelievers and the ignorant that a woman in contemporary New York can be the kind that Patricia was and can do the things that she did.

Patricia, who lived as a girl near Boston, went to Radcliffe, got married in her very early twenties, and after four years of conscientiously modern marriage that was dominated by her own drinking and by the befuddled standards of an alcoholic social set—this Patricia is not quite surprised to find herself one morning an unfaithful wife. From then on her rake's progress is steady and not unconventional: after vain efforts at reconciliation with her husband she goes to live with a girl-friend, indulges in promiscuously chosen lovers and in various imitations of high-life, and finally is reconciled to divorce. The end of the narrative seems true neither to life nor to art, for Patricia finds within the last few pages a second husband, who promises kindness and economic security. Such an episode becomes an incongruous "happy ending."

All this is told in a pedestrian, uninspired tone that probably is ingenuous. The story is constantly on the edge of dullness, chiefly because of the author's lack of skill. There are many tedious passages where Patricia and her roommate philosophize upon the cares and privileges of an "ex-wife," who in their minds seems to be a very definite type. This definiteness of type is not apparent to us who read, and consequently much of the point of the book is blunted. There are other annoying faults in the narrative, such as meticulous enumeration of the clothes that Patricia wore, too precise accounts of her work in the advertising department of a large store, and an eccentric, mannered style of writing.

The book, then, is unimportant except as an illumination of how a few women-about-town live and what they think about. The number of women represented by Patricia must be small indeed. Not many could have as demanding a job and still drink and carouse from seven in the evening until long after midnight. Furthermore, she is intelligent and well-informed far beyond the average woman (or man, either, for that matter). This "sociological document," then, has the ring of truth but no general applicability. It should not prevent any careful parent from sending his daughter to New York to work and live, but it ought to give pause to some women who long for what they think is Freedom.

Architecture

SKYSCRAPERS AND THE MEN WHO BUILD THEM. By COL. W. A. STARRETT. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1929. \$3.50.

BEYOND ARCHITECTURE. By A. KINGSLEY PORTER. Boston: Marshall 1928. \$3.50.

Reviewed by AYMAR EMBURY II

THIS is as curious a pair of books on architecture to blow in together for review as could well be imagined; the first dealing with one phase of architecture from the viewpoint of one of the ablest, most intelligent, and most successful builders in America, the other product of one of our most scholarly and learned teachers of art. As might be expected from men whose occupations touch the art of architecture and the building industry at opposite poles their viewpoints are completely antipathetic, and while it can hardly be said that either book is by itself a very great contribution to the literature on architecture, taken together they constitute a fascinating commentary on the civilization of our time.

Colonel Starrett's book is, as its title indicates, all about skyscrapers, while Professor Porter's alludes to them but once, and a comparison of the opening paragraph of the former's with the latter's lone allusion will show better than any discussion of them from what different points of view the same thing may be considered.

Colonel Starrett writes: "The skyscraper is the most distinctly American thing in the world. It is all American and all ours in its concept, all important in our metropolitan life; and it has been conceived, developed, and established all within the lifetime of men who are, in many cases, still active in the great calling which they themselves created and which they have developed within the span of their business careers."

Professor Porter writes: "Barn-storming, the determination to outshout uproar and be heard above the hubbub, is evident in two arts which still show activity, architecture and music. The former tends towards skyscrapers always of increasing height, towards ever greater complexity of plan and construction and plumbing. The silhouettes of these buildings are praised, often not unjustly. Yet who can say that any of them flash upon that inner eye which is the bliss of solitude?"

Both of these men know their jobs thoroughly, and both are men whose influence on the future of American architecture is far from negligible, Col. Starrett's because he is not infrequently in a position to recommend an architect to a prospective owner of new buildings, or through his great knowledge of the economic problems of building to impress upon the owner the importance of certain factors which control design, and Professor Porter's because his teachings will long be felt by those future architects who sit in his classes. It is, therefore, somewhat depressing to find in books by such authoritative men so little common ground; of the two the builder sees more truly, for while he realizes that much of our architectural design is cheap, shoddy, trivial, he pushes these things out of his mind and resolutely focusses his thought upon the magnitude of our physical accomplishment, and the occasional splendid piece of esthetic achievement. Yet if Professor Porter does (as he himself says) offer "cider some middling hard, and some turned to vinegar," and this cider can be sold in our market, it is a sign that our self-complacency is permeable. By a synthesis of the two methods, by bearing the fine accomplishment in mind and never being satisfied, our art may advance. Yet when all is said and done, it might be better if we architects read no more books about our art; we are already far too self-conscious; we should design by feeling and not by intellect, and if in the same generation we produce buildings as diverse and as excellent as the Telephone building by Voorhees, Gmelin, and Walker, and Mr. Morgan's library by McKim, Meade, and White, we should worry as to what that means. Professor Porter writes that Roman architecture failed because it lacked the spirit of joy. The average sincere practising architect will say that such a statement is just bunk. We know why we fail; it is because we haven't wit enough or brains enough to solve our problems honestly and beautifully at the same time. Colonel Starrett, utilitarian that he professes himself to be, knows that.

Books of Special Interest

A Diary of Promise

A DIARY OF THOMAS DE QUINCEY.
Edited by HORACE A. EATON. New
York: Payson & Clarke. 1928. \$6.
Reviewed by GARNET SMITH

THE interest of this hitherto unpublished document is clear at the first glance. We knew that, by the arrangement of his mother and guardians, Thomas de Quincey was to have passed with a fit provision from the grammar school of his native Manchester to Oxford University; and that, at the last moment, the plan was frustrated. In 1802, growing restless and unhappy, he pleaded in vain for instant removal. How could he further endure the loss of health and liberty? It was of pressing need that he should break with monotonous drudgery. Resolving on flight, and stowing a poet in either pocket, he turned towards the Lakes. If he might so much as catch a glimpse of that Wordsworth, whose altitude, he was sure, none but himself then measured! But, shrinking, rather he faced a shocked mother and an amused uncle. Thanks to this last, he was allowed to wander among the Welsh mountains for a while, at a guinea a week. How he passed from happy vagabondage to a pariah existence in London we learn from the "Confessions" and the autobiographical sketches; while it still escapes us by what train of circumstances he reclaimed himself or was reclaimed. We hear, indeed, of residence with his stately and rigid mother at The Priory in Chester; of his "resting from dreadful remembrances" in a "deep monastic tranquillity." And with this Diary, we discover that he was speedily rusticated from the Priory to Everton, on the edge of Liverpool, there to remain from March to June, 1803, under eyes which his mother could trust.

The authenticity of the manuscript, here reproduced in facsimile as well as presented chronologically in print, is beyond a doubt, though its history is but scantily known. Probably left at his lodgings, De Quincey fashion, it passed from hand to hand; lay almost forgotten in an old clock; was offered for sale at reduced prices. Its present owner

has shown it to De Quincey's granddaughters and issues it with the encouragement and aid of Mr. Horace A. Eaton, Professor of English at Syracuse University, whose editorial introduction and illustrative notes are entirely adequate.

Perchance the first statement to be made is that we are not to consult the Diary with any expectation of confirming or rectifying the famous "Confessions." It was unlikely that the lad, newly escaped from his nightmare sojourn in London, should seek to record recent anguish. For a time, feeling would be numbed. Not yet could it be his to look backward in tranquillity; to ascertain proportions and perspective, to blend fact and poetry. And, in the second place, one may say that De Quincey is not yet in possession of his style. He is random and miscellaneous. Nothing is developed. And none the less it is a diary of promise. Already one can spy the potential critic and master of prose. If he is various of mood, inconsequent, he is not without his central positions. He is asking himself important questions, when not freakish and petulant. Ambition and young confidence prick. He elects twelve English poets for his own admiration and, thereupon analyzing the nature of poetry, can doubt and reject. He catalogues the dozen works which, at one time or another, he has "seriously intended" to execute. To poetic and pathetic dramas, pathetic tales, essays on poetry and character, lives of Catiline and Julius Cæsar, he adds certain items less surely determined. Besides, "I have always intended, of course, that poems should form the cornerstones of my fame." Only he does not happen at the moment to recollect the subjects of them, and, moreover, finds that it is bedtime. Minerva, indeed, was to prove unwilling, though the Muses did not fail in attendance.

What chiefly appears in the Diary is that the lad of seventeen is a born and sworn Romantic. He might be the precocious Grecian, but is one regardless of the classic restraint. Homer is an "old dotard"; and he has discovered but a single line of true pathos in the would-be classic French. He is sure that the man of genius works from inspiration; is the seer, temporarily deli-

rious. At the outset, De Quincey is for training himself so as continually to foster the passions and render exquisite the fits of "visionary and romantic luxuriating or of tender, pensive melancholy." He images to himself the ultra-romantic hero, gloomy and abysmal, of "an angel's ken" and a fate of misery beyond conceiving. In short, though busied multifariously in determining the sources of happiness, the relations of humor and sublime pathos, and the nature of the Almighty, he is also the eager consumer of the contemporary fiction, the uncritical follower of the literary fashion. Nevertheless, his wholehearted admiration of Wordsworth abides with him. His critical poise is but in abeyance. "I amuse the ladies by saying that I wish there was some road down to hell by which I might descend for a short time—to save myself from a state of apathy." That is to say, he has grown restless and uncertain again. He sets down how he is introduced to "2 vulgar belles," eats a few shrimps, reads so many pages of the third volume of the "Accusing Spirit"; and—writes to Wordsworth of the "sad and dreary vacuity of worldly intercourse." It is all very young, and not without its appeal to sympathy.

Lay Sermons

IF I COULD PREACH JUST ONCE:
Essays by Thirteen Authors. New York:
Harper & Bros. 1929. \$2.50.

Reviewed by ALBERT JAY NOCK

THIS book is a symposium by four native writers and nine foreigners, mostly English. Three of the authors, Dr. Collins, Sir Thomas Garder, and Sir A. Conan Doyle, are physicians. Of the others, Bertrand Russell is a mathematician, Miss Kaye-Smith a novelist, Dr. McCracken a college president, Dr. Canby an editor, Mr. Drinkwater a playwright, Messrs. Lewisohn and Chesterton essayists, Sir Philip Gibbs a journalist, Professor Snowdon a physicist, and Lord Hugh Cecil a member of the British aristocracy.

The point of the book is that each author is supposed to deliver the message that he would deliver if he knew he could never have but this one chance to speak. We must, therefore, regard these messages as representing to their several authors the most important thing they have to say to the world. Under these circumstances one is rather surprised that in most cases they are not more significant and more cogently set forth. One can think of a good many more important subjects than appear on these pages, and one can imagine much clearer and more forceful exposition of them. Not many of these preachers have succeeded in preaching what old-time Methodists used to call a "searching discourse," and the reader is bound to be a little disappointed that they have not done better. Some have taken a distinctly second-class subject; others, like Mr. Drinkwater, have taken a good subject and treated it in a distinctly second-class way; while one or two of the essays, both in subject and style, leave us quite unable to make anything of them, whether good or bad.

Hence one must calculate a little closely in order to say whether or not the book is worth its price; but as books go, this reviewer is sure it is; that is to say, it contains amidst much that is valueless, a fair equivalent of two dollars and a half per reader. Mr. Russell's essay alone would furnish that. He has taken a first-class subject and treated it in a first-class way; so has Mr. Ludwig Lewisohn. So, too, has Sir A. Conan Doyle. One may not be sure that Sir A. Conan Doyle has the facts with him in his view of the individual human spirit's survival of death, but that question does not come within the purview of the book. The subject itself is one of the very first order, and there can be no doubt that Sir A. Conan Doyle has presented his view of it with ability, clearness, and force; so that clear profit is bound to ensue upon the reading of his essay, whether conviction does so or not.

One wonders why such books as these should be sent out into the world without editing. Not the editing of opinion—nothing like that—but enough coördination to insure each essay being up to the general purpose of the book. It is fair to require a contributor to propose a subject of quality, and to think clearly about his subject. If he proposes a second-rate subject, there should be some one to tell him that it is not good enough. If his thinking hangs in disorderly festoons around his subject, there should be some one to tell him to clear his mind, so that he will himself know what he is trying to say, in order that his readers in their turn may know. Beyond this, probably, editing should not go, but thus far it should go.

Witchcraft in Old and New England

By GEORGE LYMAN KITTREDGE

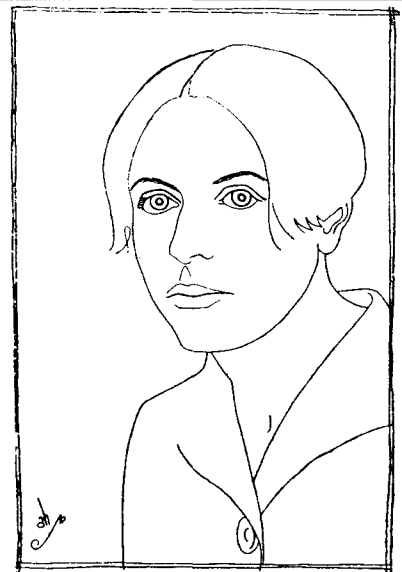
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