

Into the Light

THE SHORTER CAMBRIDGE MEDIEVAL HISTORY. Two Volumes.
By C. W. Previté-Orton. New York: Cambridge University Press. 1202 pp. \$12.50.

By A. C. KREY

THE Cambridge History has won for itself the enviable distinction of serving as the standard authoritative reference in its field. Begun somewhat modestly with the Modern History Series, almost exclusively by British scholars for the English public, the whole conception of the work was eventually expanded in the Medieval Series to include other scholars, wherever located. Though World War I prevented the full realization of this program, the aim of the series, now supplemented by the Ancient History and the Economic History in progress, has been achieved. In their entirety the Cambridge Histories have thus established themselves as the most scholarly and comprehensive works of their kind in the world.

In the two volumes here under review, the Syndics of the Cambridge Press have ventured upon an experiment to meet the changing tempo of the age. Was it possible, they asked themselves, to condense the eight bulky volumes of the original Medieval History into a shorter work which could be read not only as a continuously interesting narrative but also as an inclusive and reliable guide to the period? This problem, a large order in anyone's calculation, was put to the late Professor C. W. Previté-Orton, himself one of the principal editors of the original work, who then completed the present manuscript before death overtook him. Philip Grierson, at the request of the Syndics, then saw the volumes through the press, making only such changes as current scholarship seemed to require: and as a further step in the direction of their purpose, the Syndics also asked Dr. S. H. Steinberg to provide appropriate illustrations.

In undertaking to accomplish this ambitious task, these scholars might easily have come forth with either a condensed mass of undigested fact or with too incomplete an account, in an effort to maintain the interest of the general reader. Only rarely, however, does an unilluminated list of names and events appear, and the editors, well

aware that remote facts do not speak for themselves, have usually tried to supply expert judgment on the meaning of those facts. In addition, though the general arrangement of topics does not slavishly follow the original, almost no important area of interest has been omitted. From Persia to Ireland, from Egypt to Iceland, and from Morocco to the Ural Mountains, with occasional glimpses into inner Asia, no region has been overlooked, and all receive attention over the whole span of time from 305 A.D. to 1492.

Topically, the shorter History somewhat accentuates the characteristics of the original work. Political and ecclesiastical affairs receive preponderant notice. Cultural, economic, and social history, though not altogether



disregarded, are accorded comparatively scant treatment; the relative neglect of these elements constitutes the chief defect of the present work, as it also does of the original.

This deficiency is corrected in part by the illustrations, which form perhaps the most arresting feature of these volumes. The pictures are thoroughly integrated with the text and, to single out but one instance where they add greatly to the material involved, they include a representation of a coin which commemorates the expulsion of the English from France in the year 1453, supplying a concrete symbol to signalize the mystifying close of the Hundred Years War. Many of these illustrations will be new even to seasoned scholars in the field. Furthermore, the curious will be able to decipher with the aid of reading glasses (high powered in the case of the half-page illustration of Magna Carta) nearly all the inscriptions and small details. To achieve so much telling illustration, rather heavy paper has been used, but the satisfied reader will no doubt forget the consequent weight of the volumes in his pleasure at their contents.

The reference value of this shorter history has been likewise enhanced by numerous genealogical tables and lists of emperors and popes, as well as by helpful sketch-maps and a table of dates. One important omission is the absence of bibliographical aids to further reading, contained in the original work. Specialists will hardly be satisfied, as is to be expected, with the summary treatment which many important events have received in these volumes, but even such scholars will find much of value for them also in this shorter version of the Medieval History.

Faith Ruptured

THE DEVILS OF LOUDUN. By Aldous Huxley. New York: Harper & Bros. 340 pp. \$4.

By ANNE FREMANTLE

WHATEVER individual preferences may be, no one can deny that as creator, as critic, and as a contemplative Aldous Huxley is among the most urbanely civilized of writers living. And among the most profoundly concerned with the human condition.

To demonstrate his tightly woven, skilfully documented study of what he calls man's urge to self-transcendence in all its three-dimensional aspects—upward, downward, and horizontal—Mr. Huxley has gone back to France in the seventeenth century in which he set "Grey Eminence," his only biography. In "The Devils of Loudun" he has taken various individuals and has composed a group centered around Urbain Grandier, sometime vicar of Loudun, burnt as a sorcerer, and Soeur Jeanne des Anges, Ursuline prioress, who claimed him as the cause of her possession by seven devils.

Urbain Grandier, a contemporary of Corneille and Descartes and, like them, a pupil of the Jesuits, was appointed at the age of twenty-seven to a Jesuit living, though a secular priest. From the first Grandier made more enemies than friends in the divided city (it was more than half Huguenot). Among his enemies the most disastrously important was the Prior of Coussay, later to be Bishop of Luçon and called Armand-Jean du Plessis de Richelieu, who did not forget to concern himself directly with Grandier's doom.

Other, more local enemies were Madam Trinchant; the public prosecutor; Canon Mignon, Trinchant's nephew; Madam Adam; the apothecary; Pierre Menuau, the King's advocate, whose intended bride was another of Grandier's mistresses; and De la Rochepezay, his bishop. Grandier's few local friends were entirely convinced of his innocence, as was Jean D'Armagnac, Governor of Loudun. The Jesuits did their best to befriend their erstwhile pupil, and the people of Loudun, who, like Grandier were against Richelieu, admired their pastor's superb eloquence.

Wining and wenching, Grandier soon antagonized Capuchins and Carmelites and united the clergy and bourgeoisie solidly against him. His enemies found their weapon in Soeur Jeanne des Anges. Only twenty-five,

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Fiction. From the battlefields of ancient Troy to those of America's Yorktown there has been a long historical haul as well as a considerable development in the art of fiction. If that lyre-swinging minstrel Homer were alive today he might have enjoyed commenting on this week's list of books. Quite possibly he would have appreciated Burke Davis's "Yorktown" (below) as the work of a fellow practitioner in the realm of re-creating historical material; in this case a brisk, colorful account of the last hectic year of the American Revolution. Homer might have been puzzled as to why an audience would be interested in the struggles of a schizophrenic individual who tries to dominate his split self; yet well-written novels like Margaret Kennedy's "Troy Chimneys" (page 17) do have a considerable following. That the extra-marital divaganzas of a psychology professor pictured in Robie Macauley's "The Disguises of Love" (page 17) should merit attention would be beyond a Greek bard who was concerned with the big-time operations of supermen who, if schizophrenic, were in any case wondrous.

Climax of Our Theory

YORKTOWN. By Burke Davis. New York: Rinehart & Co. 306 pp. \$3.50.

By WILLARD M. WALLACE

THE author of that excellent novel "The Ragged Ones" has written another spirited book, "Yorktown." A tale of the last year of fighting in the Revolution, it is concerned with the campaign that terminated in the capitulation of Cornwallis. But until that day arrives when the redcoats march out in all their splendor and misery to surrender, the reader moves from the grim prison ship *Jersey* to the mutiny of the Pennsylvania Line, thence through war-prosperous Philadelphia to the tattered Virginia army of Lafayette, who trades bloody blows with his lordship, and finally to York peninsula. Battle scenes crackle with action, and the sights, smells, and sounds of conflict are presented in a realistic manner which, fortunately, stops this side of being macabre. The writing throughout is crisp, vibrant, and colorful.

The structure of the novel leaves something to be desired. There is the love story of Sergeant Peter Spargo and the uninhibited young Eve Cooper. Burke Davis gives also the story of the trials of Mad Anthony Wayne in contending with the mutineers of the Pennsylvania Line and in eventually leading a new Line to cooperate with Lafayette against Cornwallis. Finally we learn of the efforts of Washington

and Rochambeau to secure effective collaboration. Though Spargo in his love for Eve, his devotion to Wayne, and his respect for Washington is a useful device for holding all parts together, the strain on the reader's credulity is occasionally acute. Furthermore, the point of view changes so often from one character to another as to be disconcerting. Only if one accepts the campaign itself as the real hero does this constant shifting make sense.

The characterization is more suc-

cessful. Generally it is sharp and convincing, particularly of Wayne and Lafayette among the historical figures and of the never-say-die Captain Chalk and the mysterious agent Raffine among the minor characters. Spargo's blind devotion to Wayne, however, impressed this reader as being about as naive and incredible as his companions evidently considered it, and out of joint with the relative maturity of his character as initially depicted.

Notwithstanding the creaks and strains, the book holds one's interest. Mr. Davis knows his Revolution and writes with fervor. Revealing a keen understanding of the financial, social, and military issues involved, he describes the mutiny with an admirable blend of fact and fiction. He paints a vivid picture of Philadelphia with its busy Congressmen, merchants rich and scheming, witty society women, frail sisters of less estate, privateersmen, stout farmers in for market, taverns bursting at their seams with turbulent patrons and a plenitude of food and rum. Thanks to Mr. Davis's skill, the French expeditionary force comes alive, not only in the magnificence of its uniforms and equipment, but also in the hearty human qualities of its rank and file, the dash and brilliance of its aristocratic officers, and particularly in the common sense and magnanimity of Rochambeau. Mr. Davis has caught the flavor of the period and has written a novel which, if not remarkable, is decidedly entertaining.



—Jacket design by Edwin Schmidt for "Yorktown."

Williard M. Wallace, professor of history at Wesleyan University, Connecticut, is the author of "Appeal to Arms: A Military History of the American Revolution."