

THE EDITOR'S TABLE

Life's Little Ironies

It has been suggested that every autobiography may be summed up in the lines of Horace:

Video meliora proboque,
Deteriora sequor.

Not every autobiography, perhaps, but many. To see and approve the better way, and follow the worse, it is only too lamentably usual. Socrates was surely never more mistaken than when he said that to know the right was necessarily to do it. Many an autobiography is the story of a man's progress from lofty ideals and noble aspirations towards habits based on expediency and ever deeper compromise with "the world."

The half-serious, half-comic autobiography which Mr. Michael Barsley has just written* is the story of a man who realized what was happening to him in time. He saw that he was in danger of losing his soul in exchange for very much less than the whole world, and he decided that the bargain was a bad one.

The son of a vicar, Mr. Barsley was not zealously religious as a young man, but he was imbued with a passion for social justice and for truth. The test of this moral conscience came when he left Oxford and found himself a job as an advertising copy-writer.

He made two important discoveries in this profession: one that he was good at it, the other that he did not approve of it. Advertising copy was not necessarily a tissue of lies—more often it was just high-sounding nonsense skillfully aimed at the soft spots in the potential buyers' "sales resistance." It traded on the fears and vanities of the public. Still, by Mr. Barsley's standards it was a pretty corrupt form of literature, and it did not please his Socialist heart any better for being done in the interests of big business.

Copy-writing, however, was well paid, and well-paid employment was not easily obtainable by an artistically-minded university graduate in the 'thirties. The alternative to advertising was almost certain poverty, or in Mr. Barsley's own metaphor, the wolf at the door. It was not an easy decision to make, but Mr. Barsley was resolute and plumped for the wolf. Fortunately, he had plenty of imagination, so he decided to make friends with the wolf, not only to bring him to the door, but to invite him in.

The wolf did not turn out to be very sinister after all. At any rate, having him around meant that Mr. Barsley was able to write his two delicious satires, "Ritzkrieg" and "Colonel Bogus," in which he may be said to have got his own back on the people who had previously threatened to corrupt his talents.

During the war years, Mr. Barsley has earned a reputation as the English equivalent to the American humorist James Thurber. He writes the same devastating parodies, and he illustrates his work with the same artless sketches, but he differs from Thurber in having a more serious mission.

Notably Mr. Barsley's gift is for political satire, but he is not sure about the future of this. The political satirist of the new age, he shrewdly observes, will be of the Right, whereas Mr. Barsley is very much of the Left. Now that the Left is in authority in Britain iconoclasm is not appropriate to the furtherance of its end.

Does this mean that for all his success the wolf will return to Mr. Barsley's door? Happily not, if his autobiography is anything to judge from. He shows there that he can be witty without being unduly disrespectful, and that he can deal gently even with such provoking people as the Buchmanites. His book reveals also a rare and valuable gift for pointing morals without even seeming to do so. He will probably prosper after all.

* *The Wolf at the Door.* By Michael Barsley. (Michael Joseph, 10s. 6d.)

THE BIRTH OF A NATION

AFRICAN PORTRAITS. By Stuart Cloete. (Collins, 12s. 6d.)

WRITTEN in a graphic if somewhat jerky style, in places uncomfortably suggestive of a March of Time news-reel commentary, this narrative is nevertheless based upon a diligent and extensive study of the available material. As an introduction to the modern Union of South Africa, it has much to commend it.

Mr. Cloete, who is himself a South African, and whose great-great-grandfather wrote "The History of the Great Boer Trek," has had the excellent idea of plaiting into a triple cord of narrative the biographies of three great men: Cecil Rhodes, Paul Kruger and Lobengula, King of the Matabele, who, caught between the upper and the nether millstone of the two, was ground to powder.

Rhodes and Kruger—the eagle and the bull—were temperamentally antipathetic. "Mr. Rhodes," said Kruger, "is just as loyal to his country as I am to mine; but you can't come to an agreement with a man who never goes to church." Rhodes believed in imperial expansion, Kruger in isolation. To Rhodes, money was power; to Kruger, it was the root of all evil. Out of the clash between their dominant wills, South Africa was born. There were many minor actors in the drama: Dr. Jameson, whose abortive *putsch* temporarily upset Rhodes's apple-cart; the Rev. John Mackenzie, the missionary, champion of native rights and native interests; Sir Charles Warren, with his dragoons; Sir Hercules Robinson, the High Commissioner; Joubert, de la Rey, de Wet and Smuts.

Rhodes made money to enter politics, and used politics to increase his power. To call him "a Fascist Imperialist," to represent him as a prototype of Hitler, seems excessive. Equally, the description of Oom Paul as "an early democrat" is a little fanciful. The contrast, in fact, is overdrawn. But Mr. Cloete has a gift for full-blooded narrative.

WHEN FRANCE FELL

PLEA FOR LIBERTY. By George Bernanos. (Dennis Dobson, 8s. 6d.)

M. BERNANOS is a most eloquent pleader, but his particular plea for liberty reaches most English readers four years too late. He was writing under the immediate strain of France's capitulation. His medium is the letter or manifesto which enabled him to write on the spur of the moment. Many of his judgments were transitory, and some have been shattered by the course of events. He assumed, for instance, that Hitler did not intend permanently to cripple Jewry or to exterminate the Jews of Europe.

The time has not yet come for his powerful emotions to be "recollected in tranquillity," and when a man of letters writes on contemporary affairs, even though his subject is the cataclysmic fall of a great country, he must share the fate meted out to others who write well and yet know that their contributions have only a passing importance.

None the less, *Plea for Liberty* is the work of a very distinguished mind. A true Catholic saw the full power of mediocrity at work in the Church and the State. Like St. Augustine, when stirred to the depths by Alaric's sack of Rome, M. Bernanos recognized that the heavenly city could not be completely identified with the Catholic Church nor the earthly city with the State. His most powerful letter happens to be addressed to the Protestant Roosevelt. "Fascism, Hitlerism, Communism," M. Bernanos tells him, "shall one day appear, in the light of history, as monstrous deformations of the ancient idea of Christendom."

LORDS OF THE GROVE

TREES IN BRITAIN. By L. J. F. Brimble. (Macmillan, 15s.)

MR. BRIMBLE has followed up his volume on *Flowers in Britain* with a corresponding treatment of trees, which, though they strike the eye of the casual admirer with a very different impression, are merely bulkier specimens of kindred genera in the view of botanical logic. The present book opens with a general introduction on the botanical structure of trees, and describes in turn all trees, wild, ornamental or commercial, that are likely to be found in Britain, in the order of their scientific classification.

Mr. Brimble writes with discursive ease for the benefit of "anybody who is interested." His literary allusions and aesthetic appreciations do mask the fact that he has a great deal of information to impart which bears a fully scientific and historical interest. His book is amply illustrated; and both the impressionistic and the representational aspects of his work are reflected in the charming reproductions of pencil drawings made by the late Dr. Lonsdale Ragg, a notable lover of trees.

THE BODY OF CHRIST

THE DOCTRINE OF THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH IN THE WORKS OF KHOMYAKOV AND MOEHLER. By Serge Bolshakoff. (S.P.C.K., 18s.)

KHOMYAKOV was a wealthy Russian layman, not an exact scholar, though he read widely. He was a prolific writer, a somewhat bitter but not too careful controversialist. His views on the Church were developed in reaction from those of William Palmer of Magdalen, one of the early Oxford fathers, and in more or less acknowledged dependence on Johann Moehler, famous as the author of "Symbolik," one of the great books of nineteenth-century Romanism. Khomyakov's doctrine explains the attitude of the Orthodox to the Ecumenical movement.

Palmer is remembered for his determined efforts, during two visits to Russia, to be allowed to communicate at Orthodox altars. In discussions with Khomyakov and other Russians he expounded a doctrine of the Church which Newman said, forty years later, was what "we" had held and confessed in Oxford. He believed that the visible Church instituted by our Lord exists in a triple presence—the Latin, the Greek, and the Anglican. Each of these three is the whole Church; where any one of the three is present, therefore, the other two are absent, there being no real difference between them except the external accident of place.

Christians, wherever they are, are bound to recognize, and be recognized by, the Church there, ceasing to belong to the Anglican Church, as Anglican, when they are at Rome, and ignoring Rome as Rome when they find themselves at Moscow. Acting on this, Palmer tried to prove in Moscow that the English Church had never really separated from the Orthodox, so that any Anglican might communicate in the latter. Previously, he had tried to communicate in the Roman churches on the Continent. But the branch theory was rejected both by East and West. Later, Palmer became a Roman Catholic.

Khomyakov's ecclesiology was developed in discussions with Palmer. He said that Anglicanism is believing that you are a Catholic when you have become a Protestant. The Church is not an institution, but a living organism. It is not the hierarchy, but the whole people of the Church, the body of Christ, which is the guardian of the truth. Because the knowledge of truth is given to mutual love, unity does not rest on authority, as the Romans think, nor is there freedom in Protestant licence, but in the humility of love.

THE CEMENT OF GOOD TEACHING

TOTAL EDUCATION. By M. L. Jacks. (Kegan Paul, 10s. 6d.)

IN its sub-title this book is described as a plea for synthesis. Mr. Jacks is appalled at the fragmentation of modern life, which is shown in education no less than in other departments. As at present practised, he complains, education is a piecemeal affair. Just as educational institutions are as multifarious as they are unrelated, so the subjects taught in them are arbitrarily selected and have little bearing on each other. At best only certain aspects of the pupil or student receive any attention, and in most cases the process of education comes to an abrupt end in adolescence. What is wanted instead of this is something "total"—an education which is synthetic, covering the man's whole personality and life, giving him a comprehensive view of the world.

Mr. Jacks makes a tactical error, however, in singling out total war as an analogy of what he wants, as if the concentration of the national effort necessitated by it were calculated to commend his educational ideals to the British public. To most people the high degree of central control and planning, which is unavoidable in the crisis of modern war, involves a degree of regimentation incompatible with peace-time liberty.

In the main he makes his essay an attempt to give sinews and flesh to the bare bones of the new Education Act. In particular he discusses the organization and administration of education, the proper approach to the child, the curriculum, and the kind of teachers that are required.

The first place is assigned to religion in his scheme. Mr. Jacks is convinced that, unless the child's personality is to suffer from frustration, the integrating feature of his schooling must be religion. It is fatal to divorce man's intellect and body from his spirit. What is less certain is the kind of religion the author has in mind. So far as he throws any light on this, he appears to

The Church defines the truth by separating itself from error, and by marking the boundary between them.

The unity of the Church is from the unity of God. The departed, the angels, those still on earth, are united in reality, as God sees them, in one Church, in one and the same grace of God. The visible Church on earth lives in perfect communion and unity with the whole body of the Church whose head is Christ. She acts and judges, however, only within her own borders.

The man who is living within the Church does not submit to false teaching, and the Church herself does not err, for she is the truth; she is incapable of cunning or cowardness, for she is holy. And, of course, the Church does not change. The grace of faith is not separate from holiness of life. The whole Church alone is holy, and therefore infallible.

According to this view, infallibility pertains to a state of life—that is, saintliness—not to any office. Dr. Bolshakoff thinks that Khomyakov did not stress adequately the hierarchy and the apostolic succession. Only those Councils were right and true, the decisions of which were accepted by the Church—that is, by the consent of the faithful. Khomyakov denied any external authority in the Church. He admitted only the authority of the Church. Whatever opinion the Church endorses is right, but how this opinion is endorsed nobody knows.

The obvious criticism to be made of Khomyakov is that he thinks almost exclusively of the Church invisible, the ideal Body of Christ, without recognizing sufficiently the relative, earthly elements in the empirical society in which it is embodied. Dr. Bolshakoff would assent to this, to some extent at least, for he says more than once that Khomyakov needs to be explained and interpreted, or his writings may lead to erroneous conclusions.

Moehler put the same emphasis as did Khomyakov on the place of love as the unity and life of the Church, but his ecclesiology worked out, in fact, much more like that of Newman. He recognizes that although a doctrine, to be truly Christian, must have been always present, it may have been only in germ. The knowledge of the Church develops continually, as its life expands, and so becomes more exact and clear as it follows the growth of the Church into the manhood of Christ.

Dr. Bolshakoff's book is to be welcomed. The literature on these two writers is voluminous, and he has given a clear, and perhaps overmuch documented account of them, and of their influence.

be thinking of a vague theism which might or might not allow room for the religion of the Incarnation and Redemption.

If at the end the book leaves an uneasy feeling with some readers, that is because the author does not seem to appreciate how much his conclusions, so far from being independent, reflect the atmosphere of the age in which he lives. Mr. Jacks makes a sincere effort to show that "total" must not be equated with "totalitarian"; but those who value the humane ideals of Western culture will wonder whether he has not surrendered too much of what it held precious.

Laodicea in the Twentieth Century: or, the Church of England in the England of To-day, by Frank Bennett, with a foreword by Alec Vidler (S.P.C.K., 1s. 6d.), is a much-expanded version of an article, "Our Struggle," published in *Theology* in July, 1944. It is stimulating, provocative, unashamedly Anglican, and critically optimistic. Its realism is refreshing, and it has the endearing quality of saying on behalf of the parish priest a great many things that he has thought for a very long time. It is a tract, and a tonic, for the times, and may be respectfully commended to the attention of the laity and of the hierarchy.

Burma. By George Appleton. (S.P.G., 1s.) If the rest of the "War and After" series brought out by S.P.G. is as well-written as this first instalment by the Archdeacon of Rangoon, the cause of missions should benefit greatly. Burma has been the scene of war in its most terrible aspects, and has suffered an economic setback from which it will take long to recover; but there is much in this record which encourages hope. It is specially pleasing to read of the efforts made to avoid presenting the Gospel in a Western dress, and to give greater responsibility to native ministers.

ORATORIAN AND HYMN-WRITER

THE LIFE OF FATHER FABER. By James F. Cassidy. (Sands, 6s. 6d.)

It has evidently been a labour of love for Fr. Cassidy to compile this concise popular biography of one for whom all his life he has had "a singular reverence." The greater part of it is given to a narrative of the famous Oratorian's career, which the author has tried to make as simple, clear and devotional as possible. In this he has certainly succeeded.

The book is not the fruit of any original research. For his facts, Fr. Cassidy has relied almost exclusively on the original biography by Fr. Bowden, issued in 1869. One chapter is given to a short account of Faber's published work in prose and verse.

Of Faber's personal holiness, eloquence, evangelistic zeal and attractive personality there can be no doubt. Not everyone will be so sure as Fr. Cassidy that he was "a great mystical theologian," or even "a great hymnologist." Wordsworth, who knew him while he was still an Anglican, said that he might have become eminent as a poet if he had devoted himself to literature rather than to pastoral work. Faber regarded this as a temptation, and deliberately turned away from it.

In later life he wrote only a few good hymns, and many more indifferent ones. His devotional books are still read, and his present biographer hopes to revive interest in them. But Faber's florid prose, his emotional and rather exotic type of devotion, are little to the taste of these times.

FOOTNOTES TO MR. ELIOT

FOUR QUARTETS REHEARSED.

By Raymond Preston. (Sheed and Ward, 5s.)

ONE of the literary pleasures of the years of war was the appearance annually, from 1939, of Mr. T. S. Eliot's cycle of poems recently assembled in one volume as "Four Quartets." They are not "difficult" by comparison with Mr. Eliot's earlier work. Much of their content is deceptively easy, and the style has a beguiling fluency. Often, however, the poet is saying something other or something more than he seems to be saying, and wisdom and wit are both at times concealed.

Mr. Preston's commentary is designed to assist the better understanding of the "Four Quartets" by setting them in the context of Mr. Eliot's work generally, and by suggesting some of the ideas that might have been in the poet's mind at the time of writing. In a limited field Mr. Preston's work is thorough and helpful, but no amount of paraphrase can make explicit what the poet has chosen to express in riddles. The reader who expects Mr. Preston to solve all the problems in the four poems will be disappointed; but the reader who is willing to think for himself will find this commentary rewarding.

ON THE ROAD

PILGRIM STORY. By Henzie and E. Martin Browne. (Muller, 6s.)

MR. and MRS. MARTIN BROWNE launched the Pilgrim Players in the early days of the war. Modern pioneers of the idea, which C.E.M.A. and the Arts Council inherited, of taking the theatre to the people, their company of actors began at Canterbury a pilgrimage which took them all over Britain, and especially to those remoter places where there were no facilities for ordinary entertainment.

Working for a private's pay, and not always as much as that, the Pilgrim Players performed in churches, in halls, barns, schools, huts and sometimes in the open air; the actors were their own scene-shifters, electricians, stage-manager, designers, wardrobe-keepers, and engineers; they lodged where fortune placed them, sometimes in bishops' palaces, often in dismal boarding houses.

Themselves professional actors with a religious motive, the Pilgrims chose for their repertory plays with a religious content by modern professional dramatists. The tale is one of a signal success for a venture that started off with no funds and which had to contend during its first years with diverse crises; it is highly amusing to read about.

Who Sit and Watch, by Anne Blake-more (Lutterworth Press, 10s. 6d.), is a faintly sentimental account of bird life on a Gloucestershire farm, arranged in order of the kalendar, and containing a good deal of personal, though frequently also superficial observation. Mr. Eric Hosking supplies the photographs.