

EPISCOPAL THOUGHTS

REFLECTIONS OF A BACK-BENCH BISHOP. By the Bishop of Chelmsford. (Latimer House, 5s.)

In these days, honesty and encouragement are an unusual combination in a topical book; this is particularly the case with attempts to assess the spiritual position of this country. The Bishop of Chelmsford, in this volume of reflections on some contemporary issues in Church and State, is at pains to estimate the position accurately. Indeed, on one or two points his estimates may be slightly too severe. But the virtue of the book is not that it states the facts accurately and clearly, nor even that it warns of dangers as yet largely unrealized. It is that, without any sentimentality or even intentional stimulus to courage, it does give the reader new hope and new heart. This is likely to be especially true if the reader is a priest.

The Bishop looks at many of the problems of the parish priest from the inside, and discusses them often from an angle that is as unusual as it is helpful. He has some interesting remarks, for instance, on the relations between the rector and his people, on short sermons, and the central clergy-house system of running a group of country parishes. His comments on the financial position are particularly worth attention. It is refreshing to find so strong a supporter of the ordinary parson's conviction that sedulous pastoral work more than anything else is attacking the evil of these times at its root and heart.

Many of Dr. Wilson's opinions on more general matters will not command such ready assent. His remarks on reunion are an example; and his notes on the parties in the Church will strike many readers as involving a rather peculiar sort of history. But even on such matters his contentions are well worth thinking over. What he has to say on planning and reform is extremely stimulating.

GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS

POEMS OF GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS. Third Edition, Revised and Enlarged. Edited by W. H. Gardner. (Oxford Press, 12s. 6d.)

GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS is a poet whose reputation has steadily grown; no respectable anthology of English poetry is now complete without some of his poems. His daring manipulation of words and original metres caused bewilderment at first: sometimes, it is true, Hopkins fails to achieve the desired effect, and is merely obscure. But when he succeeds, as he so often does, the effect is dazzling in its brilliance.

This new edition, edited by Mr. W. H. Gardner, is a good piece of work. It includes some pieces published for the first time, and the early poems previously published in the poet's *Notebooks and Papers*. "Hopkins," writes Mr. Gardner, "has attained the status which gives a psychological or biographical as well as literary importance to all his utterances, and that fact alone should justify the placing of a number of his early poems where they belong—before the works of maturity." Mr. Gardner also contributes a useful outline of the life of Hopkins, and many additional notes.

SCHOOLGIRLS AT MASS

THE MASS IN SLOW MOTION. By Ronald Knox. (Sheed and Ward, 6s.)

In this book, Mgr. Knox has displayed to the full that quality which his earliest (and Anglican) works displayed, and which after a long period he has re-captured as a Roman dignitary—a genuine spiritual insight informed and illuminated by an irrepressible sense of humour. Here is his exposition of the Mass to the schoolgirls whose chaplain he was during the war, when he was translating the New Testament. These addresses are reproduced in the actual form in which they were delivered; they contain not only "a priest's private thoughts about the Mass," but the record of a learned man who is wise enough to perfect his *sacrificium laudis* by interpreting it to the minds of babes and sucklings.

Some, perhaps, will dismiss the preacher's vivid style as "flippant," and object to an exposition of the Holy Mysteries attuned to the ears of the devotees of Angela Brazill. Such critics will miss brilliant and fresh interpretations of the rite which, if they owe little to traditional devotion or to liturgical scholarship, are none the less unmistakably true and inspired. Almost every page contains some scintillating thought which has never before found adequate expression. And the secret of the inspiration lies in the fact that the writer is a priest who thinks in terms of the needs of his congregation—even if they are grubby little schoolgirls. This book shows the quality of the Roman Catholic Church in England at its best; Anglicans as well as Romans will profit from its study.

GRAVE AND GAY

PARADOX IN CHESTERTON. By Hugh Kenner. (Sheed and Ward, 7s. 6d.)

THIS book is a long and learned essay on Gilbert Chesterton, the mystic, the metaphysician, the moral philosopher, the contemplative, the realist, the religious teacher, the disciple of Thomas Aquinas, who made use of paradox to teach men the truth about reality and God. It will be a surprise to many who have only a superficial acquaintance with Chesterton's stories and poems and essays to discover from Mr. Kenner's book how ignorant they have been of the profundity of meaning which lies beneath so much of the paradoxical writing that has given them so much pleasure.

Fundamentally his aim in all his serious writing, and, for that matter, in much that is regarded as frivolous, was to reveal God, the incarnate God of the Christian faith, to man. He shows repeatedly that the gulf between God and man was bridged when "a strolling carpenter's apprentice said calmly and almost carelessly, like one looking over his shoulder, 'Before Abraham was I am.'"

Not only Chestertonian enthusiasts, but students of Thomas Aquinas, T. S. Eliot, William Blake and (surprisingly enough) James Joyce, about all of whom the author has much to say, will appreciate this book.

GLUBB PASHA

THE STORY OF THE ARAB LEGION. By Brigadier J. G. Glubb. (Hodder and Stoughton, 25s.)

THE story of the Arab Legion is largely the tale of Glubb Pasha; for it began when he, accompanied by a single Arab servant, set to work to raise a desert patrol. This grew into a legion, until with twelve hundred men he was keeping order over an area the size of England, in which most of the population carried weapons. By incessant activity, persuasion and stern action, he eventually put down the raiding which is second nature to the nomad. He succeeded because he loved and understood the Arab. He knew that it was not enough for the Legion to be a police force; it must also be a social service. It must educate the nomad. Above all, it must teach him to plough.

How well Glubb Pasha and the Legion did their work appeared in the war, when they were able to leave Transjordan almost unpoliced and go off to fight with brilliant success in the Iraq and Syrian campaigns. These were a new experience for the Arab, who looks on fighting very much as the Briton looks on Wembley or Twickenham, and after a battle will sit down cheerfully to drink coffee with his late adversary. The tank and the aeroplane made a different business of it. "There is no joy in war nowadays," remarked an Arab glumly, after he had been bombed for an afternoon.

The author cannot praise his men too highly. He insists that they are natural soldiers, heirs of the men who once carried the Prophet's flag from the Punjab to the field of Tours. To their native gallantry, generosity, chivalry and hospitality, they added a discipline to match that of the Brigade of Guards. He tells their story simply, modestly and extremely well, with occasional autobiographical touches which lend it colour and excitement.

NOTICES

The SPCK has produced two large sheets (Nos. 1 and 2) of cut-out figures for Christmas trees (2s. each sheet). The figures are beautifully coloured and gilded, and could hardly be more attractive. They include figures of the Christ-child, the shepherds, the kings, angels and St. Nicholas. They will give children a happy afternoon's work, and infinitely enrich the look of the Christmas tree.

The Church in Wales. By the Right Rev. E. W. Williamson, D.D. (SPCK, 6d.) The Bishop of Swansea and Brecon gives an informative and encouraging picture of the Church in Wales; but not everybody, either in the Principality or on this side of the border, will share his complacency at the increase of the number of Welsh-trained clergy who migrate to England.

Popular Hymns and Their Writers. By Norman Mable. (Independent Press, 7s. 6d.) Mr. Mable writes briefly about nearly two hundred authors and some of their hymns. He has confined his choice to those he believes to be the most generally popular in all denominations in this country.

Before His Presence (SPCK and National Society, 9d.), is a useful guide to Mattins and Evensong for those who are unfamiliar with Church services.

ROUND-ABOUT PAPERS

Importance of Tables

THE word "collation" printed on an invitation card has about it a flavour of cold chicken and white wine, at least for those among us who are not so young as to know nothing of the pleasures of such informal hospitality begun by St. Benedict and ended by Adolph Hitler. It is a far cry from the austerity tempered by the light repast enjoyed by those who had listened to reading from the *Collationes*, to the austerity which hinders the simplest hospitality. To-day the collation is unknown except in the ecclesiastical sense of a bishop putting into a benefice a clergyman of his own appointment.

There is a chilly air about the invitation which runs: "Lunch [bring your own] 1.10." But we ought to be used to such entertainment by now. After all, food is not the main aim of our social gatherings; and if we are asked to a party (hot water provided), we must depend on our inner resources to generate the party spirit.

One species of invitation has become notably rarer, and that is the telephone call to say, "We are going for a picnic to-morrow afternoon, and it would be so delightful if you could join us." Picnic baskets have been turned to other uses in the last year or two, and, for one, I am thankful that it is so. Picnics, like breakfast in bed, are among the pleasures which are illusory rather than real. It is easy enough to take an almost romantic view of picnics, but with rare exceptions it is exceedingly difficult to make a comfortable job of the *al fresco* meal.

It may have been all very well for the ancient Greeks and Romans, and the lesser breeds of their day who felt on the top of their social form when they were reclining on one elbow; but for us vertical chaps it is not easy to keep up our gay nonchalance as we approach the table-cloth laid on the ground and secured against the breeze by odd scraps of boulder. We are not nearly so much at ease before the spread as are the various insects which are unable to constrain that unbridled curiosity which distinguishes the members of the insect world from the larger mammals. While you may be quite certain that your picnic party will not be invaded by gate-crashing deer, moles, badgers, foxes, weasles, rabbits or hares, you may be equally certain that all manner of creepy-crawly creatures will live up to their reputation for brazen effrontery, and hop and flutter and stroll all over the table-cloth.

The insects are in their element; the animals of the wood and copse show their good manners by keeping out of ear-shot; while you and I, alas! have to make a hearty pretence of enjoying the strains and distortions without which we cannot share the feast.

It is not for nothing that the table has become the symbol of hospitality and that it should stand also for life-giving nourishment. The old-fashioned inn-keeper made it a point of honour that he "kept a good table." The *table d'hote* signifies the polite and normal hospitality available for guests. Even the familiar verb used by our committee-minded friends when they table a motion had in the vocabulary of our forebears the simple meaning of entertaining a guest. In its highest significance a table is called holy when it serves as God's board and becomes the Christian altar.

So it is that the pleasures of the table, enjoyed at the high table or at the kitchen table have also a sacramental quality. The bond-fellowship of men who break bread together at the same table was honoured in ancient times and the remembrance of its obligations is not wholly forgotten in our own day. That again is exemplified in its sublimest aspect as men kneel at the table of the Lord to receive that life-giving Bread.

A picnic meal differs thus profoundly from a meal, however frugal, taken at a table. Perhaps that is why one has inponderable misgivings about meals spread on the ground. There is religious and philosophic significance in such abasement, and for that reason also, among others, I rejoiced when my host the other day drew from the boot of his car a folding table, folding chairs and the napery and vessels proper to a right meal.

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