

BLACKFRIARS

experience is gradually reducing to an intelligible sequence, have a tense unreality, conveyed to the reader by the self-conscious aridity of the prose. The cumulative effect of colourlessness makes it like some Schöngauer print, heightened as it is by contrast with such water-colour passages as this:

He could not see the horses, but there was Cotswold, earth and sky; the familiar golden soil and cool green, the coloured pattern of fields, crop, stubble, grazing, early ploughing; hedges of quick, draped with clematis and tangled with black briony.

Canon John Gray's restrained understatement, in short, has produced a remarkable and sometimes a beautiful book.

J.P.-H.

A HALF-DAY'S RIDE. By Padraic Colum. (Methuen; 7/6.)

We expect from the poet when he writes prose an essay differing from that produced by the avocation of the mere prose writer. Possibly, and often, wrongly. What we expect is not a difference of language; fundamentally it is that we look in the poet's essay for the same initial impulse, the same acute, almost revelational perception that is the basis of the satisfying poem. It is, therefore, unfortunate for Mr. Padraic Colum's considerable reputation as a poet that the majority of the essays included in this volume fail even by prose standards to justify their disinterment from the weekly press to which they were originally contributed.

Two, however, stand out from the rest, *Henry Ford versus the Toilers of the Sea* and *Plautus and the Comic Inheritance*. What Mr. Colum has to say about Plautus is not, of course, of greater critical value than his rambling meditations on Burns or Blunt, but the circus scene with which the essay opens is in its uneven emphasis of essentials a good piece of descriptive writing. In the other essay there is joined to this descriptive prose facility the poet's more meticulous workmanship and a broader sympathy which raises it alone of the twenty-four above a low level of efficient journalism.

J.P.-H.