

don in 1941. But like Michaelsford itself, the rambling structure is strictly true to a pattern. And that pattern is the growth of an artist, from the boy scribbling alone in the nursery to the acknowledged master seeing in the end where the colour of flowers and their meaning meet.

Readers of *Jake* and *Mildensee* will remember with what understanding Miss Royde Smith wrote of music, how nearly she closed the elusive gap between the artist's experience and the communication of it. In *Fire-Weed*, with that dexterity which must be the despair of most other novelists, she does the same for painting. Rufus's pictures are not externalised achievements, merely: his failure to solve the anguish of his personal life is all the time thrust against the background of his painting, assured and strong. It is as though words have been invoked to show the inadequacy of words. But there is nothing vague in the writing: a resolute economy only, massing the strong colours of the story, grouping its sharply marked figures—all to serve the total picture, the portrait of Rufus Greyne.

Fire-Weed is full of lively incident—family rows and scenes in restaurants; full, too, of acutely observed characters—Lady Emily, the professional egoist secure in the Michaelsford bed; Lise, the Boulogne *fille du boulanger* who ran away with the gipsy; Eustace, the diplomat. Yet it is Rufus who remains in the memory, and that is as it should be, for it is he who sees the flower where death has been.

ILLTUD EVANS, O.P.

A HOUSE IN BRYANSTON SQUARE. By Algernon Cecil. (Eyre and Spottiswood; 10s.).

There are some books (Amiel's *Journal*, Benjamin Constant's *Adolphe*, Aubrey's *Miscellanies* are among these) which exercise a peculiar excluding charm over certain people who feel that even if they have not exactly written these words themselves nobody else has ever read them with quite so complete an appreciation. Mr. Algernon Cecil's *A House in Bryanston Square* may quite well prove to belong to this rare and secretly cherished class. Its main theme is an elaboration of the Neo-Platonic belief that there are emanations from the Divine Being which are scarcely tainted with any defect; its subject is one of these beings; its background and framework the house, once that spirit's casket, now blown to dust by a direct hit from a high explosive bomb some years after the lovely inhabitant had died.

All the harvests of wide reading, instructed travel and of a gradually increasing religious faith attained through an analysis of the thought of the giants of Belief, enrich the reconstruction of a companionship which seems, on the evidence of this book's pages, to have grown closer since the bodily presence of one partner to it has gone. Aristotle; Aquinas; Dante; Pascal; Santayana and many

opponents of their declarations flock to the reconstructed exchange of ideas which salted the material comfort and beauty of the house in Bryanston Square. Such a symposium must unavoidably make room for digression; but, as Leslie Stephen once wrote of another philosophic speculation 'the book is redeemed by its digressions.' Is not all good talk digression? Is not Memory incurably tangential?

The result of this attempt at recapturing the thought and the intellectual adventure of two minds is a kind of consecutive annotated anthology. Even when direct quotation ceases, whole phrases are as packed with literary allusions as a Japanese poem.

A rose indeed, and budding once in a land of roses! Yet now only the spectre of a rose, whose fragrance haunts me still, now that the brief ballet of life is over and the memories of a day that is gone return in the firelight. But, if a spectre only, surely dancing yet, as the Blessed dance in the rich imagery of Dante's visions. Of such, as the poet assures us, the angels scent the sweetness in the celestial air as they pass like bees from petal to petal of the Great Rose of Heaven.'

This passage is chosen for its shortness—a quality so necessary in so brief a note on an almost inexhaustible mine of reference. A complete manual of notes on these happy incorporations might be made. Some book-haunting leisured reader may yet accomplish such a work. Meanwhile a learned and industrious scribe should be employed in tabulating an Index to this House for future editions, for which the tenderly evocative dust-jacket should be preserved or, better still, incorporated in the volume as an illustration or as end papers.

NAOMI ROYDE SMITH.

SOME COMPARISONS BETWEEN UNIVERSITIES. (Blackwell; 2s. 6d.)

This is a report of the second Educational Conference of the Association of University Professors and Lecturers of the Allied countries in Great Britain. It suffers in any case from its snippety composition (64 pages for speeches or parts of speeches by nearly thirty people). But apart from this it is melancholy reading—discussion of this and that element in British or foreign Universities with scarcely a hint of any directive principle, spiritual or intellectual. The prevailing gloom is a little relieved by remarks of some interest from Professor Sir Fred Clarke (Universities and teachers), Mr. Bruce Truscot (dons and students), Professor Sommerfelt (comparison between French and Norwegian Universities) and Professor Vermeil (Western Universities in relation to the state and society). But in general—from Newman to these eminent speakers, *quelle dégringolade!* The truest words spoken at the Conference seem to be those of Professor Saurat: 'At present we have no direction. We do not know what to do. We are just drifting.'

W.S.