

not altogether satisfactory, because computing and playing games are activities which are usually regarded as requiring thought. Some writers interpret the question to mean, Could a machine be built which would be able to answer a succession of questions brought to it from someone in another room and to do this so convincingly that its interrogator would be left in doubt whether he had been questioning a man or a machine? Whatever the answer to this question, it seems clear that those who wish to attempt a definition of thought, or of life, must in future take into account the kind of machine activity we have just been discussing. But that is another story.

REVIEWS

VATICAN ASSIGNMENT. By Sir Alec Randall, K.C.M.G., O.B.E. (Heinemann; 21s.)

The author, until recently H.M. Ambassador to Denmark, offers this volume in all humility '... as an addition to the—I am told—approximately 230,000 books already written on Rome'. Like many of those books, it is based upon personal reminiscences; but it is outstanding amongst them for a happy combination of reasons. Principal of these is the fact that Sir Alec Randall's Vatican assignment was a diplomatic one, as Secretary to the British Legation during five eventful and crucial years from 1925 to 1930. Add to this an exceptional ability in lucid and colourful writing, a wide culture combined with a keen aesthetic appreciation, a nice sense of critical judgment, a marked vein of whimsical humour, and you have a most fascinating, informative, personal yet authentic inside story of a Catholic diplomat's Vatican contacts, official and unofficial, during a period covering such notable situations as the Portuguese *padroada* rights in Goa, the Strickland crisis in Malta, and the settlement of the 'Roman Question' with Mussolini. But besides the political involvements are delightful memories of audiences with the Holy Father arranged for visiting British V.I.P.s, vignettes of Vatican personalities, sidelights on official ceremonies, all interspersed with precious digressions and illuminating asides on history, art and culture. At the same time the author shows an understanding tolerance of the more childish customs and even superstitions of the Roman people, which it seems to him 'mere highbrow snobbery to despise'. The chapter on the working constitution of the Holy See, with valuable

comments on the work of the Sacred Congregations, is particularly well-informed, while 'How to see Rome' offers a choice conducted tour of the author's preferences. Sir Alec uses his final chapter to set out his considered views, both as an experienced diplomat and as a devout son of the Church, on the Vatican in relation to the world at large now and in the future. There is some criticism in the sphere of diplomacy, which could hardly be taken amiss from such a source, but there is above all a deep appreciation of and an intelligent loyalty towards the Holy See, the well-spring 'of a spiritual universal society, reaching back to the beginning of our age and looking forward to the end of it'. The notes, gathered at the end of the book, are most valuable and the Index most helpful.

HILARY J. CARPENTER, O.P.

THE SMALL RITUAL. Being Extracts from *Ordo Administrandi Sacramenta* with an Authorized English Version. (Burns and Oates; 21s.)

In a foreword to *The Small Ritual* the Archbishop of Birmingham explains that 'it is intended to fulfil a twofold purpose: to provide the prayers and formulas of those ceremonies and sacraments which priests perform and administer most frequently, and to furnish layfolk with a book with which they can follow them in their own language'. But the translation is not to be taken to mean that English is authorized for these administrations.

In the matter of bi-lingual rituals this country is far behind most others: the use (in varying degrees) of the vernacular for the administration of the sacraments has been conceded by the Holy See to Germany, France, the United States and Australia. It is difficult to understand why the publication of *The Small Ritual* has not been allowed to coincide with a permission to use its translations, since one may assume that the pastoral needs of this country are no less urgent than those, say, of America. Perhaps the intention is to submit this edition to the judgment of critics so that a definitive text may take into account what they have to suggest. In the meantime it provides a useful version of the parts of the *Rituale* with which the laity are most concerned.

The Latin text, it must be said (and this is not made plain) is not always fully translated. The rubrics are sometimes abbreviated and sometimes additional English observations are added (e.g. 'rust-proof metal containers' are specified for the holy oils). The exorcisms in Baptism are not given in a complete English version, and the reason is that the Holy See always excludes them from vernacular versions for public use. This seems to contradict the *caveat* about the use of the translations here provided; at least it hints at a hope for English conformity with the growing practice in other countries.