

## **Blackfriars**

of whom (Shakespeare included) with no certain doctrine of philosophy, lived ever haunted by the sinister shadow of mortality. But a universe without purpose is a universe without order; for order implies at least 'two terms and a relation to a principle which is anterior to the creation of the order.' Thus Mr. Strachey has made this book—so luminously ordered—in spite of his philosophy.

His irony indicates also that, in his view, it is the function of grace to destroy nature, that religion is the enemy of human endowments and human feelings. Spain with its theologians and its praying king are ironically compared with robust Englishmen and the terrestrial Elizabeth. The comparison is unfair because the persons are unequal. Elizabeth was certainly lacking in grace but the morbid Philip was lacking in nature. The purpose of grace is not to destroy but to fulfil, to perfect human nature. 'I came that they might have Life, and life more abundantly.' It does not, however, make up for natural deficiencies. And there is only one Exemplar in history whose life was perfectly divine and perfectly human. Nevertheless, He showed forth the Ideal and supplied the means to attain it. Mr. Strachey must surely agree that, with this 'tragic history' in mind, a little grace would have been no misfortune for Elizabeth despite her statesmanship and virile magnificence.

A.M.

### **DARKENED ROOMS.** By Philip Gibbs. (Hutchinson, 7/6.)

The theme of Sir Philip Gibbs' latest novel is spiritualism, which, without any other qualification, should be sufficient to make it interesting. But the book as a whole takes it for granted that the basis of spiritualism is money-making and fraud, and it does not attempt to explain at all clearly what there may be genuine in this 'science.' The author starts his story immediately with an apparently successful séance, at which all the main characters of the book are introduced to us. Yet although it is represented as successful in a way, as are indeed nearly all the subsequent séances and phenomena described in the story, it has about it the air of a rather sordid and played-out game.

To take this taste of dulness out of our mouths there are some amusing passages such as introduce Mrs. Laveray, the medium, asthmatic and garrulous, who calls herself 'aunty,' and who, as a sideline to her crystal-gazing, thrills her clients by claiming to be under the influence of her 'guru.'

## Book Reviews

When picking up a novel on this subject one is prepared either for a terrific onslaught on it, as on an evil to be driven from the world, or for a defence of it as of (at least) scientific experiments, appealing to a few. But the author, instead of taking these strong lines, simply lays bare these experiments and enables all his characters (except one) to see through them; that one being the slightly-described heroine who gropes blindly in the darkness of the unknown in search of her dead lover. The medium (Emery Iago), whose work is ostensibly that of a photographer in a mean street in Brixton, has our sympathy, because the story is told first from his point of view, and however unattractive we cannot but judge his personality to be, he is an interesting and convincing psychological study.

In contrast to this detailed picture of a partially unconscious impostor appear a successful K.C. and a beautiful society actress who have both come under his influence.

Exciting our interest at the very beginning in this obscure subject we are drawn on by the development of the plot, wondering what will be the dénouement. With surprising force and power a solution is suddenly hurled at the reader on the final page. In this last chapter the author speeds up the movement and gives an answer to the slowly gathering question as to whether at the back of the claims of spiritualism lies any valuable truth: for the boy, Billy Neal, the one character who has never been even mildly interested in the subject, does, in fact, see a spirit, not excitedly, as in the case of the mediumistic or emotional influences, but somehow, beautifully, as in a vision.

G.V.Z.

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY AND THE RIGHT OF WAR. By LUIGI STURZO. Translated by Barbara Barclay Carter. With a Foreword by G. P. Gooch, D.Litt. (Allen and Unwin; 10/- net.)

This is a remarkable book by a distinguished Italian priest; the work, Dr. Gooch reminds us, 'not merely of an exiled leader of a great party, but also of a scholar and a thinker'; the work of 'the idealist who is nothing of a doctrinaire, the man of learning who is also a man of affairs, the literary craftsman whose materials are skilfully marshalled, and whose arguments are forcibly expressed. Don Sturzo founded the *Partito Popolare*, with its motto 'Libertas,' and its programme of Christian democracy, in 1919. The rule of Mussolini left no room for political parties in Italy whatever their programmes, and Don Sturzo—following the example of earlier