

Book Reviews

'curiously woven . . . a simple tale that follows its own straight path,' and she declares, 'I do not propose to reveal God's secrets with my soul.' She reveals everyone else's secrets, however, and that with immoderate candour, and she writes about herself with deplorable lack of restraint. It must be remembered that the disclosure of intimacies of the soul can be more indelicate than intimacies of sex, and for that reason this book would be far more acceptable were it written in the third person. To write it so powerfully as a piece of fiction is indeed a *tour-de-force*; if it really were autobiographical I should be sorry for its publication—except for the excellence of the translation.

It has occurred to me that perhaps after all I have been very dense and that the whole thing is a cunning and deliberate exposition of the ugliness of spiritual pride, a stupendous satire on priggishness; but that is too much to expect. R.R.

SIDELIGHTS ON NEW LONDON AND NEWER YORK, and Other Essays. By G. K. Chesterton. (London: Sheed & Ward; 6/-.)

In this collection of essays Mr. Chesterton gives us his contribution to that ever-growing library of criticism of Modern Youth and the New Age. Its manifestation in the civilisation of the West is dealt with in a series of eight essays on New London, followed by fourteen essays under the title Newer York, criticisms based on his own personal observation of the recent developments of the New Age in the New World.

With his customary penetration and cheerfulness Mr. Chesterton succeeds in persuading his readers—and let us hope, his victims—that he is neither a Nonconformist preacher nor yet one of those 'Dear Old Things who understand the Modern Youth.' If he sees gate-crashing as a sort of sacramental and mystical denial of the first principles of cultured society, he does, on the other hand, find a sympathetic and winning excuse for it in a masterly analysis of 'The True Victorian Hypocrisy.' Cocktails, too, provide a reason for the lash, and their wide popularity is shown up as a modern vogue for the facile and shallow as compared with the more mature and deeper pleasures of the beer and brandy of an older civilisation. The declining cigar trade can console itself with the contemplation of this point, or even consider its advertising potentialities.

The value of such criticism, however, must be appraised with an eye on the fact that so few can breathe for long, or at all, the rarified atmosphere of Mr. Chesterton's viewpoint. Not

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vitaly concerned with fundamental issues, many are content to dally with the more fortunate blooms of the New Age: to disregard railways as an economic blunder and merely to be glad that the 'Royal Scot' was made. They are the people who will 'man the last ditch' for Modernity, and they must be considered in a complete criticism. Perhaps they too can appeal to common sense for what appears to be merely common senselessness—as he himself would say.

His readers will applaud him for this characteristic performance, given with all the bounce of a clown in a pantomime. And they will be grateful, too, for the pleasing and serviceable form and the cover design by that witty artist Thomas Derrick.

R.M.B.

CHRIST THE KING OF GLORY. By Dom Anscar Vonier, O.S.B. (Burns, Oates & Washbourne. Pp. 152; 5/-.)

It is the duty of Christian teachers to bring the mind of every Christian into living contact with the traditional Faith of the Church, not only by simple enunciation of the truths of the Faith but also by careful and illuminating explanation, and so re-present the great body of Christian thought contained in the writings of the Apostles, the Fathers, the Doctors and the theologians. Such is the work that Abbot Vonier has accomplished in *Christ the King of Glory* with singular success. His subject is the Person of Christ and his chief source is the magnificent treatise of St. Thomas Aquinas on the Incarnation. It is a book for the ordinary Catholic with good will and energy enough to apply himself to a thoughtful study of the truths contained in the doctrine that Christ is at once true God and true man. As the Abbot remarks: 'It is not an enviable state to have a reputation for writing difficult books.' He reduces the difficulties, however, to manageable shape and has written a book worthy to be counted among the best explanations of Christian doctrine in modern times.

C.C.H.

A RECALL TO DANTE. By Alice Curtayne. (London: Sheed & Ward; 6/-.)

One is inclined to quarrel with Miss Curtayne for sounding a 'Recall to Dante' in which there is no direct treatment of Dante's poetry as such. A reason why Catholics, as much as anybody else, should be urged to read Catholic poetry is that it is poetry. But the author in her disarmingly modest preface announces her intention to be to emphasise the poet's