

written, or rather re-written, in the light of his final convictions. It wavers in its outlook, therefore; inclining perhaps rather more to the pole of orthodoxy. It is full of brilliantly suggestive thought. But it is also equipped with a masterly complement of technical information. It deserves—perhaps only just deserves—to be rated as the *great* Commentary which every one had looked for.

RICHARD KEHOE, O.P.

THE POWER AND THE GLORY. By Graham Greene. (Heinemann; 8s. 3d.)

The greatest obstacle to *pietas* is complacent piety. It bolts and bars the soul against divine intrusion; it evades the divine pursuit because it cannot think of such a pursuit as conceivably necessary. Conscious of sin—its own notion of sin—only as an alien ugliness, it has discovered or dreamt of the deepest love: 'We wouldn't recognise *that* love. It might even look like hate. It would be enough to scare us—God's love. It set fire to a bush in the desert, didn't it, and smashed open graves and set the dead walking in the dark. Oh, a man like me would run a mile to get away if he felt that love around.' 'I love God, father,' she said haughtily. He took a quick look at her . . . another of the pious . . . 'How do you know? Loving God isn't any different from loving a man—or a child. It's wanting to be with Him, to be near Him.' He made a hopeless gesture with his hands. 'It's wanting to protect Him from yourself.'

To have missed, to fail to suspect, the deepest love is to miss the tears of God, and the deepest glory. For the deepest glory is revealed when the heart of God seizes on the weak, the negligent, the cold, for its service; entrusts to their care the Christ-life that is light to the world; and even batters them into beauty themselves, and into love, through their grudging service.

This story presents us with two contrasting portraits: a plump, sleek priest, surrounded by his admiring guilds and societies, accepting homage easily, performing his duties ably, respectable, respectably ambitious, repeating correct professional platitudes which have no meaning for him, loving nobody, living for himself; and the same priest, hollow cheeked, whisky-sodden, father of a child, neglecting all his personal duties, but discovering, with the sense of his own shame and weakness, the essence of the priesthood—the power to give God to men; discovering, in the mire and misery, the meaning of love; and dying for God. It is the story of the sole surviving priest in a

persecuting Mexican state. Ought he to relieve the faithful of the scandal of his life; or is it more important that he should stay, to give them God? Finally he does escape; the old sleek life beckons him; and he turns back at the call of a dying man, knowing that he is walking into a trap, still weak, still shivering, still tortured by his own worthlessness and sin.

The skill with which the story is built up is outstanding: the Mexican scene, the heat and the squalor; the vivid, terrible, contrast provided by the passages from the pretty plaster-saint life of the other martyr; the figure of Padre José, married and settled down to a life of humiliation on a Government pension; the cold idealism of the Red lieutenant; the recurring portrait of the priest himself in earlier days; the scandal of ecclesiastical commercialism ('The boy, father, has not been baptised. The last priest who was here wanted two pesos. I had only one peso. Now I have only fifty centavos'); all these things are organic elements in a single vision, gradually achieved, of extraordinary intensity and depth. It needed great skill to write such a book; but it needed more than skill. That is why it is one of the most moving novels, and one of the most illuminating, that one has read for a long time.

GERALD VANN, O.P.

'WHAT IS LITERATURE?' By Charles du Bos. (Sheed and Ward; 5s.)

To attempt to provide an answer to the question 'What is Literature?' is to join oneself to a distinguished line of critics: Arnold, Sainte-Beuve, Coleridge, de Gourmont. 'I would have no right to approach the question at all,' M. du Bos rightly says, 'if I pretended that I am not in possession of at least the lineaments of an answer.' There are two fundaments of his answer which are presupposed by any real aesthetic: the objectivity of beauty and the exemplarity of God: 'beauty is *objective* before being *subjective*,' and the response of the soul 'depends upon the immutable objectivity of the appeal addressed'; and 'the mystery of Beauty is tributary of God's presence . . . and herein lies the deepest ground not only for the objectivity of Beauty, not only for its immutability, but for all the mysterious truths residing in the essences of the things of Beauty themselves.' It is a pity that, starting from such premises as these, the criticism of M. du Bos should show all those failures into which all criticism so easily falls, and perhaps especially French criticism: his language lacks critical precision, and, at those moments where he approaches the