ing gesture of the Hellenic Christian, that gesture whereby he fetches everything home to Christ' (p. xix).

The first part of the book consists of illustrations of this attitude in the case of the mystery of the Cross, of baptism, and of the seasonal cycle of the ecclesiastical year, with Christmas and Easter linking it to the rich symbolism of Sun and Moon. The second part contains two essays concerned with the symbolism of the process of maturing, of reaching perfection and fullness of life in the midst of death and corruption. The third and last part of the book is perhaps the section which displays the poetic qualities of Fr Rahner's scholarship at their deepest and most moving. Entitled 'Holy Homer', it takes up the theme of the second section ('The healing of the soul') in following Odysseus on his homeward journey and the Christian in his heavenward striving. A passage from the introduction to this section may serve to conclude this review. It does less violence to Fr Rahner than any attempt to summarise inevitably would, and it states some of his main themes as clearly as any short passage can:

'. . . Christian humanism reposes on the simple truth that the successful fashioning of this our earthly life, the fashioning of it into a life of true humane goodness and nobility, can only be achieved if we go beyond our present world and take our stand in the world to come; for only thus can we find and learn to love what is eternal in man. Only by relaxing his hold on created things can man hope to make their hidden worth his own. To find we must first renounce, and it is only by the light that streams from the door which we only enter in death that earthly things disclose their clear and truly lovely forms. That is why Odysseus, the eternal voyager, had first to sail to the dark doors of Persephone—and how strange it is that should have been Circe herself who sent him thither—ere he was permitted to find the way to his sweet earthly home; for this story of Odysseus rests on an intimation, even though dim and fleeting, of that truth that is the foundation of Christian humanism, the humanism that is proof against all illusion; the truth is this: God has willed it that heaven is not the only thing that man should enjoy. Earth also, transfigured but still delectably tangible, earth with its loveliness is also there, here and now, for his delight . . .' (p. 281).

R. A. MARKUS

THE HISTORIAN AND CHARACTER, AND OTHER ESSAYS, by Dom David Knowles; Cambridge University Press; 45s.

When a distinguished Professor retires from his chair, it is not unusual for his colleagues and his former pupils to mark the occasion by presenting him with a collection of essays written in his honour. Those responsible for this book conceived the even happier idea of paying tribute to Professor Knowles by giving him a farewell present made up of a number of his own lectures and essays which have been printed either separately or in the pages of various

learned periodicals. They have called the book *The Historian and Character* which is the title of the first item printed in it and which was the subject of Professor Knowles's Inaugural Lecture as Regius Professor of Modern History in the University of Cambridge. The title does, as they claim, provide the main theme of the collection and gives unity to a rich diversity of material. Although Professor Knowles would be the last to deny the importance of environment and the influence of those trends, tendencies and movements which help to shape the careers of great historical figures, he has nevertheless always stressed the importance of human personality as one of the main concerns of the historian. As he puts it, 'Time and again throughout the ages a great issue has provoked a clash of character . . . More rarely, and yet not negligibly, the character of a single man—St Francis, a Luther, a Henry VIII—has had a decisive influence over a multitude and has altered part of the stream of history'.

In these essays and lectures Professor Knowles displays those remarkable gifts which enable him to understand, and to help his readers understand, the many and varied personalities with whom he deals, whether it be St Bernard and Peter the Venerable clashing with each other in the twelfth century or Abbot Ford and Abbot Butler struggling in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to restore in the face of determined opposition the traditional conception of Benedictine monasticism in England.

There is a measure of unity in these studies since they are the work of one man and since the interest in character predominates, but each has its own particular appeal and shows a different aspect of Professor Knowles as an historian. Indeed it would be a mistake for the reader to go without pausing from one essay to the next, for each provides the material for reflection and for critical appreciation of a brilliant historian at work over a great range of material. This is a collection of gems of different sizes and colours, some with a sparkle that immediately catches the eye, others requiring much more careful and detailed examination if the observer is to appreciate fully the skill and knowledge of the master craftsman who shaped them.

The essays on Jean Mabillon and on Cardinal Gasquet as an Historian provide Professor Knowles with splendid opportunities not only for dealing with fascinating subjects but also for making clear, directly and by implication, what he thinks should be the standards of the historian. Of Mabillon, he writes 'Never before, and perhaps never since, has a single mind mastered and retained such a vast array of sources, literary and diplomatic, in so many fields of Church history and medieval society . . . and retained them so as to be able to survey any topic from above, with a wealth of illustration . . . Mabillon stands out from his contemporaries as one of the world's greatest scholar-historians by reason of the vision, the intuition, the creative quality of his mind, by reason of his critical powers, and by reason of his intimate sense of the dignity and obligations of his calling'.

Although the thirteenth century has often been acclaimed as the high-water mark of medieval civilization, it is the twelfth century that Porfessor Knowles

seems to find more attractive, and five of the twelve chapters of this book are devoted to that great and vigorous age with its 'wide and sympathetic humanism' and its 'kindly warmth and fragrant geniality' which Professor Knowles finds lacking in the culture of the schoolmen. A study of 'The Humanism of the Twelfth Century' outlines in a brilliant and suggestive manner the great achievements of the age, and in three chapters on St Bernard, on the controversy between St Bernard and Peter the Venerable, and on Archbishop Thomas Becket, Professor Knowles uses his gifts to examine the personalities of these twelfth-century giants whose characters later ages have found so difficult to understand. He writes as an historian concerned only with the truth, not as an advocate feeling that he must at all costs put the best possible interpretation on the behaviour of a saint, and his interpretation of Thomas Becket is a masterpiece of sympathetic and critical understanding of a most difficult and complicated personality.

Some of these studies, such as 'The Case of St William of York' and 'The Censured Opinions of Uthred of Boldon' show Professor Knowles at work as a specialist medieval historian bringing to bear on the evidence in a limited field his outstanding critical powers and his profound knowledge of medieval life and thought. Others, like the general examination of the Monastic Buildings of England, which has not hitherto been published, enable him to range over the centuries and to fit a great mass of detail into the ever-changing picture of medieval religious life. All of them are written with that clarity of thought, that critical appreciation of the past, and that wholly admirable concern for matter and form which make Professor Knowles such a great master of his craft.

Those concerned with selecting the items for inclusion in this volume must have been faced with a difficult task. Inevitably some readers will regret the omission of this or that essay or lecture to which they are particularly attached. In his lecture on 'Academic History' printed in *History* for October 1962, Professor Knowles gives his views on the problems of contemporary history teaching and suggests the principles on which a solution to these problems might be based. This lecture was presumably published too late for inclusion here, but it is a pity that room could not be found for at least one of Professor Knowles's papers on 'Great Historical Enterprises'.

Over a quarter of this book consists of a memoir of Abbot Cuthbert Butler and an examination of his work and thought. It might at first sight seem that the editors have devoted an undue proportion of the available space to a topic which is of particular interest only to a limited section of their readers, but many who are not directly concerned with the history of Downside and of Benedictine monasticism in this country in modern times will nevertheless be very glad that this penetrating and illuminating study of a great abbot and a great abbey has been reprinted here. It brings out the clash of personalities, and the issues involved were of tremendous importance for the future of the Black Monks in this country. Above all this memoir displays in a high degree those qualities of judgment and of critical appreciation of personality which characterise all

Professor Knowles's work. There are many who will agree with Mr Pantin's comment that it is 'one of Fr David's most important pieces of writing'.

The book is admirably produced by the Cambridge University Press. It contains a Curriculum Vitae by Mr W. A. Pantin and a bibliography of the writings of Professor Knowles. The photograph used as a frontispiece has in the main caught very well the expression of the subject except that it gives him an unduly tight-lipped appearance.

This is not the place to attempt to pay tribute, however inadequate, to the achievements of Professor Knowles and to the high standards which he has set for Catholic historians in this country. Although he is retiring from the Regius Professorship which he has held with such distinction, it is to be hoped that he has ahead of him many years during which he can continue his great historical enterprises and by his work and his example remind his fellow Catholics that in our day scholarship is one of the most necessary forms of apostolic action.

PATRICK MCGRATH

MEDIEVAL LONDON: FROM COMMUNE TO CAPITAL, by Gwyn A. Williams; University of London, Athlone Press; 50s.

This book is a highly detailed study of the development of the city of London between 1191 and 1337. It seeks to unravel the causes and internal proceedings which changed the city from a commune existing in a feudal society on sufferance to a powerful corporation with an assured independent status as the capital of England. The ordinary reader will pretty certainly rise from his struggle with the book's complexities with two main impressions. The first impression will be a very powerful sense that his previous notions of medieval history were much too shallow; that the reality was far more complex and sophisticated than he imagined; that the Gregorian Reform, the coming of the friars and, indeed, the whole life of the medieval English Church was fitted into a far bigger and more variegated and difficult material and social frame than the older Church history books—or, indeed, the textbooks of medieval political history—suggested. The second impression—a very different one—is of the opportunities and dangers of modern methods of specialist historical research. The opportunities are clear. The astonishing wealth of MS material for so limited a field as the history of one city is revealed by the footnotes, appendices and statistical tables of this book. The detailed reconstruction of the careers and family histories of so many London trading families of the period also underlines the opportunities. But the dangers are equally clear. One danger in the use of so much specialised material is that no other specialist will ever have the time or energy to check the innumerable references and test the multitude of statements made by the author. Another danger is that advanced specialist research techniques do not necessarily qualify the researcher as an interpreter of his new material. Indeed, historical research of the modern scientific kind, with all its impressive apparatus and technical jargon not infrequently goes with a very naive and uncritical ideology. Dr