

REVIEWS

psychologists, sociologists, politicians, etc., are deliberately or at least effectively attacking. *G.K.'s* will be found to have a spilth of paradox—because the attack has a spilth of absurdity. For example, we might give utterance to the aim of *G.K.'s* in the proverb, 'The home is the social defence of freedom; and the homestead is the economic defence of the home.' But because each clause in this almost self-evident proverb is disputed, we may change the proverb into a seeming paradox: 'The man who has nothing to defend has nothing for self-defence'—or again, to give it a more startling form, 'A man is mostly defended by what he has to defend.'

But it is not the paradox alone that *G.K.'s* has used to defend the essentials of human liberty and life. Perhaps because the word *home* has carried the poetry of the English language throughout the world, these defenders of the Home have been English of the English in their weapons of defence. Nothing is more national in Shakespeare than his creation of Sir John Falstaff. But many of the national poet's admirers have to be told that in creating the great burly lecherous clown of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* Shakespeare was laughing out of court the new thing in religion.

The little group of 'poor servants of literature' who, in their love of England, tried to undo in Essex Street what was being done in Whitehall, were brothers of him who made the playhouse at Blackfriars a last line of defence against the new invasion of England. Contrasted with the Essex Street group who fought against still greater forces, the other English satirists may one day seem of lesser importance. The genius who gave us *Gulliver's Travels* and the *Tale of a Tub*—the hardly lesser genius who enriched our literature with the *Book of Snobs*—and the *Sorrows of Werther*—gave English satire its right to sit with the immortals. But the things they defended—perhaps over-defended—were so little in comparison with the great battlings of *G.K.'s* that the Essex Street group may one day be given a higher place in the history—if not in the literature—of England whom they served with their pen and with their poverty.

VINCENT McNABB, O.P.

THE MENACE TO OUR NATIONAL DEFENCE. By Sir Norman Angell. (Hamish Hamilton; 3/6.)

The recent set-backs to projects of disarmament and the present tension of international relations should set many Englishmen reading and considering this lucid treatise. Our national security, once assured by sea-power, is now threatened from the air. If we want peace above everything, we can of course refuse to defend our national integrity, but no responsible statesman,

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though he may declare that peace is the first interest of the British Empire, really means what he says. He means *security*. But this cannot be guaranteed merely by increased national air armaments. Overwhelming air supremacy is not practical politics because no great state will accept a condition of inferiority, nor will a strong air force threatening retaliation deter a prospective enemy who counts on getting a paralyzing blow in first. Two courses appear to be open; first, the abolition of air armaments and the internationalization of civil aviation; or alternatively, the adoption of air armaments as an effective instrument of third-party intervention in a dispute, an unambiguous threat of the community of nations against any party disposed to what has clearly been defined as aggression. The author has no difficulty in disposing of those publicists who declare that this country can only preserve her peace by adopting a policy of isolation and refusing foreign commitments. Probably most of our wars have been defensive wars and yet they have all been fought in someone else's country. Only Switzerland and Greenland seem to have escaped our campaigning.

THOMAS GILBY, O.P.

NOTICES

THE PONTIFICATE OF LEO XIII. By Eduardo Soderini. Translated by Barbara Carter. Vol. I. (Burns, Oates, 1934; 7/6.)

This is the first volume of the somewhat belated official biography of Leo XIII. No indication is given in either Preface or Note of the ultimate length of the book or its exact scope or plan, but the present instalment furnishes the main incidents of the Pontiff's life, with a detailed account of the Conclave in which he was elected, and then minutely and ably devotes itself to that work of Social Reconstruction which was the most striking feature of Leo's long pontificate. The author writes learnedly and dispassionately, and has used much new matter, the secret archives of the Holy See having been placed at his disposal. The translation is adequate, yet the reader is always quite conscious that it is a translation that he is perusing, and not the original.

The era of Leo XIII seems a remote one now, and the world has moved apace since his time. Yet the student of present-day problems will find in this book much to interest him. For Leo XIII worked for the future. His action was social rather than political, and he gave to Catholic Action its present orientation. Brunetière used to say it was Leo XIII who liberated Catholicism from the antiquated forms that had enveloped and stifled it, and who restored to it the freedom and fecundity of its early institution. For this Leo will be eternally honoured in the history of the Church, and because of this the story of his reign deserves to be closely and attentively studied. (F.R.B.)