

REVIEWS

THE WILFRID WARDS AND THE TRANSITION. Vol. I. The Nineteenth Century. By Maisie Ward. (Sheed & Ward; 15/-.)

The present writer well remembers the absorption and delight with which forty-five years ago he read *William George Ward and the Oxford Movement* and the conviction then formed that from out the English Catholic body had emerged in the person of Wilfrid Ward the Perfect Biographer. The impression was only deepened when in the course of time that first success was followed up by *William George Ward and the Catholic Revival*, *The Life and Times of Cardinal Wiseman*, and the *Life of John Henry Cardinal Newman*. And it is only right that to-day, when he has passed away, this great master of Biography should have his own 'Life' brilliantly and fascinatingly written, and that by a daughter who has quite evidently inherited her father's gift of perfect workmanship. Wilfrid Ward, Mr. Chesterton has said, was the portrait-painter of the soul, and could make a death-mask in wax with the firmness of a sculptor's monument in marble. He was of course happy in the character of his subjects, but happier still in the skill with which he handled his materials. His biographies are of permanent value, vigorous and lively, instructive but never dull, scholarly and sympathetic, rich in anecdote and exposition. Yet was Wilfrid Ward much more than a biographer. One of the foremost laymen of our time, he had the rare gift of bringing together those who but for him would have remained very far apart. He as it were translated Catholicism to those to whom otherwise it would have been totally unintelligible. That was more than half his life-work, and as he accomplished it, he built up intimacies and friendships with such diverse personalities as Manning and Vaughan, Tennyson and Gladstone, Huxley and Jowett, Balfour and Wyndham, Gore and Oliver Lodge, Myers and Sidgwick, Haldane and von Hügel. Ward was a great lover of good talk, and a still greater letter-writer, and the record of his conversations and correspondence is writ large in this history of his life, which moreover is a store-house of good things in quite other ways. The chapters on the University Question, Anglican Orders, and the Synthetic Society are of themselves alone well worth reading. And the sympathetic figure of the novelist-wife, the partner of his mind and work as well as of his heart, is very skilfully drawn. Altogether a wonderful book, thankfully read, and gratefully recognised as in every way worthy of a great family tradition. We shall look forward with impatience to the second volume, confident that it will reach the high level of the first and be written with the same apt judgment and artistic feeling.

ROBERT BRACEY, O.P.