

BOOK REVIEWS

INTO THEIR COMPANY: A BOOK FOR A MODERN GIRL ON LOVE AND MARRIAGE. By a Medical Woman, a Girl and a Wife. With an Introduction by Father Martindale, S.J. (Burns, Oates & Washbourne; 1/6.)

Father Martindale is, I feel, not only to be congratulated but warmly thanked, for having induced three gallant and well equipped Catholic women—a lady doctor, a novelist and a mother—to undertake a small book of discreet and kindly counsel on love and marriage for Catholic girls. Father Martindale's own instructions for young men in *The Difficult Commandment*, have provided a precedent and a model; but, as its author says in his preface to the present book, it takes a woman to remember what it was once like to be a girl. Personally I feel that the girl's adolescent difficulties—sometimes embarrassing to discuss with parents, often too inarticulate for the confessional—have been admirably dealt with here. And not only on the negative side: for, as the authors rightly maintain, those who only know the Catholic 'dout's'—prohibitions of bad books, films, divorce, birth-control, and so on—know nothing very exhilarating about Catholic love and marriage. So in the spirit of the Beatitudes rather than the Commandments (though the latter aspect is, of course, not neglected) the trio sets about its task; and very well, on the whole, I think it fulfils it. The result could be put directly into a young girl's hands. It would be equally useful, I think, in the hands of a young girl's natural advisers, parents or Religious. It harmonises with astonishing felicity, considering its previous appearance, with the Encyclical *Casti Connubii*; and might indeed have taken for its text the Holy Father's noble declaration that if the man is the head of the family, the woman is the heart.

One statement only I should like to see modified: the declaration that under the auspices of modern science the danger of childbirth and its preliminary discomforts are very notably minimised. It is fair neither to husband nor wife to underestimate the heroism needed to cope with a Catholic mother's task. All the most enthusiastic writer can do is to insist on the graces that assist it and the glory—both here and hereafter—of its reward.

H.P.E.

HERMIA, AND SOME OTHER POEMS. By W. H. Shewring. (St. Dominic's Press, Ditchling, 1930; 240 copies.)

Saint Dominic's Press hath a devil whose name is legion, it appears, from a scarlet list of Errata in a book of less than forty

Blackfriars

pages. Even the list of Errata is itself erroneous! It does not contain all the Errata, and it does contain at least one Erratum which is not erroneous. The get-up of the book has a certain homeliness of beauty, an individuality consorting well with the contents. In our opinion, the book can go on the special shelf of high-class Catholic literature, and this is no small praise. It keeps a high level all through, and a careful reader will note many thoughts and expressions which will enrich his mental vocabulary and make him alert for still better things to come from Mr. Shewring, just as the *Angel in the House* leads up to the *Unknown Eros*. Patmore conned the *Summa* of St. Thomas twenty years before he joined the Church and began to tune his lyre to the Living Voice. In twenty years more, with some similar study, or identical, for none is better, Mr. Shewring, we may reasonably hope, will do something nearer to the Muse's own voice.

There is an exquisite epitaph on a monk of St. Benedict, a moving quatrain in Sprung Rhythm on a girl dying unwed, and a third on Thomas Hardy in Westminster Abbey. This last takes the form of a soliloquy by the veteran, drily spoken, but echoing into strange overtones through the matchless aisles built for a very different frame of mind. *Last Lines to Hermia* is very satisfactory in technique and colour, ending in a full chord of Paradisal hope containing not a vague emotion but a penetrating realism which can best be described as lyric wit, some truly distinguished work. *The Nuptial Mass* has also this quality of wide scope combined with hard stuff o' the mind, which makes it well worth learning by heart. There is power in the lines (Sprung Rythmic) *As Earthly Pilgrims* and strong piety in those to SS. Perpetua and Felicity. Three Latin poems are very good in class, but unequal in quality, the faultless one being the shortest. To Mr. Shewring we say 'Carry on.'

J.O'C.

THE RUSSIAN CHURCH. By Nicholas Brian-Chaninov. Translated from the French by Warre B. Wells. (Burns, Oates & Washbourne; 6/-.)

In his attempt to compile a history of the Russian Church Mr. Brian-Chaninov set himself a task demanding an expert hand, for it is by no means easy to compress so vast a subject into some two hundred pages. This work lacks a definite plan; indeed the author does not seem even to have settled the subject of his book, whether it was to be the Russian Church or the relations of Russia with the Holy See. However important