

R E V I E W S

THE WESTMINSTER HYMNAL. New and Revised Edition. (Burns, Oates and Washbourne, 1940; 8s. 6d.)

The new Westminster Hymnal is symbolic of the state of Catholic life in England at the moment. It is a work of real scholarship with many new translations, new melodies and new hymns; yet at the same time it is in continuity with the traditions of our Catholic past. Thus the work shows itself to be the product of a healthy organic life with its roots in the past, yet well adapted to its present environment.

The practical order of the Hymns is very similar to that in the earlier editions, with slight differences here and there. The seasons of the year are given first as in earlier editions, but with new feasts or new dating of old feasts taken into account. Also there is a better and bigger selection of hymns for particular saints, as for example for our own national saints, for St. Francis Xavier, and St. Teresa of Lisieux.

One of the most pleasing achievements of the present edition is the restoration of Catholic melodies from non-Catholic hymn-books, from German and French sources in particular. This is the result of a great deal of work on the part of those musicians who collected these melodies and they deserve the gratitude of all who use this new hymnal. Probably this restoration of Catholic melodies is the most characteristic quality of the work.

In addition to the melodies we have just mentioned, there are a number of new ones, most of which have been composed by Dom Gregory Murray, O.S.B., and by the late Sir Richard Terry. Examples of these are the melodies of 'Behold a simple tender Babe' of Blessed Robert Southwell, of 'Battle is o'er, hell's armies flee,' 'One great and final Sabbath day,' 'Sweet Sacrament Divine,' and 'Hail, Queen of Heaven.' The melodies of Dom Gregory are very beautiful, though their beauty may not be obvious to congregations meeting them for the first time. They are unusual and possibly rather strange to people who have become over-familiar with more obvious kinds, and for that reason they will provide a welcome relief to many.

Another sign of the progress which this new edition shows us is the introduction of some of the poetry of earlier English Catholics. We have been dependent in the last fifty years on the writers of the nineteenth century for almost all the words

of our hymns. That dependence was a good thing all the time that it lasted; without it we should have had hardly anything at all. Now that we have had time to take stock of all that we possess, however, we can see that in every period of the Church's history there is plenty of poetry and many hymns written by Catholics both in England and in exile.

Many nineteenth century hymns, well-loved by the Catholic body, have been retained in this new edition, while writers of later date are also allowed to make their contribution, so that to the familiar works of Faber and Caswall are now added the vigorous dignities of Mr. Shewring, the happy ingenuities of Mgr. Knox, and the vivid fervours of Mgr. John O'Connor.

Bishop Mathew contributes as a preface a brief survey of English Catholic hymnology which sharpens the appetite for a much larger dose than he has given us. An expansion of it would provide a valuable educational work, but perhaps the whole book will do much to fulfil this need.

DANIEL WOOLGAR, O.P.

ON THE PLACE OF GILBERT CHESTERTON IN ENGLISH LETTERS.
By Hilaire Belloc. (Sheed and Ward; 3s. 6d.)

There has been remarkably little public comment on Chesterton since he died four years ago. The critics hardly mention him and the public seems only to read him now and again. There has been far less post-mortem discussion of Chesterton than of D. H. Lawrence. Of course Lawrence's name has a notoriety that Chesterton's entirely lacks; and Lawrence, who wrote for the generation which grew up during the Great War, died at the height of his powers, whereas Chesterton had done his best work (I consider, *pace* Mr. Belloc) by the mid-1920's and outlived the full activity of his genius by a decade. Even so, the fact is worth noting. It is no good our pretending that the *name* of this great man is something to conjure with at the present day. To use the initials G.K.C. like a magic spell would not only be futile, it would be also unfair to the man behind the name. It would be to repose in the rosy glow of those qualities which everybody allows him—wit, humanity, Englishry, simplicity—while not recognizing those other qualities in him, far harder to appreciate, which the general public seems to have missed. Perhaps it is safer to pay no attention to the ordinary public estimation of Chesterton; to do so is to run the risk (following the easier way) not only of missing the depth of the man, but also of supposing that because the public esteems him for some of his qualities it therefore rates him